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## A 'Hidden Treasure' in South Bend

**Bishop Rhoades Makes Pastoral Visit to Corpus Christi Catholic School**



Derby Photography

Students at Corpus Christi School in South Bend raise their hands to ask Bishop Rhoades questions during his pastoral visit to the school on Thursday, April 23.

BY KASIA BALSBAUGH

The most common questions students asked Bishop Rhoades during his visit to Corpus Christi Catholic School were about his zucchetto and pectoral cross. The first graders, in particular, had thoughts about the latter.

"I want to tell you something," one of the students told Bishop Rhoades. "I have a necklace that has a cross on it."

"I have a necklace that says, 'Jesus is the Lord,'" another student chimed in.

"I have a cross at home, too," said another.

On Thursday, April 23, Bishop Rhoades celebrated Mass and visited classrooms at Corpus Christi School in South Bend — his first visit there in nine years. His classroom adventures included being rushed by kindergarteners trying to count the buttons on his cassock, observing the pre-K

students' frogs and telling the fifth graders all about emergency baptisms.

In his homily during the all-school Mass, Bishop Rhoades spoke on the first reading, in which the apostle Philip tells a

**CORPUS CHRISTI, page 4**

## Catholic School Educators Honored at Awards Luncheon



Kasia Balsbaugh

Teachers, staff and supporters of Catholic Schools gather for the annual You Can Lend a Hand luncheon at the Century Center in South Bend on Friday, April 24.

BY KASIA BALSBAUGH

Teachers don't often receive recognition for their hard work, but the annual You Can Lend a Hand luncheon offers an opportunity to honor the area's best. As master of ceremonies (and Catholic school parent), Chuck Freeby from Sports Michiana said during the event, "Today is a celebration of both the program and the fearless educators in this room."

"When we look at celebrity

culture — actors, musicians — it's tough to find role models," Freeby added. "And we certainly need them. So where do kids look for a light in a time that seems so dark? Frankly, they look to the people who are being honored here today."

At the luncheon on Friday, April 24, at the Century Center in South Bend, students also helped as ushers and performers. Saint Joseph High School students

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TODAY'S  
CATHOLIC

(ISSN 0891-1533)  
(USPS 403630)

Official newspaper of the  
Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend  
P.O. Box 11169  
Fort Wayne, IN 46856

**Publisher**

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260-456-2824

Published weekly, except for the last Sunday in December and every other week from the fourth Sunday in May through the last Sunday in August by the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, 915 S. Clinton St., P.O. Box 390, Fort Wayne, IN 46802. Periodicals postage paid at Fort Wayne, IN, and additional mailing office.

**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to: Today's Catholic, P.O. Box 11169, Fort Wayne, IN 46856-1169 or email: [circulation@diocesefwsb.org](mailto:circulation@diocesefwsb.org)

**MAIN OFFICE:** 915 S. Clinton St., Fort Wayne, IN 46802. Telephone 260-456-2824. Fax: 260-744-1473.

**BUREAU OFFICE:** 1328 Dagoon Trail, Mishawaka, IN 46544. Telephone 260-456-2824. Fax 260-744-1473.

News deadline is 10 days prior to publication date. Advertising deadline is nine days before publication date.

**Today's Catholic may be reached at:**

Today's Catholic,  
P.O. Box 11169, Fort Wayne, IN  
46856-1169; or email:  
[editor@diocesefwsb.org](mailto:editor@diocesefwsb.org)



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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# An American Catholic Patriotism

**Ahead of the U.S.'s 250th Anniversary, What Does the Church Teach About the Honor We Owe to Our Country?**

BY M.T. LU

“Our country, right or wrong.” So Commodore Steven Decatur famously declared his loyalty to the United States in celebration of his victory over the Barbary Pirates in 1815. This notoriously American sentiment has long been regarded as an expression of unthinking nationalism. Reflecting on it many years later, G. K. Chesterton would acidly remark that it was “a thing that no patriot would think of saying. It is like saying, ‘My mother, drunk or sober.’”

How should American Catholics think about patriotism today? Is Chesterton right, and Decatur's boast just a slightly more eloquent version of the “USA! USA! USA!” chants that so offend the sensibilities of the sophisticated? Or is Decatur's heart in the right place, even if open to misinterpretation?

As is so often the case, we can find clarity by turning to St. Thomas Aquinas. In fact, he is unambiguous in holding that patriotism is a virtue — it is a part of piety and, therefore, of justice. He explains that we owe honor to our parents and country (*patria*) because they are “principles of our being and government.” With this, he grounds our duties of piety and patriotism in the fact that who we are, and our understanding of the good, substantially derives from our parents and country.

Obviously, each of us owes a great debt to our parents. Not only did they beget us, but the vast majority of us were also raised and formed by them. Just as a good ruler governs the state for the sake of the common good, good parents “govern” their children by shaping them to desire and pursue what is authentically good. Our obligations to our parents, expressed through the virtue of piety, involve acknowledging their rightful authority, which exists for the sake of that same good. Even as adults, when we have passed out of their direct authority, we still owe them honor and respect, which is perhaps why the Fourth Commandment is actually the first concerned with human morality.

St. Thomas notes that the nature of our duty to parents is directly parallel to our natural moral obligation to God. This is likely to occasion some confusion since we Catholics normally think of our relationship to God in supernatural terms. When



Shutterstock

we receive the sacraments, we are receiving supernatural gifts. While these gifts are ultimately higher and better than what we are able to do by human means alone, the Church has long taught that we can also know God by natural reason. Accordingly, all humans have obligations to God in natural justice, apart from what the baptized may also owe to God on account of His revealed Law. St. Thomas calls this the natural virtue of religion.

Like our parents, God is a “principle of being and government” for each of us. Of course, God is the primary principle, and so our obligations to Him outweigh any other, including even our duties to our parents. Nonetheless, it's very important to see that the duties in both cases have the same normative structure and arise for the same reasons, precisely because we are the kind of thing that has principles of being and government.

We are now ready to see how patriotism fits into this. As already noted, we actually have two secondary principles of being and government: our parents and our country. We owe our existence as the kinds of people we are not only to our parents but also to our civil community. Our nation, through its laws and institutions, educates and shapes us in much the same way that our parents form us. Therefore, just as we have natural duties to God and our parents, we have analogous duties of patriotism to our civil communities.

Of course, it is one thing to see that we have duties of patri-

## Additional Resources

As the United States prepares to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. bishops will mark the occasion by consecrating the country to the Sacred Heart of Jesus on Thursday, June 11. The bishops invite all the Catholic faithful and parishes to participate through Eucharistic adoration, works of mercy and a special novena to the Sacred Heart. To learn more, visit [diocesefwsb.org/america-250](http://diocesefwsb.org/america-250).

otism in general and quite another to know exactly what they require. But the same is true with our parents; I know it would be wrong to let my aged parents be put out onto the street, but does honoring them require that I give them a veto over my choice of spouse? Similarly, I know it would be wrong to abandon my country in her hour of need, but does honoring the flag require me to accept any given policy the government might choose to advance? In both cases, practical wisdom (prudence) is required, and we cannot articulate ahead of time simple rules that will easily resolve the many difficult questions that arise. But just as my duty to honor and respect my parents remains even if they are flawed or imprudent or even occasionally maddening, the honor and respect owed to my country does not depend on who is in charge or whether I happen to like or dislike that administration's policies.

So where does that leave us? From the perspective of natural reason, we can unambiguously say that patriotism is a virtue and a requirement of natural justice. In our day and age, it is difficult to see anything other

than the constitutional republic in which we live as the proper object of that patriotic duty. At the same time, we also know that many of our country's laws and policies are contrary to that same natural justice, from legalized abortion to euthanasia and much more. And yet, for all its flaws, America remains a principle of our being and government. So, in one very important sense, Commodore Decatur was correct: As Americans, she is our country, right or wrong, and we are called to honor her — just as we are called to honor our parents. However, Chesterton's concern was not unfounded; we cannot let a legitimate love of country blind us to injustice. As Catholics, then, we are called to the hard work of making her more right than wrong, even while knowing that task will never be complete.

*M.T. Lu is an associate professor of philosophy at the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota. He wrote this for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops as part of a series exploring Catholic contributions over 250 years of American history. Find out more at [uscbb.org/weholdthesetruths](http://uscbb.org/weholdthesetruths).*

# Pope Leo Concludes 11-Day Apostolic Journey to Africa

BY OSV NEWS

Pope Leo XIV concluded his first trip to Africa on Thursday, April 23, capping a four-country visit marked by urgent calls for peace, direct engagement with conflict zones and a backdrop of international political tension.

Traveling April 13-23 through Algeria, Cameroon, Angola and Equatorial Guinea, the pope met civil and religious leaders, celebrated public Masses and encouraged Catholics to remain steadfast witnesses to the Gospel.

His visit brought him into regions scarred by violence, including Cameroon's separatist conflict, while also addressing inequality and corruption in Angola, promoting interreligious dialogue in Algeria and a just society in Equatorial Guinea.

In Algiers, he visited the Great Mosque, calling the encounter a sign "that we can learn to respect one another, live in harmony and build a world of peace."

Later, at the Basilica of Our Lady of Africa overlooking the Mediterranean, he honored Algeria's Christian martyrs and highlighted interreligious dialogue in the Muslim-majority nation.

On April 14, the pope traveled to Annaba, near the ruins of ancient Hippo Regius, where St. Augustine spent his final years. The visit held personal significance; Pope Leo has often described himself as "a son of Augustine."

Celebrating Mass at the Basilica of St. Augustine, he urged Christians to follow the saint's example, "fervently seeking the truth and serving Christ with ardent faith."

In Cameroon, the pope acknowledged the suffering caused by conflict in the English-speaking northwest and southwest regions. Since 2017, fighting between separatist militias and government forces has killed more than 6,500 people and displaced over 500,000.

"Lives have been lost, families displaced, children deprived of schooling and young people no longer see a future," he said. "Behind the numbers are the faces, stories and shattered hopes of real people."

Days before his arrival, separatist groups declared a three-day ceasefire to allow safe travel during the visit.

The highlight of the April 15-18 stop was the pope's visit to Bamenada, in the heart of the conflict



CNS photo/Lola Gomez

**Young people and families celebrate as they wait to have a meeting with Pope Leo XIV at Bata Stadium in Bata, Equatorial Guinea, on Wednesday, April 22.**

zone. Addressing Catholics at St. Joseph's Cathedral, the pope was met with enthusiasm after declaring, "I am here to proclaim peace."

After hearing testimony from local residents — including a chief imam who described a deadly attack on a mosque — the pope strongly condemned violence carried out in God's name.

"But woe to those who manipulate religion and the very name of God for their own military, economic and political gain," he said, warning against dragging what is sacred "into darkness and filth."

Celebrating Mass for 20,000 people at Bamenda's airport, he urged hope rooted in faith.

"This is the moment to change, to transform the story of this country," he said. "The time has come, today and not tomorrow."

In Angola, he focused on the country's challenges and the Church's role in offering hope. Home to more than 20 million Catholics, Angola has deep Christian roots but continues to struggle with inequality, corruption and the legacy of a civil war that claimed up to 800,000 lives.

Celebrating Mass for tens of thousands, he also addressed exploitation linked to the diamond industry.

"How often the hope of many is frustrated by violence, exploited by the overbearing and defrauded by the rich," he said. "We were not born to become slaves," he added. "Every form of oppression, violence and dishonesty negates the resurrection of Christ, the supreme gift of our freedom."

The final leg of Pope Leo's 11-day journey took him to Equatorial Guinea. In his final Mass in Malabo Stadium on April 23, Pope Leo offered a word of hope to the country's Catholics, urging

them to seek strength, justice and hope from the Gospel and the sacraments.

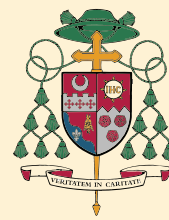
Encouraging the faithful to "joyfully proclaim" that "Christ is everything for us," Pope Leo reminded Christians that in Jesus, "we find the fullness of life and meaning."

"Our problems do not disappear in the Lord's presence, but they are illuminated," he said. "Just as every cross finds redemption in Jesus, so too the story of our lives finds its meaning in the Gospel."

As the Mass concluded, the pope bid farewell to the African continent, saying that his visit was "an invaluable treasure of faith, hope and charity."

Highlighting the continent's significance, the pope said that "today, Africa is called to contribute significantly to the holiness and missionary character of the Christian people."

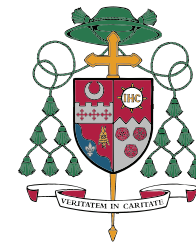
"I entrust this intention to the intercession of the Virgin Mary, to whom I commend myself wholeheartedly, as well as your families, your communities, your nation and all the peoples of Africa," the pope said.



PUBLIC SCHEDULE OF  
BISHOP KEVIN C. RHOADES

*Veritatem In Caritate*  
(Truth in Charity)

- ◆ **Tuesday, May 5, at 8 a.m.** – Meeting of Indiana Bishops and Major Religious Superiors, Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, Indianapolis
- ◆ **Tuesday, May 5, at 3:30 p.m.** – Meeting of Bishops of Indiana, Archbishop O'Meara Catholic Center, Indianapolis
- ◆ **Wednesday, May 6, at 10 a.m.** – Meeting of Indiana Catholic Conference, Indianapolis
- ◆ **Wednesday, May 6, at 5:15 p.m.** – Mass with Holy Cross Community, Corby Hall, University of Notre Dame
- ◆ **Thursday, May 7, at 5 p.m.** – Mass with Blessing and Sending of Graduates of Notre Dame's Masters of Divinity Program, Moreau Seminary, University of Notre Dame
- ◆ **Friday, May 8, at 7 p.m.** – Confirmation Mass, St. Vincent de Paul Church, Elkhart
- ◆ **Saturday, May 9, at 10 a.m.** – Confirmation Mass, St. Vincent de Paul Church, Elkhart
- ◆ **Sunday, May 10, at 10:30 a.m.** – Confirmation Mass, St. Thomas the Apostle Church, Elkhart



## Priest Assignment

*The Most Reverend Kevin C. Rhoades, Bishop of Fort Wayne-South Bend, has made the following assignment of a priest, effective June 16, 2026:*

- ◆ **Reverend Robert Krisch**, from Parochial Vicar, St. Charles Borromeo Parish, Fort Wayne, to Pastor, St. Patrick Parish, Arcola, while continuing as part-time chaplain of Bishop Dwenger High School, Fort Wayne.

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Photos by Derby Photography

Bishop Rhoades poses with the community at Corpus Christi School in South Bend during his pastoral visit on Thursday, April 23.

#### CORPUS CHRISTI, from page 1

traveling Ethiopian man about Christianity and baptizes him in what Bishop Rhoades called “probably the shortest OCIA ever.” As Bishop Rhoades pointed out, the fruits of that one encounter are still seen today, as Ethiopia continues to have a very high number of Christians.

Bishop Rhoades encouraged the students to think about how they might spread the Faith like Philip and the other apostles did. One option is to share the Faith with people you know, he said.

“But you know we also share our faith by the way we live,” Bishop Rhoades said. “When we’re kind to others, when we’re generous with the poor and the needy, when we show love to other people — we’re spreading the Gospel. So, we can spread the Gospel with our words but also with our actions.”

Bishop Rhoades also emphasized the gift of being able to live faith together at a Catholic school, and he commended the students for their active participation in Mass.

“It’s really important that when we pray, we do so with our minds and our hearts, and also with our voices,” Bishop Rhoades said.

Johnathan Combs, principal at Corpus Christi, said school leaders didn’t want to

#### Corpus Christi School

**Address:** 2817 Corpus Christi Drive, South Bend  
**Phone number:** 574-272-9868  
**Website:** corpuschristisb.org  
**Principal:** Johnathan Combs  
**Number of students:** 170  
**Founded:** 1961

“put on a display” during Bishop Rhoades’ visit but instead aimed to show him who they really are.

“[Bishop Rhoades’] presence at our campus was a great blessing to all of us,” Combs told *Today’s Catholic*. “The children got to sit with him, ask him questions, connect with him as a person as opposed to just the picture in the hallway.”

Combs began as principal at Corpus Christi Catholic School three days before classes started last fall. In reflecting on his first year as principal, he said he has discovered that despite the school’s smaller size, “we’re mighty in faith and mighty in providing what the children need.” He called the school a

“great hidden treasure in South Bend.”

Most of all, Combs emphasized that the main goal of the school is to promote a relationship with Jesus Christ and His Church.

“It is a faith-filled school,” Combs said. “The teachers love and appreciate and guide the students, not only academically

but in faith.”

Father Daryl Rybicki has been the pastor at Corpus Christi Parish for nearly 17 years. He noted that the parish and school’s location, tucked away behind a residential area, is both a blessing and a challenge. He called it a “delightful environment” with several acres of green space, but he also noted that it isn’t located where anyone would happen to drive by or discover it by chance.

“Unless you are really intending to come here, you won’t accidentally come here,” Father Rybicki said.

Father Rybicki described the parish as “active and involved” in many ministries, including the Christ Child Society and the St. Vincent de Paul Society,

which he said the students are also involved in.

“The generous spirit carries over into the school activities as well,” Father Rybicki said of the parish.

During an all-school assembly during his visit, Bishop Rhoades received a few gifts from the school community. One was a baseball cap with the school’s mascot, a cougar, on it. The crowded gym broke into spirited applause when Bishop Rhoades put the hat on and said, “Go Cougars!”

Another gift was a box full of a classic food from Bishop Rhoades’ native Pennsylvania: Tastykakes. “This is what we ate almost every day for dessert,” Bishop Rhoades exclaimed when he opened the assort-

ment, which included butter-scotch (the bishop’s childhood favorite) and lemon blueberry (a flavor he didn’t remember). As Father Rybicki remembered, the idea came from the former principal of Corpus Christi School, a fellow Pennsylvanian who gifted the bishop the nostalgic treats last time he visited.

The third gift was a spiritual bouquet of sacrifices, prayers and acts of kindness that members of the school community offered for Bishop Rhoades and his intentions.

“Please know that you are remembered in our prayers in a special way,” said the eighth grade students presenting the gift to the bishop, who responded, “Prayer is the greatest gift! That’s what I need the most.”



Principal Johnathan Combs looks on as Bishop Rhoades dons a Corpus Christi Cougars hat during his pastoral visit.

“When we’re kind to others, when we’re generous with the poor and needy, when we show love to other people — we’re spreading the Gospel.”

**BISHOP RHOADES**

# 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.

## Marian Sets Freshman Up for Success

### 9th Grader Reflects on Going from Nerves to Knowledge in His First Year of High School

BY LUKE DATZMAN

When I first walked through the doors of Marian High School at the beginning of the school year last August, I was stressed and anxious about how my first year of high school would go. I was nervous about what high school would entail.

Now, having nearly completed my freshman year, I feel very confident at Marian, and I know so much more about high school life. I have many more friends than I did in the first few weeks of school. I have made significant progress in all of my classes. All my teachers this semester have been great (as most of them taught me last semester). I have gone from scared and anxious to confident and nerveless.

Knowing this, my advice to incoming freshmen is simple: Don't be afraid. Your teachers and your peers are there to help you.

Homework was a big stressor for me, as it is for most incom-

ing freshmen, and my advice would be to do whatever it takes to get your homework done. In my experience, the homework late in the first semester was tough, and I had a lot of it, but I was able to persevere.

Midterm exams were some of the most serious tests I have ever taken. I felt good about them, and I studied a lot to ensure I would do well. After the first day of finals, I was confident that I could finish all my classes and get good grades. English was definitely the most difficult, and I needed a 93 percent to get an A. I got a 96 percent after studying hard — both alone and with friends. I easily passed my other midterms. At this point, I felt so much more self-assured. The second semester has been going great as well. Even though the material in my classes is getting arduous, it feels much easier than the beginning of the year.

My Spanish right now is vastly superior to what it was at the beginning of the year. Spanish teacher Maria Arias has taught

me so much. I went from not understanding the directions on the paper to being a confident Spanish speaker. All my teachers have been so helpful and supportive of my endeavors. When I am in class, I can always ask my amazing teachers for help, and they will do whatever it takes to assist me. I think I have done well in high school so far, but I could never have reached the level I am at without the help of my awesome teachers. I think by the time I finish high school, I will be prepared to go to college or into the workforce. These incredible teachers have instilled

core values into me by their actions and words.

After school, I go to track practice. I run the 4x800 relay and 1,600 meters. The people on the track team are very nice and friendly. Most people who ran cross country with me in the fall are also on the track team. Running gives me time to reflect and appreciate the school day, and in general it has made me stronger physically and mentally. In running, you have to finish the race even if it is painful. This has made an impact on me. After the cross-country season, my already strong work ethic

reached new heights, and track has improved it even more.

Thank you to my teachers, coaches and mentors — for what you have taught me this year and in advance for all of my life's successes. You have made a gigantic impact on my freshman year and my entire life. This first year of high school has been fun and exciting, but my journey is just beginning, and I'm very excited to see what my sophomore year brings with all these great people around me.

*Luke Datzman is a freshman at Marian High School.*



Photos provided by Marian High School



## Pope Leo Advances Sainthood Causes, Including Nun Who Served in Missouri

VATICAN CITY (OSV News) — Pope Leo XIV has advanced the sainthood causes of five candidates, including a Dutch Carmelite nun who served in Missouri. Meeting April 27 with Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, prefect of the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, the pope recognized the heroic virtues of Sister Teresa of the Most Holy Trinity. Born in the Netherlands in 1897, she entered the Carmelite Sisters of the Divine Heart of Jesus at 19 and professed vows in 1919. That same year, she traveled to the United States to serve as a missionary sister. But after arriving, Sister Teresa developed severe kidney disease. Despite her illness, she continued to serve at her convent in St. Charles, Missouri. According to her congregation's website, Sister Teresa "wanted to serve God in the order, working in silent union with Him." "When work was no longer possible, she bore her pain silently, hidden from the world," the congregation said. She died March 10, 1926, at age 28. The pope also recognized: the martyrdom of Spanish Father Emanuele Berenguer Clusella, Montfort Brother of St. Gabriel Estanislao Ortega García and 48 companions, killed "in hatred of the faith" in 1936 during the Spanish Civil War; the offering of life of Spanish missionary Pedro Manual Salado, a lay member of the "Hogar de Nazaret" association, who died in 2012 in Ecuador when he collapsed after rescuing seven children drowning at sea; the heroic virtues of Mother Maria Eletta di Gesù, an Italian Discalced Carmelite, who was born in Terni, Italy, in 1605; and the heroic virtues of Italian Sister Maria Raffaella De Giovanna, founder of the Congregation of the Tertiary Minim Sisters of St. Francis of Paola, who was born in Genova in 1870.

## Archbishop Coakley Calls for Prayer After Attack on White House Press Dinner

WASHINGTON, D.C. (OSV News) — Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, denounced violence and called for all to resort to prayer after a gunman's attempted assault on the annual White House Correspondents' Association Dinner in Washington, D.C., on Saturday, April 25, forced the evacuation of the president, first lady and members of the Cabinet. "We are grateful the lives of the president, those who protect him and everyone in attendance last night were spared from serious harm," the archbishop said in a statement on

# NEWS BRIEFS

## MASS HELD AT ST. MARY MAJOR ON ANNIVERSARY OF POPE FRANCIS' DEATH



OSV News photo/Yara Nardi, Reuters

People pray as Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, dean of the College of Cardinals, celebrates Mass at the Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome on Tuesday, April 21, for the first anniversary of Pope Francis' death. Pope Leo XIV praised his predecessor's "courageous witness" as a lasting gift to the Church. In a message read at St. Mary Major, where Pope Francis is buried, the pope recalled how he died the day after Easter, completing his life "in the embrace of the Risen Christ." Pope Leo highlighted Francis' identity as a "missionary disciple" and a "caring shepherd" whose influence extended through his travels and even his final illness.

Sunday, April 26. "Let us all pray for our elected leaders and public officials that they may receive God's blessings," he said. "Because human life is a precious gift, there is no room for violence of any kind in our society." The suspect, reported by the Associated Press and other media outlets as a 31-year-old California man, was in custody awaiting arraignment on Monday, April 27, on several charges.

## Diocese of Peoria Sets Schedule of Pilgrimage Events for Sheen Beatification

PEORIA, Illinois (OSV News) — The Diocese of Peoria, Illinois, has released a full schedule of events ahead of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen's September 24 beatification, inviting pilgrims to "go deeper" and "transform your trip into a sacred journey." "The Sheen Pilgrimage is a spiritual experience centered around prayer, reflection and celebration," the diocese said. "Beginning in Peoria on September 15, this pilgrimage includes the anniversary of Sheen's ordination, the historic beatification Mass and culminates in celebratory Masses and the Sheen Award Gala." Events begin with a September 15-23 no-

vena at Peoria's cathedral and include a September 20 anniversary Mass. Celebrations then move to St. Louis for September 23 vespers and the beatification at The Dome at America's Center. "With anticipation of a great number of people wanting to participate, we chose (The Dome) because of availability, being indoors, and the close proximity to the Diocese of Peoria," Bishop Tylka said. "Whether you come for a day or the entire week," the diocese said, "this is an opportunity to walk in the footsteps of a remarkable spiritual leader and grow in faith alongside pilgrims from around the world."

## Pope Leo to New Priests: Keep Church Door Open

ROME (OSV News) — At an ordination Mass in St. Peter's Basilica on Sunday, April 26, Pope Leo XIV urged 10 new priests to keep the Church's doors open to a "suffering humanity," emphasizing that their role is to welcome, not block, those seeking Jesus Christ. Preaching on the World Day of Vocations, he said priests must be "channels, not filters," reflecting Christ's patience and tenderness with humility and simplicity. The pope highlighted

that a deep bond with Christ expands a priest's love for all people, calling them to serve as builders of peace and social friendship. He acknowledged today's fears and divisions but warned against retreating or closing in on others. Addressing the global group of ordinands — most serving the Diocese of Rome — he encouraged them to engage the world with courage, trusting in Jesus' life and resurrection. Their mission, he said, is to walk alongside people, recognizing God already at work in everyday acts of goodness. "The people you will serve as priests ... nhabit pastures that you must come to know," Pope Leo said.

## Pope Encourages U.S. Death Penalty Opponents

CHICAGO (OSV News) — Pope Leo XIV sent a message of support to participants at a DePaul University event marking 15 years since the abolition of the death penalty in his home state of Illinois. In a two-minute video released on Friday, April 24, Pope Leo addressed those on hand for the gathering, which featured anti-death penalty activist Sister Helen Prejean and former Illinois Governor Pat

Quinn, who in 2011 signed the state bill abolishing capital punishment. "The Catholic Church has consistently taught that each human life, from the moment of conception until natural death, is sacred and deserves to be protected," Pope Leo said in his message. He summarized the Catholic Church's position on the death penalty, the formulation of which Pope Francis clarified in 2018, revising paragraph 2267 in the Catechism of the Catholic Church — a move that built on St. John Paul II's frequent and longstanding calls to abandon the death penalty. "In this regard, we affirm that the dignity of the person is not lost even after various serious crimes are committed," said Pope Leo. On the same day as the pope released his message, the Trump administration Department of Justice announced plans to expand various forms of administering the federal death penalty, directing the Federal Bureau of Prisons to reinstate the use of the firing squad, the lethal drug pentobarbital and "additional manners of execution" including electrocution and lethal gas.

## Pope: Holy See Does Not Approve Blessings of Same-Sex Unions, but 'All are Welcome' in Church

ABOARD THE PAPAL PLANE (OSV News) — Pope Leo XIV said on Thursday, April 23, that the Holy See does not approve of formalized blessings of same-sex couples, while stressing that Church unity "should not revolve around sexual matters" and that all people are welcome in the Church. Pope Leo answered questions from journalists ranging from regime change in Iran to the dignity of migrants, in which the pope affirmed countries' rights to enforce their border laws, while underlining that migrants are human beings who should not be treated like "animals." Pope Leo was asked about a decision by German Cardinal Reinhard Marx to authorize the blessing of same-sex couples in his archdiocese the day prior, and how the pope intended to preserve unity in the global Church in light of it. "I think it's very important to understand that the unity or division of the Church should not revolve around sexual matters," Pope Leo said, listing other matters such as freedom and justice he sees as more important. However, "The Holy See has made it clear that we do not agree with the formalized blessing of couples, in this case homosexual couples ... or couples in irregular situations," and it has communicated its position to the German bishops. He said all are welcome in the Church and "all are invited to follow Jesus, and all are invited to look for conversion in their lives."

# Finding God in Humble St. Joseph

BY LEONARD J. DELORENZO

(OSV News) — St. Joseph does not draw attention to himself. He listens, and he acts, exemplifying what a disciple is: the one who hears “the word of God and acts on it” (Lk 8:21). As the Church celebrates the feast of St. Joseph the Worker on May 1, may we turn our attention to St. Joseph and allow ourselves to be led, by him and through him, to discover the God whom he heeded and the divine mission he served.

The Litany of St. Joseph takes us down a path of contemplation. We are led to contemplate the titles and honors of Joseph, husband of Mary and foster father of Jesus. Encountering Joseph, name by name, is to allow him to draw us toward the mysteries of our salvation.

Setting our attention to just two of these names of Joseph will, hopefully, inspire us to pray with this great saint, who never failed to hear the word of God and act on it.

By the strength of his own virtue, Joseph guarded the virtue of his wife. There are no shortcuts to integrity. Only the regular and consistent exercise of both respect and reverence yields it. Joseph not only respected and revered his wife's virginity, he also respected and revered his own. And this is because he is a man who has given his whole heart to the Lord.

He is first among all to confess what the centurion later declared: “Lord, I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof” (Mt 8:8). Joseph's was the roof under which both the Divine Child and the Blessed Virgin came to dwell. He knows best of all that this was an honor and duty for which he was not worthy. He required virtue exceeding what he possessed if he was to make a dwelling place befitting such precious company.

Joseph looked nowhere else to receive what he lacked than to the Lord, to whom he always responded quickly, ready to do His will. Joseph did not overestimate himself, nor did he underestimate the Lord. In humility, he confessed what he lacked and received what he needed. Loving His servant's humility, the Lord provided Joseph with what was required to respond to this sacred calling.

This is how the house of Joseph was built. It was built through humility and gracious



Unsplash

## Prayer to St. Joseph

Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer,  
Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.  
To you God entrusted his only Son;  
in you Mary placed her trust;  
with you Christ became man.  
Blessed Joseph, to us too,  
show yourself a father  
and guide us in the path of life.  
Obtain for us grace, mercy and courage,  
and defend us from every evil. Amen.

(Pope Francis, *Patris Corde*)

acceptance. It was the house of virtue and of grace. He did not glance around to see what advantage he could gain from following the designs of others. He did not take his eyes off the family entrusted to him so as to flatter himself with other possibilities. He remained humble, confessing his limitations and his faults, ready to receive what the Lord gave and do what the Lord commanded.

Joseph did not seek kingdoms, but the Lord made his household into a dwelling place for the King. Joseph called his King “son,” and the blessed reign of God was first expressed in the respect and reverence with which Joseph held the King's Blessed Mother. This respect — this reverence — was itself rooted in the respect and reverence with which Joseph held his

own standing before the Lord, as both servant and protector. Joseph was meek enough to serve and yet bold enough to command the first earthly kingdom of the everlasting King.

The household of Joseph created the conditions in which a singular devotion to God was fostered. These conditions surrounded and guarded the Virgin. These conditions pleased the blessed and most royal fruit of her womb. These conditions redound to the magnificence of Joseph, whose humility the Lord exalts, whose simplicity the Lord

overwhelm power with power; it was to suffer the consequences of the misuse of power by those who do not love God, who loves the world. In the fullness of time, Christ would allow Himself to be extinguished so as to enter into the final darkness of the grave, where He would rekindle His light for all time.

While He was in the world and in His most vulnerable state — as an infant, as a child — Jesus the Christ required the custodianship of one who would not hate God but rather serve God in faith.

Joseph was that guardian, who tended the sanctuary lamp of the babe born to Mary.

Joseph shielded the child Jesus from the winds of malice with his own body and protected the sacred flame that would set the world ablaze. The winds of malice came swiftly for Jesus. No sooner did Herod hear of His birth than the tempest of jealousy roared within. Humble though he tried to make his words sound to the Magi searching for the newborn King, he could not quiet the fury beneath his words. The Magi knew not to return to Herod, and no sooner did they leave Joseph and Mary than Joseph determined to take flight with his young family to Egypt. Must not the sense of Herod's malice have reached Joseph through the visit of the Magi? From them, he must have learned the sacred flame was in danger. And so, when the angel whispered in his ear while he slept, Joseph was ready to listen and to act.

The trepidation of the Magi was a sign of the times; the clarion command of the angel was the appeal to faith. Joseph did not dither, and he did not dally. He arose immediately and, with singular devotion, began to shelter the Light of the World from the encroaching darkness. With haste, he fled, and the malice of Herod could not keep pace with Joseph's fidelity.

This faithful guardian of Christ was a buffer against the darkness. Under his protection, God's gift to the world grew. Night in and night out, Joseph kept watch so that, when this little flame was full grown, He would burst through the doors of the sanctuary and become the everlasting dawn.

Leonard J. DeLorenzo, Ph.D., works in the McGrath Institute for Church Life and teaches theology at the University of Notre Dame.

regales and whose stability the Lord cherishes as a reflection of His own divine manner.

God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son. But the world does not love God. Christ is the light, yet “men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (Jn 3:19, RSV). Jesus was vulnerable from the start.

In a nighttime church, the small and quiet flame of a sanctuary lamp illumines the darkness. That flame, though powerful, must also be guarded lest the wind extinguish it and the darkness spreads unchecked. So it was with the Son of God, who though possessing the power over heaven and earth, submitted Himself to infancy and childhood and poverty and the fickle winds of men's hearts.

His saving mission was not to

# Bishop's Visit Highlights Faith at St. Joseph in Garrett

BY TIM JOHNSON

Students, teachers and parishioners gathered for Mass at St. Joseph Church in Garrett on Tuesday, April 21, as Bishop Rhoades made a pastoral visit to one of the smaller Catholic school communities in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend.

Bishop Rhoades' visit gathered students from pre-kindergarten through fifth grade along with faculty, families and parishioners, reflecting the close relationship between parish and school that defines St. Joseph's identity.

During his homily, Bishop Rhoades emphasized the unity at the heart of Catholic education and the life of the Church.

"We are united in our faith in Jesus Christ but also united as a community — brothers and sisters who follow Jesus together, not just as individuals," he told students.

Reflecting on the first reading, Bishop Rhoades spoke about St. Stephen, the Church's first martyr, pointing to his courage and his witness of forgiveness even in the face of persecution.

"We forgive just as God forgives us," Bishop Rhoades said, encouraging students to live their faith with both conviction and mercy.

That message extended beyond the homily and into the classroom, where Bishop Rhoades spent time with students, returning to the example of St. Stephen and engaging them in conversations about faith, Scripture and daily Christian life.

Father Brian Isenbarger,

## St. Joseph School

**Address:** 301 W. Houston St., Garrett  
**Phone number:** 260-357-5137  
**Website:** school.stjosephgarrett.org  
**Principal:** Kathleen Mulligan  
**Founded:** 1876  
**Number of students:** 84

pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Garrett, along with Father Drew Curry, pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish in Auburn, and Father Thomas Zehr, pastor of St. Michael the Archangel Parish in Waterloo, joined Bishop Rhoades at the altar for the liturgy, representing DeKalb County's three Catholic parishes. Students from all three parishes attend St. Joseph School, the only Catholic school in the county and one of the northeastern-most Catholic schools in the diocese.

## Faith Woven into the Rhythm of the Day

For St. Joseph School Principal Kathleen Mulligan, the bishop's visit affirmed what is already at the heart of the school's mission.

"This visit reminds our students that they are part of something bigger — the larger diocesan community — and it gives encouragement to our staff in the work we are doing here," Mulligan told *Today's Catholic*.

That work, she explained, is rooted in a Catholic identity that permeates every part of the school day.

"Catholic identity at St. Joseph isn't just a class once a day — it's interwoven into the entire atmosphere and rhythm of the school," she said.

From morning assemblies for prayer to participation in Mass



Photos by Tim Johnson

Bishop Rhoades engages with students in a classroom during his visit to St. Joseph School in Garrett on Tuesday, April 21.

and the integration of faith into every subject, students experience their Catholic identity as something lived rather than simply taught.

"We aren't just focused on students knowing the faith — we want them to have a real relationship with Christ and to take that relationship beyond our school," Mulligan said.

The school also provides intentional opportunities for students to grow in that relationship. A monthly "prayer lab," for example, introduces students to different forms of prayer, helping them discover how they can encounter Christ personally.

"We want them to find ways to connect with Christ that will stay with them throughout their lives," Mulligan said.

That desire is already evident

among students.

"Students will ask to go to the prayer corner to spend time with God," she said. "That shows us they truly desire a relationship with Christ."

## Encountering Christ in the Sacraments

That emphasis on relationship is grounded in the sacramental life of the Church, Father Isenbarger said.

"The Eucharist is both the source and summit of the Christian life. Everything we do in our school finds its source in the Mass and is directed toward giving glory to God," he said.

Father Isenbarger said the sacraments offer students more than instruction — they provide a real encounter with Christ.

"In the Eucharist and in

reconciliation, students don't simply learn about Christ — they encounter Him as a living Person working in the Church," he said.

Through regular opportunities for Mass, the Sacrament of Reconciliation and prayer, students begin to experience that encounter at a young age, helping them understand faith as something active and personal.

"Our school fundamentally exists to create an environment in which students can encounter Jesus," Father Isenbarger said. "His presence permeates the whole of our school."

## A Community Rooted in Relationships

With 84 students in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade, St. Joseph School offers



Fifth graders from St. Joseph School in Garrett sing during a Mass celebrated by Bishop Rhoades.



Kindergarten students interact with Father Brian Isenbarger, pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Garrett.



Bishop Rhoades answers questions from students in teacher Chelsea Rigler's kindergarten classroom at St. Joseph School in Garrett during his pastoral visit on Tuesday, April 21.

a setting where relationships are central to both learning and faith formation.

"Every teacher, faculty and staff member knows each other by name," Father Isenbarger said. "It creates a family-like environment — fitting for a school under the patronage of St. Joseph."

That closeness extends across grade levels, Mulligan said, allowing students to grow together in both friendship and faith.

"Because we are a smaller school, we can come together regularly for prayer and build relationships across grade levels — students truly know one another," she said.

The connection between parish and school also strengthens the faith life of families, Father Isenbarger added.

"What we do in the school is meant to supplement what takes place in the home," he said, describing the family as the "domestic church." "There has to be collaboration between parents, teachers and the parish in forming our students."

### Faith Expressed Through Beauty and Learning

The integration of faith and learning extends beyond religion class into the broader life of the school.

Music, for example, plays an important role in both worship and formation. Fifth-grade students served as the choir for the Mass, led by parish music director Adam Trudel, who also teaches music at the school.

During the visit, Bishop Rhoades also observed one of Trudel's music classes, where students were learning not only musical skills but also how beauty can lead them closer to God through learning sacred music.

"In a time when students are overwhelmed by technology and screens, one of the fundamental dispositions we seek to cultivate is a sense of wonder," Father Isenbarger said. "Through truth, beauty and goodness, students begin to see the world in a way that points them toward God."

Throughout the school, that sense of wonder is reinforced through prayer, art, music and the example of the saints.

The halls, Father Isenbarger noted, are decorated with images of the saints in their youth, offering a reminder to students that those recognized for holiness were once young themselves.

### Forming Disciples for the Future

While St. Joseph School currently serves students through fifth grade, parish leaders are

exploring the possibility of expanding the school to include middle school grades in the future. At present, most students transition to public schools after completing their time at St. Joseph.

Even so, the school's focus remains on forming students who will carry their faith into the next stage of their lives.

For Father Isenbarger, the presence of young students offers a constant source of hope.

"Jesus says the Kingdom belongs to the little ones," he said. "The children are joyful, filled with wonder and eager to learn about the goodness of God. Our hope is to deepen that joy and strengthen their friendship with Christ so that it continues throughout their lives."

### Rooted in Faith, Looking Ahead

As the parish looks ahead to celebrating its 150th anniversary later this year — with Bishop Rhoades expected to return to visit the parish in December — the school continues to serve as a vital part of the parish's mission.

For Mulligan, that mission is clear.

"My hope is that people would see a joyful community where students encounter Christ, are formed as disciples and are sent on mission," she said.

For those who gathered for Mass and throughout the bishop's visit, that vision was already evident — a school community where faith is not simply taught but lived each day.



Father Brian Isenbarger looks over a student's paper during a classroom visit.



A student at St. Joseph School reads during Mass as Bishop Rhoades looks on.



Bishop Rhoades, along with diocesan superintendent David Mangel, St. Joseph School principal Kathleen Mulligan, and Father Brian Isenbarger, enjoy lunch with students during Bishop Rhoades' pastoral visit to the school in Garrett on Tuesday, April 21.

# Life 'Flourishes When We Follow the Good Shepherd'

## Bishop Rhoades Celebrates Mass at Notre Dame for Those Being Confirmed, Coming into Full Communion in the Church

BY BISHOP KEVIN C. RHOADES

*Bishop Rhoades delivered the following homily for the Fourth Sunday of Easter on April 26 during a Mass for those coming into full communion in the Catholic Church and receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart on the campus of the University of Notre Dame.*

The words of Jesus at the end of today's Gospel express the very heart of His redemptive mission: "I came that they might have life and have it more abundantly." The abundant life Jesus is speaking about is the new and eternal life He came to bring to humanity through His incarnation, life, death and resurrection. The life in abundance is life in communion with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The fullness of life that Jesus came to give us "far exceeds the dimensions of our earthly existence, because it consists in sharing the very life of God" (Evangelium Vitae, No. 2). We all yearn for this life. This yearning drives all human searching for truth, love, peace and happiness. It is our deepest human aspiration, a built-in yearning for infinity that nothing finite can satisfy. St. Augustine famously articulated this longing when he prayed, "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you." While we may pursue many fleeting desires, like material wealth, pleasure or power, we discover, as Augustine did, that ultimately, they do not satisfy. The prodigal son realized this, too, since his search for life in the wrong places led to misery. He came to his senses, returned to his father, who received him back with open arms, saying, "My son was dead and has come back to life."

The sacramental life of the Catholic Church is a beautiful expression and means by which we receive and share in the life in abundance that Jesus promises us. Through the action of the Holy Spirit in Christ's Body, the Church, the power of Christ's Paschal Mystery touches us. Through baptism, we enter into communion with Jesus, the Resurrection and the Life. And through Jesus who is the gate, we enter the sheepfold, the Church. In baptism, the



Matt Cashore/University of Notre Dame

Students pray at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart on the campus of the University of Notre Dame during a 2025 Mass.

Holy Spirit communicates to us, intimately and personally, the divine life, the life that originates in the Father and is offered to us in the Son.

At this liturgy, 32 of our Christian brothers and sisters, already baptized, will enter into the full communion of the Church. They already share in the new life of Christ, but they seek to share more abundantly in His life. They have heard the Good Shepherd calling them to deeper communion with Him through access to the fullness of grace and truth which our Lord entrusted to the Church, which He established on the foundation of St. Peter and the apostles and their successors to teach, sanctify and govern in His name. With joy, I will receive them into the Catholic Church at this liturgy. Then, in confirmation, they and 66 other candidates will be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, and will be bound even more perfectly to Christ and to His Church.

Dear candidates for confirmation, you will be enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit today, the special strength that the apostles received on the day of Pentecost. In the first reading today from the Acts of the Apostles, we heard part of a powerful speech given by St. Peter on the day of

Pentecost itself. Notice how bold his words were, so powerful that St. Luke tells us that the people "were cut to the heart." They repented of their sins, and about 3,000 were baptized that day. Candidates, in the Sacrament of Confirmation, you will receive a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost, to strengthen you to be missionary disciples of Jesus; as the Catechism says, "to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ, to confess the name of Christ boldly, and never to be ashamed of the Cross" (No. 1303). We heard in

Psalm 23, the responsorial psalm today, these prophetic words of the psalmist addressed to God, the shepherd of His people: "You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows." Jesus, the Good Shepherd, will anoint you today with the oil, the chrism of salvation. I pray that your cup will also overflow. This overflowing cup refers to the abundant life that God desires for us, the blessings of peace, hope and joy, which are

fruits of the Holy Spirit's action in our lives.

Psalm 23 also contains these words addressed to the Lord: "You spread the table before me in the sight of my foes." We can see this as a prefiguration of the table of the Eucharist, where the Good Shepherd feeds us with His very body and blood, a foretaste of the banquet feast of heaven. The One who said, "I am the Good Shepherd" also said, "I am the Bread of life." At this Mass, those who will have

You will be enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit today, the special strength that the apostles received on the day of Pentecost.

been received into full communion in the Church will join us for the first time at the table of the Lord and receive their first holy Communion. Jesus nourishes us on our life's journey with the Holy Eucharist, with Himself, the Bread of life. It is, as St. Ignatius of Antioch wrote, "the one bread that provides the medicine of immortality, the antidote for death and the food that makes us live forever in Jesus Christ."

The new life we receive in the sacraments flourishes when we follow the Good Shepherd, live in His love and love one another as He has loved us. Indeed, the

sacraments give us the grace to do so. Pope Benedict XVI taught that "when we love, we are fulfilling our deepest need and becoming most fully ourselves, most fully human. Loving is what we are programmed to do, what we were designed for by our Creator." This is what it means to be truly alive. It is at the very heart of Jesus' moral teaching: loving God and our neighbor, imitating the Good Shepherd who laid down His life in loving sacrifice for us and serving Him in our brothers and sisters. This is what the holy Eucharist, the sacrament of Christ's love unto the end, nourishes us to do, as it nourished all the saints of the Church. When we live in this way, we find life in abundance, and, in doing so, we are building a culture of life and civilization of love.

One of our most recently canonized saints, the young adult, Pier Giorgio Frassati, who died in 1925 at the age of 24, famously said these words: "I want to live and not simply exist!" Those words express something we all experience deep in our hearts. St. Pier Giorgio found this life he was yearning for in Jesus and in His Body, the Church. On a photograph of him while mountain-climbing, Pier Giorgio wrote a friend, "*Verso l'alto*" which means "to the heights." This young saint was an avid mountain climber, but he wasn't referring merely to his physical climbing to reach the top of the mountain when he wrote "*Verso l'alto*." He was referring to spiritual climbing to reach the summit of eternal life with Christ. His words are a call to rise above worldly apathy, setting one's sights on Christ and pursuing holiness.

St. Pier Giorgio and all the saints you have chosen as your confirmation names set their sights on eternal life with Christ. They lived their lives in Christ, strengthened by the sacraments. They were not satisfied to live lives of mediocrity. They lived lives of faith, hope and charity with their eyes fixed on eternal life. This is what God created us for: to be with Him forever.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints help us with their prayers to grow in holiness, that we might have life and have it more abundantly by following Jesus, the shepherd and guardian of our souls!

# Solloway Celebrates 50 Years as a Third Order Franciscan

BY TODAY'S CATHOLIC

On Sunday, April 19, in Huntington, Susan Solloway, a lifelong member of SS. Peter and Paul Parish, celebrated the 50th anniversary of her lifetime profession as a member of the Secular Franciscan Order, traditionally known as the Third Order of St. Francis. Father Tony Steinacker, pastor of SS. Peter and Paul, celebrated Mass and, in his homily, acknowledged Solloway's faithfulness — both to the Church and to the Franciscan order. Following the homily, Solloway came forward accompanied by Sister Agnes Marie of the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration. Standing before Father Steinacker, Solloway renewed her promises that she made 50 years ago. Father Steinacker blessed her, and

she then received congratulations from the many members of her family and friends as well as the Franciscans from across the state who came to celebrate with her. Following the Mass, Solloway was joined by her family and friends at a reception in her honor in the Father Gollner Hall at SS. Peter and Paul Church. At the reception, younger guests listened and learned many things from Solloway's history as a Franciscan. Solloway continues to live according to the Franciscan Rule. She works each week at the Huntington County Food Pantry, a cooperative effort from churches across the city and county. She is also a regular at Wednesday Eucharistic adoration at SS. Peter and Paul Church as well as a Rosary group that meets weekly at the St. Felix Catholic Center in Huntington.



This print of "St. Francis Preaching to the Birds" by Giotto di Bondone was given to Susan Solloway in honor of her 50th anniversary of her profession as a Third Order Franciscan. The original was painted in 1299.



Photos provided by Bill Duffy  
Susan Solloway, center, accompanied by her friend of 78 years, Sister Agnes Marie, receives a blessing from Father Tony Steinacker, pastor of SS. Peter and Paul Parish in Huntington, after renewing her promises as a Third Order Franciscan.



From left, Susan Solloway, Sharon Solloway, and Sister Agnes Marie, members of the Huntington Catholic Class of 1960, pose for a photo.

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# Seagull on the Sistine: The Rare Gift of Shared Delight



## TWENTY SOMETHING

CHRISTINA CAPECCHI

In the end, after two days of breathless anticipation, the white smoke shared the stage with a seagull.

The whole world was abuzz. An American pope! A seagull! With so many eyes trained on the same chimney, the bird had appeared in exactly the right spot at exactly the right moment, amusing spectators across the globe.

Eric A. Clayton, a Catholic father of two, remembers the scene outside the Sistine Chapel fondly. "How rare in this moment in time that we can all see something delightful for us to smile at?" he said. "It is rare — a real gift, a real grace."

As politics immediately entered the discussion — which way would Pope Leo XIV lean? How would he compare with Pope Francis? — the seagull became a source of levity and unity.

"To come to this moment from different places and have this universalizing experience is

really beautiful," said Clayton, 37, a writer who belongs to the Church of the Nativity in Timonium, Maryland. "It speaks to our God, who desires to bind us together."

A couple of days later, Clayton was waiting for a haircut when his friend, Shannon, texted him. The children's book on Mary that they had co-written had just been released, and they were in celebration mode. A friend had told Shannon that the story of the papal seagull would make a good children's book.

"What do you think?" Shannon asked. "Should we give it a go?"

Soon, the two friends were brainstorming background stories for the seagull.

Their rapid-fire text exchange turned into a shared Google document, with one writer noodling it — playing around with new lines, tracking changes, adding questions — then passing the baton. They established a premise near and dear to Clayton's heart: that the seagull, who yearned to be as special as a dove, lands in a sacred moment and is deemed worthy of God's love.

"We all need to be reminded that God delights in us, and



OSV News photo/Kevin Coombs, Reuters

we're beloved," said Clayton, who works as deputy director of communications at the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States.

That message profoundly touched Clayton when his first spiritual director, a beloved Jesuit priest at his college, told him that as a sophomore.

"I was awed," Clayton said. "He assigned the Scripture where Jesus was baptized. 'I want you to pray with this and imagine God saying those words to you: "You are my beloved."' I go back to that all the time. It's foundational in my spiritual life. It underpins

all my writing. Man, if people knew God delighted in them — onward and upward!"

It's still sinking in for Clayton — as is learning to accept who he is and who he isn't.

"It's a constant challenge," he said. "There's always more you could be doing. There's always more success you could be reaching."

But Clayton is learning to embrace his unique and God-given path, like the seagull in his new book, "The Seagull on the Chapel." Paraclete Press timed its release to mark the one-year anniversary of Pope Leo's election. It was co-written

by Shannon K. Evans and richly illustrated by Angela Edmonds, a former Disney artist.

Celebrating one year of Pope Leo comes naturally to Clayton. "God provided the pope we need right now," he said. "The humble way with which he reminds us of our shared call to live the Gospel is inspiring."

Meanwhile, Clayton will keep hammering away on his laptop — emailing ideas to himself, mapping out the next book, finding fresh ways to express God's love. The imaginative prayer used in Ignatian spirituality is "inherent to creativity" and a springboard for storytelling. To really make it effective, Clayton tries to limit his use of social media and ground himself in prayer. It helps him embrace who he is today rather than chase a more ideal, future version of himself.

"There's this false image of ourselves that is always 'beyond' — after we've sold more books, made more money, done more push-ups," he said. "But we are already God's beloved. We can delight in who we are."

**Christina Capecchi** is a freelance writer from Grey Cloud Island, Minnesota.

# The Church Today is Called to Mirror the Early Christian Community in Acts



## THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

MONSIGNOR OWEN F. CAMPION

Once again, this season, the Acts of the Apostles provides the first reading. The early chapters of Acts graphically reveal to us the lives led by the early Christians. Obvious in this glimpse into events so long ago is the primary place of the apostles — and the superior position among them of Peter.

The apostles led the community because the first Christians recognized their special relationship with — and calling from — the Lord. Indeed, reverence for the apostles was so deep that the people placed their possessions at the apostles' feet, allowing the apostles to control even the material assets of the community.

In Acts, this community was situated in Jerusalem. Although the very heart of Jewish life, and a city supremely symbolic for

Jews, Jerusalem was not Corinth. It was not Antioch. It most certainly was not Rome. In the total scheme of things, it was not a great city.

Even in Palestine, Caesarea, a seaport on the Mediterranean Sea, was more important. The Roman governor resided in Caesarea, and it was where the Roman occupation had its headquarters. Jerusalem was secondary.

The ruins of Caesarea are now in the suburbs of modern Tel Aviv. It is interesting, incidentally, that the only relic of the administration of Pontius Pilate as governor, aside from mention in the Gospels, is a stone carved with his name, and the stone was found at the site of ancient Caesarea.

The way of life for the first Christians was very clear. Care of the needy — and particularly of widows — was their priority. Evidently, the apostles directed such care. The apostles also taught the Gospel, with Peter as the spokesman.

To assist in providing this

care and to proclaim the Gospel, the apostles chose seven holy men to be deacons. Calling deacons was an exercise not just of organization but also of the apostles' authority to act in the name of Jesus.

The second reading comes from First Peter, which centers Jesus as essential in salvation. The reading urges Christians to be true to Jesus.

St. John's Gospel supplies the last reading. Not a Resurrection Narrative, it recalls the Lord's discourse with the apostles, telling them what to expect in the future. As it looks ahead and frankly suggests that obstacles await, it is an appropriate reading now as people contemplate Christian living amid modern troubles.

Reassuringly, Christ will be with us always. He is "the way, the truth, and the life" and belongs only to the Son of God.

## Reflection

Almost a month has passed since Easter. For weeks, the Church has joyfully told us of the

Resurrection. He lives!

Before long, the season will end. We will return to life in 2026, with its burdens and rewards.

The Church tells us that Jesus still is with us as savior, teacher and guide, our rock and our shield. Today, we compose the community of Christians, but to be authentic, our modern Christian community must mirror the community described in Acts.

Applying the picture in Acts to the present is interesting. Which Christian community reflects the gathering of Christians in Jerusalem long ago? It must be the Roman Catholic Church, precisely because the Church still relies upon the apostles, with Peter clearly and actually as their head.

The community in Acts showed its dedication to the Lord profoundly, caring for the sick and the needy. Ever since, caring for others has been no charming sideline for Christians. It is the essence of our religion.

Finally, the Church tells us, as the Easter season concludes,

that Christ is with us. In turn, we must draw ourselves into the community that the Lord created.

Being in the community is more than joining a club. We must give our hearts to the Lord freely, totally.

## READINGS

**Sunday:** Acts 6:1-7; Psalms 33:1-2, 4-5, 18-19; 1 Peter 2:4-9; John 14:1-12

**Monday:** Acts 14:5-18; Psalms 115:1-2, 3-4, 15-16; John 14:21-26

**Tuesday:** Acts 14:19-28; Psalms 145:10-11, 12-13ab, 21; John 14:27-31a

**Wednesday:** Acts 15:1-6; Psalms 122:1-2, 3-4ab, 4cd-5; John 15:1-8

**Thursday:** Acts 15:7-21; Psalms 96:1-2a, 2b-3, 10; John 15:9-11

**Friday:** Acts 15:22-31; Psalms 57:8-9, 10 and 12; John 15:12-17

**Saturday:** Acts 16:1-10; Psalms 100:1b-2, 3, 5; John 15:18-21

# What the Easter Scriptures Teach Us About How to Live as Family



## FAITH AT HOME

LAURA KELLY FANUCCI

Family life is hard. In case no one has affirmed that for you lately, let me be the one. Whether you're in the stage of diapers and bottles, wiping faces and losing sleep, or whether you're worrying about the children who have grown, the now-adults stumbling their way through a suffering world, families will always be holy, hard and humbling schools of love.

Sometimes we look to Scripture and ask, "Does anything here speak to my life today?" Especially when biblical times, societies and structures differ sharply from our own, we may be more likely to seek support, advice or models for our daily struggles from more contemporary sources. But the Gospels surrounding Easter offer refreshing, realistic and surprisingly relevant stories for the struggles we face as families.

Take Mary Magdalene, the first to encounter the Risen Christ. In the Gospel of John, she stands weeping at the empty tomb — but because she is willing to enter fully into her grief, she alone is there to meet the Lord (Jn 20:1-18). Her witness reminds us that God is always making a way to meet us in grief and loss, even after deep

trauma, as Jesus did for Mary, whom He freed from seven demons (Lk 8:2).

Or take the story of Peter sitting on the shore with the friend he denied. What searing regret he must have felt — and what a shocking twist for Jesus to offer nothing but mercy, extending the greatest second chance of all time: "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" (Jn 21:15-19). Peter teaches us that forgiveness after deep hurt is the way of the Christian life. Like Jesus, we must keep offering forgiveness. Like Peter, we must keep answering yes to love.

The struggles of families — and the ordinary work that keeps us going — are all over the Easter Gospels. Thomas reminds us how often we feel confused, left out or misunderstood, even among those who know us best. Sometimes it takes time, humility and a willingness to show up again to see the truth before us.

The Myrrhbearers (the men and women who cared for Jesus' body after his death) underscore the quiet holiness of tasks of care. Like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, we can carry our heavy burdens together. Like the women who brought oil and spices to anoint Jesus' body, we learn how the smallest offerings allow us to care for Christ in one another.

Notice where Jesus meets His disciples after the Resurrection. In a house in Emmaus, breaking bread over dinner. On

the lakeshore, after a long night of fishing. On the road, when His friends were grieving and aimless. In locked rooms, where they huddled together in terror. God will meet us in the same places — over ordinary meals, in daily work, on the road. In the midst of grief, loss and fear.

The gritty humanity of the first disciples ranks among the greatest gifts God gave us. We do not have ancestors in faith who got everything right, whose families always flourished, whose faith never wavered or whose witness was perfect. Instead, we got sisters and brothers just like us: longing, loving but losing their way and stumbling back to God, over and over again.

Much like pregnancy, fostering or adoption, Easter takes a long stretch of time, much longer than we might have realized when we first set out. Far from a single Sunday, Easter is a gift of 50 days — because the sacred mysteries that we recall and relive during this season are so great that we need plenty of time every year to pray through the Resurrection again.

What goodness of God to give the gifts we need: extra time, real companions, rich stories and relentless grace. In the family of faith, even in our hardest days, we are never alone on the road.

**Laura Kelly Fanucci** is an author, speaker and founder of Mothering Spirit. Her latest book is "Living Easter: 50 Days to Practice Resurrection."

## SCRIPTURE SEARCH®

Gospel for May 3, 2026  
John 14:1-12

Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for the Fifth Sunday of Easter, Cycle A: Jesus prepares for his Ascension. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

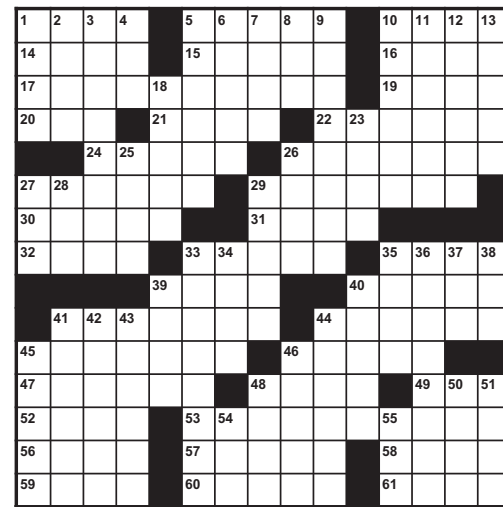
- HEARTS
- BE TROUBLED
- IN ME
- FATHER'S HOUSE
- MANY
- A PLACE
- IF I GO
- AGAIN
- TO MYSELF
- MAY BE
- YOU KNOW
- THE WAY
- THOMAS
- WE KNOW
- JESUS
- THE TRUTH
- LIFE
- NO ONE
- COMES
- EXCEPT
- THROUGH ME

### A PLACE

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

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- 48 The pope is the bishop of this city
- 49 Poly \_\_\_\_
- 52 Muslim title of respect
- 53 Order of Christian \_\_\_\_
- 56 Goes to court
- 57 Patriarch respite, perhaps
- 58 Laugh loudly
- 59 In this place
- 60 Russian negatives
- 61 Against

- DOWN**
- 1 " \_\_\_\_ Mary"
  - 2 Catholic songwriter Guthrie
  - 3 Frog stopovers
  - 4 The scourge of winter
  - 5 Tosses
  - 6 Cavalry weapon
  - 7 Cyberauction site
  - 8 Crock

**ACROSS**

- 1 Herod offered this much of his kingdom to Herodias' daughter
- 5 What the apostles did while Jesus prayed in the Garden
- 10 French clergyman
- 14 Seed covering
- 15 "Come to me, all who \_\_\_\_ and are burdened" (Mt 11:28)
- 16 Applaud
- 17 To decorate like the Book of Kells
- 19 Carry
- 20 "The Thin Man" actress
- 21 Suffix denoting state or quality
- 22 Holy one, in Paris
- 24 Cleanse
- 26 Walks with long steps
- 27 Barricade of trees
- 29 Catholic author, J.R.R. \_\_\_\_
- 30 Yields
- 31 Singles
- 32 Soviet news service
- 33 Exodus infestation
- 35 It returned to Noah with an olive branch
- 39 Pluck
- 40 Muscular type
- 41 He dreamed of fat and thin cows
- 44 Redbreasts
- 45 Reviewers
- 46 Homes for 44A
- 47 Hidden

- 9 Table supports
- 10 Play part
- 11 She is the butt of many jokes
- 12 Lock
- 13 Foil relatives
- 18 Mary, Stella \_\_\_\_
- 23 Holy holders
- 25 Native Americans
- 26 \_\_\_\_ of Songs
- 27 \_\_\_\_ of Contrition
- 28 Opie's aunt
- 29 "...for eye, \_\_\_\_ for..." (Ex 21:24)
- 33 Ritual breaking of bread during Mass
- 34 Rivers in Spain
- 35 Something that is owed
- 36 Certain sin
- 37 Sometimes it's mini
- 38 Abstract being
- 39 Broad smile
- 40 Follower of Daniel
- 41 Archdiocese in the Czech Republic
- 42 Toward this place
- 43 Relaxed
- 44 Negligent
- 45 Conflict
- 46 Tag declaration
- 48 Ascend
- 50 Joseph had a multi-colored one
- 51 Letters above the cross
- 54 Denial
- 55 Lilt syllable

Answers on page 15.

## SAINT OF THE WEEK SAINTS PHILIP AND JAMES THE LESS Feast Day: May 3

Philip and James the Less, son of Alphaeus, are listed among the Twelve Apostles commissioned by Jesus. Philip brought Nathaniel to Christ, had a part in feeding the 5,000, and at the Last Supper, when asked to be shown the Father, was told by Christ, "Have I been with you for so long a time and you still do not know me, Philip?" He may have evangelized in Turkey. Not much is known about James, but "the less" may refer to his height. One tradition puts him in Syria, while another has him martyred in the same Jerusalem persecution as James the Righteous.





Photo provided by Quality Dining Inc.

**Bishop Rhoades and diocesan school officials pose with the winners of this year's Christ the Teacher Awards in South Bend.**

**EDUCATORS, from page 1**

played string music, and St. Jude Catholic School students performed selections from their production of the musical "Annie Jr.," which was produced by the school's music teacher, Jessica Voll, who was one of this year's honorees.

The Christ the Teacher awards are given to one educator from each school and voted on by each school community.

In his keynote address, Bishop Rhoades explained the symbolism behind the seventh- or eighth-century icon of Christ the Teacher given to award recipients.

"Jesus is the unseen but ever-present teacher in every classroom, serving as the ultimate model for both educators and students," Bishop Rhoades said. "Our schools are anchored

in Christ."

Along with being honored as Christ the Teacher award recipients, Linda Waltz from St. Anthony de Padua School in South Bend and Sarah Pellico from the Cathedral School of St. Matthew received surprise awards from the Catholic Community Foundation of Northeast Indiana, which provided them with a personal check as well as money for their classrooms and schools.

Pellico, who teaches second grade, has spent 27 years in Catholic education. "A true model of Christ's compassion, she weaves faith naturally into her teaching," said Mackenzie Ritchie, the foundation's chief executive officer, quoting Pellico's school community during the award presentation.

Waltz teaches eighth grade and has spent almost four decades in

Catholic education. "Her calm presence, strong faith and patient guidance help students navigate life's challenges with confidence and virtue," Ritchie said.

Also honored were Tony and Dolores Catanzarite, who are longtime supporters of South Bend's Catholic schools.

Melissa Green, principal of Saint Joseph Grade School in South Bend, received this year's St. Mother Theodore Guerin Administrative Award, given to an administrator "demonstrating outstanding dedication to Catholic schools," as the award was explained at the luncheon. According to the luncheon program, members of her school community pointed out the various ways Green brings Catholic saints, virtues, cultures and service into the Saint Joseph Grade School culture, while involving students

- 2026 Christ the Teacher Award Winners**
- Elizabeth Baker**, St. Thomas the Apostle, Elkhart
  - Erin Cataldo**, St. John the Evangelist, Goshen
  - Kristi Chrzan**, St. Adalbert, South Bend
  - Leah Coming**, Our Lady of Hungary, South Bend
  - Donna Delph**, from St. Michael, Plymouth
  - Abby Fink**, Saint Joseph High School, South Bend
  - Jennifer Greenlee**, Saint Joseph Grade School, South Bend
  - David Hooley**, Marian High School, South Bend
  - Megan Kirkland**, St. Pius X, Granger
  - Jill Lopez**, Sacred Heart, Warsaw
  - Nichole Morse**, Holy Family, South Bend
  - Cathy Oosterhoff**, Corpus Christi, South Bend
  - Zoadi Paguada**, Holy Cross, South Bend
  - Sarah Pellico**, St. Matthew Cathedral, South Bend
  - Laura Popielski**, St. John the Baptist, South Bend
  - Pam Renner**, Mishawaka Catholic, Mishawaka
  - John Richmond**, Our Lady of the Lake, St. Joseph, Michigan
  - Paige Snyder**, Queen of Peace, Mishawaka
  - Pam Tupper**, Christ the King, South Bend
  - Jessica Voll**, St. Jude, South Bend
  - Linda Waltz**, St. Anthony de Padua, South Bend

and parents in this endeavor.

Dan Fitzpatrick is the co-founder of the You Can Lend a Hand program and the CEO and chairman of Quality Dining Inc. He and his late brother, Deacon Jim Fitzpatrick, both attended Catholic schools and began the program 44 years ago to give back to the Catholic school community. When they brought principals of the area's Catholic schools together to discuss fundraising, it was the first time many of the school leaders had even met one another. The program expanded from there to promote more contact between schools — "camaraderie, best practices, etc.," as Fitzpatrick put it. Now, the program sponsors the all-school Masses in South Bend and Fort Wayne, hosts the annual luncheons on both sides of the diocese, and helps with fundraising through coupon book sales. It has raised more than \$12 million for Catholic schools in the area.

Dan Fitzpatrick has nine

grandchildren, six of whom attend local Catholic schools.

"Every time I ask them about their school experience or their teachers or a particular priest, they beam with both happiness and joy," Fitzpatrick said to the room. "They love you. They love their teachers. I know I speak for parents and grandparents across our diocese when I say thank you to our teachers for their vocation; thank you for living your life fully for others."

Each of the speakers at the luncheon also expressed their gratitude for the tireless work of those in the Catholic schools. As Freeby put it to the teachers in the room, "So when you're getting an email at 8 o'clock at night, or dealing with a difficult day, or somebody throws up in your classroom, hopefully today serves as a positive reminder — some time [to remind you that says,] we believe in you, that you are doing things the right way and that you are appreciated."



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# WHAT'S HAPPENING?

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

**SATURDAY, MAY 2**

**Rosé & Rosaries: Kingdom Builders Fundraising Event**  
11 a.m. – 2 p.m.

LAOTTO – Join us for Kingdom Builders' first annual fundraising event at Country Heritage Winery, 185 County Rd 68! Enjoy an afternoon of delicious food, wine, and cocktails, raffles & prizes, live music with Father Drew Curry, make-and-take Rosary bracelet craft and springtime fun and fellowship. Gather your friends, wear your favorite spring attire and come celebrate the beauty of community while supporting the mission of Kingdom Builders at Country Heritage Winery. Purchase tickets at [form.jotform.com/260514156883056](http://form.jotform.com/260514156883056)

**SUNDAY, MAY 3**

**Live a Life of No Regrets**  
12:15 – 2:30 p.m.

SYRACUSE – Join us at St. Martin de Porres, 6941 E. Waco Dr., as Robert Rogers shares his compelling life story. He is a brother Knight of Columbus, a Eucharistic minister, a lay lector, cantor, worship pianist and an active member of St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Parish. His story will indelibly impact your life and draw you passionately closer to Christ. Refreshments will be provided.

**SATURDAY, MAY 9**

**O Beautiful Mother**  
1 – 2:15 p.m.

FORT WAYNE – Join the Ecce Young Adult Choir at the outdoor Marian grotto at the Catholic Cemetery, 3500 Lake Ave., for the Rosary, prayers and Marian hymns to honor our Blessed Mother and to pray for ALL our mothers, living and deceased. Bring your own blankets and chairs for sitting on the lawn, and you may bring fresh or potted flowers to place before the statue of Our Lady! There will be reserved parking near the grotto for the handicapped. In case of rain, the event will be held in the Resurrection Mausoleum on site.



[www.wordgamesforcatholics.com](http://www.wordgamesforcatholics.com)

## REST IN PEACE

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Fort Wayne</b><br>Robert Lanham, 68,<br>St. Vincent de Paul | Ruben Flores, 76,<br>SS. Casimir and Adalbert              |
| Mearl Neumann, 98,<br>St. Vincent de Paul                      | Ramon Garza Sr., 59,<br>SS. Casimir and Adalbert           |
| <b>Granger</b><br>Mario Borelli, 91, St. Pius X                | Kathleen Ginter, 77,<br>SS. Casimir and Adalbert           |
| Betty Johnson, 89, St. Pius X                                  | Justin Kruszewski, 47,<br>SS. Casimir and Adalbert         |
| George Vargo, 83, St. Pius X                                   | Carolyn Medich, 82,<br>SS. Casimir and Adalbert            |
| <b>New Haven</b><br>Gerald Dager, 86,<br>St. John the Baptist  | Mariano Garcilazo Morales, 83,<br>SS. Casimir and Adalbert |
| Anatalia "Anita" Thorp, 88,<br>St. John the Baptist            | Francisco Murillo, 86,<br>SS. Casimir and Adalbert         |
| <b>South Bend</b><br>James Hardig, 94, Christ the King         | Joan Sarber, 94,<br>SS. Casimir and Adalbert               |
| Jose Quijada Alvarez, 78,<br>SS. Casimir and Adalbert          | Rita Tarr, 96,<br>SS. Casimir and Adalbert                 |

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# One Year after Election, Americans Feel Closeness to Pope Leo

BY SIMONE ORENDAIN

CHICAGO (OSV News) — A year into his papacy, Pope Leo XIV is still enjoying popularity and rockstar-like fame, especially in Chicago, his hometown. Beyond the pop-culture interest, some of the faithful told OSV News his message of peace, dedication to the faith and outreach to young people have stood out.

After Easter morning Mass, Victoria Mendez and her family stopped to talk by the heavy bronze doors of St. Rita of Cascia Catholic Church on Chicago's South Side. The parish is run by the Midwest province of the Augustinians, the religious order that formed Pope Leo.

"I think we've seen a lot of people fall in love with Catholicism, seeing that their pope is from Chicago," said Mendez, 24.

While anecdotal, said she has the sense Pope Leo is drawing interest in the Faith. She has observed more youth in the church since his election. She also mentioned an uptick in conversions to the Faith — not just in the U.S. but also Europe, particularly this Easter. Though none of the reports about the bump in new Catholics have tied the pope's popularity to the numbers, several people told OSV News it may play a role.

"He's just very good with people," Mendez said. "He's very into creating peace within different forms of Catholicism. And he's just so open-minded, and he cares about everybody. You see that in all his actions and everything he says and does, and the way he reflects himself. You can tell he's really trying to bring peace on earth."

On May 8, 2025, the day of his election, from the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, Pope Leo's first words were, "Peace be with you all!"

His message for peace has been consistent throughout the past year. And these days, it is more vehement because of the war in Iran that the U.S. and Israel began in late February.

Pope Leo, born Robert F. Prevost, lived in Dolton, Illinois, until he entered the Augustinians' minor seminary in Holland, Michigan, when he was 13. He completed an undergraduate degree in math at Villanova University near Philadelphia in 1977, earned a master's degree from Catholic Theological Union in Chicago in 1982, the year he was ordained to



Pope Leo XIV, the former Cardinal Robert F. Prevost, waves to the crowds in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican after his election as pope on May 8, 2025.

CNS photo/Lola Gomez

the priesthood, and earned a doctorate in canon law in 1984 at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome.

He then served in Peru's impoverished northwest for nearly 20 years, where in 2015 he became bishop. He also held leadership positions in Rome, including prior general for the Augustinians, head of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America and prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops. He was elevated to cardinal in September of 2023 before being elected pope a little more than year and a half later.

Born and raised on Chicago's South Side herself, Mendez said "it makes me happy" that Pope Leo is relatable to even non-Catholics, especially as a fellow fan of the South Side-based Chicago White Sox.

Mendez's mother, Maria, said the family was drawn to St. Rita and recently began attending Mass there because of its ties to the pope. She said the papal connection and the Augustinian charism of fostering unity have made the parish very attractive.

The Augustinians "approach people in a different way, that makes people come back. (It's) the welcoming (way), their hospitality," Maria said.

The 70-year-old Pope Leo is "a happy pope," she said, adding, "He brings happiness to every individual. Doesn't matter the nationality or age, he's there for everyone. Yeah, we could feel it."

## 5 Quotes from Pope Leo

*As the one-year anniversary of Pope Leo XIV's election to the papacy approaches, here is a selection of quotes from the new pontiff on various topics.*

"I am a son of St. Augustine, an Augustinian, who said, 'For you I am a bishop, with you, I am a Christian.' In this sense we can all walk together toward that homeland that God has prepared."  
— Pope Leo in his first address from the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica May 8, 2025

"Migrants and refugees remind the Church of her pilgrim dimension, perpetually journeying toward her final homeland, sustained by a hope that is a theological virtue."  
— Pope Leo's message for the October 4-5 11th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, given July 25, 2025

"Friendship with Christ, which forms the basis of faith, is not just one aid among many others for building the future; it is our guiding star."  
— Pope Leo at a vigil for the Jubilee of Youth on August 2, 2025

"On the wounded faces of the poor, we see the suffering of the innocent and, therefore, the suffering of Christ himself."  
— Pope Leo in his first apostolic exhortation, *Dilexi Te* ("I Have Loved You"), promulgated on October 9, 2025

"Peace, in fact, cannot be decreed: It must be embraced and lived. It is a gift from God, which unfolds through patient and collective effort. It is everyone's responsibility, beginning with civil authorities."  
— Pope Leo in his meeting with the authorities, civil society and diplomatic corps in Yaoundé, Cameroon, on April 15, 2026

On April 7, on the north side of downtown Chicago, people walked under a bright spring sun and braced themselves against strong, cold wind as they left Holy Name Cathedral following daily Mass.

Tom Pyden was descending the cathedral's steps when he told OSV News Pope Leo has "done a very good job" for the

Church and the world because of "his repeated calls for peace and not backing down from that."

Pyden was in Chicago from Plymouth, Michigan, to visit his son for Easter week. Though he is not from the Windy City, he said of Pope Leo that he was "so very proud that he's from the U.S."

"I read daily inspirational sayings from him. I think he's very inclusive. And I don't know him, but it seems like he has a wonderful personality that draws people together," said Pyden, who also remarked on his possible impact on the number of new Catholics entering the Church at Easter vigil, even at his own parish.

Pilar Villa of Guadalajara, Mexico, was visiting Chicago over Easter with her twin teenage daughters. She told OSV News she likes that Pope Leo has given clear messages and has dedicated time to youth and young people.

"He recently talked about the importance of young people not having ties to artificial intelligence, that they should follow God and believe in God," she said.

Retired Bishop Daniel T. Turley of Chulacanas, Peru, a native of Chicago's South Side and Pope Leo's former Augustinian superior during his missionary work, said Pope Leo's solid upbringing in the Faith and missionary life in impoverished Peru beset with domestic terrorism have influenced Pope Leo's leadership.

"(He) is a pope at a very time of crisis, so he brings to his papacy a great deal of balance, of joy, but also a message asking for peace, asking for non-violence, asking to respect the dignity of life throughout the world, and asking countries to search out ways of unity. And he is a pope that is trying to build bridges," he told OSV News.

Bishop Turley said having an American pope might be impacting the faithful coming into the Church or returning. He said he has celebrated numerous large-group confirmations throughout the Chicago archdiocese over the past year, and pastors at those parishes have observed increased numbers of those participating in the rites of initiation.

"There's a 'Leo effect' for Chicago in particular," he said. "It's like a ripple of the ocean, the waves, you know. So, it's a wave of energy, happiness, joy, hope. That's rippling through the Augustinian order. It's rippling through the United States of America because he's the first American pope in the history of the Church. But he's also the first pope from Chicago. There's a 'Leo effect' in Chicago, in the United States, and then in the whole world."