



The

Criterion

Serving the Church in Central and Southern Indiana Since 1960



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See our photos from various schools, pages 10-11.

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Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, right, preaches on Aug. 10 during a Mass in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel of SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis. The liturgy was part of the annual convocation of archdiocesan seminarians. Family members of some seminarians also attended the Mass in addition to the 34 seminarians, the most the archdiocese has had in priestly formation since 1994. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

Historic number of new seminarians seen as fruit of National Eucharistic Congress

By Sean Gallagher

Two years ago, after the National Eucharistic Congress concluded in Indianapolis, Archbishop Charles C. Thompson reflected in an interview with *The Criterion* on what effect the historic event might have on the Church in central and southern Indiana and beyond.

"I think the fruits are going to bear out over time—weeks, months, years, maybe decades," he said in 2024. "It's going to take time to process and really reflect on what this means for us. What will we do with this? How will it impact us?"

While some seeds of faith planted at the congress may still take time to blossom, others seem already to be bearing fruit.

Father Eric Augenstein, archdiocesan director of seminarians, witnessed this impact during the past year as he guided far more men in the seminarian application process than he's ever experienced in his 14 years of being involved in promoting priestly vocations in the archdiocese.

Until now, he had never had more than nine men in one year be accepted as new archdiocesan seminarians. This year, there are 16 new men entering priestly formation for the archdiocese.

It's the highest number of new seminarians that the Church in central and southern Indiana has had in more than 30 years.

As Father Augenstein had the opportunity to get to know these 16 men over the past year, he saw what he called a "common thread" among many of them that gives some explanation for this historic growth in new seminarians.

It was the influence of the National Eucharistic Congress and the first National Eucharistic Pilgrimage in 2024, which converged in and went across the archdiocese from four routes across the country and ended in Indianapolis at the start of the congress.

"That is, by far, the most common thread that I see," Father Augenstein said. "A lot of these guys were in places where they

See CONVOCATION, page 8

On Assumption, Pope Leo says true beauty found in enduring love

(OSV News)—Christians are called to reflect Mary's authentic beauty, which is revealed through a life of enduring love rather than worldly aesthetic standards, Pope Leo XIV said.



Pope Leo XIV

Celebrating the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Aug. 15, the pope said the artistic depictions of a youthful Mary ascending to heaven stand in stark contrast to the reality of aging that all people experience.

"The glorification of Mary, body and soul, teaches us that our true beauty does not lie in hiding the signs of aging, but in revealing the signs of love that never end, and are even impressed on our flesh," he said.

"With this in mind, we are invited to re-examine many of the aesthetic standards, predominantly hedonistic and consumerist in nature, that the world imposes on us," he added.

Pope Leo, who was staying at the papal residence in Castel Gandolfo through Aug. 18, celebrated Mass at the parish of St. Thomas of Villanova. The 17th-century church, named after the Spanish Augustinian friar, was designed by the famed Italian artist Gian Lorenzo Bernini and is the only pontifical parish located outside the Vatican.

The parish's celebration of the Marian feast day was a tradition started by St. John XXIII and continued by St. John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI. Although Pope Francis broke with custom by staying in Rome during the summer, Pope Leo XIV revived the practice.

In his homily, the pope began by reflecting on the day's first reading from the Book of Revelation. The reading's description of "a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet" (Rv 12:1), he said, signified

See ASSUMPTION, page 19

A lasting romance and a special summer memory connect to the gift of a song

(Editor's note: The Criterion has invited you, our readers, to share a song that has led you into a deeper level of faith, humanity or love. Here are some songs—and why they are special—that have been shared so far.)

First in an occasional series

By John Shaughnessy

As he's dealt with kidney disease for the past 10 years, Mark Hummer has focused on what he considers the important parts of life.

"The older I've gotten, the more I think life is like a scrapbook of memories. You look back on the importance of all the little things that mean a lot," says Hummer, a member of St. Christopher Parish in Indianapolis.

One of Hummer's favorite memories is tied to the song "Summer Wind" by Frank Sinatra.

He heard the song playing during the first day he arrived in Shanghai, China, in 1991. He had come from Indiana to meet for the first time the woman he was pen pals with, the woman he would marry on that trip.

"Every time I hear that song, I get transported back in time," he says. "I first met

See SONGS, page 3

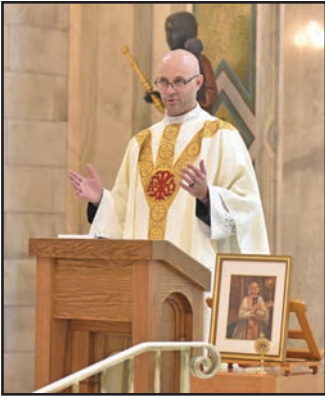


Mark and Siming Hummer will celebrate their 35th wedding anniversary on Sept. 1, a gift of marriage that has led to their three daughters, Ava, middle, Lilly, second from right, and Valarie. (Submitted photo)

Cathedral hosts Day of Prayer with St. John Vianney on Aug. 6



Above: Worshippers fill the Blessed Sacrament Chapel of SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis during a Mass on Aug. 6, the feast of St. John Vianney. The liturgy was the conclusion of a “Day of Prayer with St. John Vianney” for priestly vocations sponsored by the archdiocesan vocations office. (Photos by Sean Gallagher)



Right: Father Michael Keucher, archdiocesan vocations director, preaches a homily during a Mass on Aug. 6, the feast of St. John Vianney, in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel of SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis. The Mass concluded a “Day of Prayer with St. John Vianney” for priestly vocations. A first-class relic of the patron saint of priests is seen next to the ambo in the chapel.

Criterion staff report

Catholics from across central and southern Indiana gathered on Aug. 6 at the Blessed Sacrament Chapel of SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis for a “Day of Prayer with St. John Vianney” to pray for priestly vocations.

The Church observes Aug. 6 as the feast of St. John Vianney, the patron saint of priests and a model for diocesan priests in particular. Born in 1786 in France, he was ordained a priest in 1815. In 1818, he was assigned to the parish in the town of Ars in southeastern France.

Vianney remained there until his death in 1859. Over the course of his 41 years of

ministry in Ars, he helped many people of the town back to the practice of the faith and became a noted confessor, drawing thousands of people annually to travel to the town to go to confession to him. Known as the “Curé of Ars,” Vianney was also known for the pastoral care he gave to the townspeople, his unceasing prayer for them.

The archdiocesan vocations office sponsored the day of prayer. It began at noon with eucharistic adoration, with Benediction occurring just before a Mass at 5:15 p.m., celebrated by Father Michael Keucher, archdiocesan vocations director.

A first-class relic of St. John Vianney was present in the chapel throughout the day for veneration. †

Share what Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen meant to you, how he helped shape your faith

Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen will be beatified during a Mass on Sept. 24 in St. Louis. This American media missionary, who died in 1979, shaped the hearts and minds of people within and far beyond the Church through his radio broadcasts, his popular “Life Is Worth Living” weekly TV show in the 1950s, other speaking engagements and multiple books and articles.

Archbishop Sheen also promoted missionary work around the world through his leadership for 16 years as the national director of the Pontifical Society for the Propagation of the Faith.

The Criterion would like to know what Archbishop Sheen meant to you and how he may have influenced your life of faith. Readers young and old are invited to reply, since Archbishop Sheen’s message and ministry have become known in recent decades through re-broadcasts of his TV shows and their availability online.

Send your submissions to Sean Gallagher by e-mail to sgallagher@archindy.org or by mail in care of The Criterion, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202. Please include your parish and a daytime phone number where you can be reached. †



Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

August 20–September 8, 2026

August 20-28
 Wedding in Ireland

August 30 – 9:30 a.m.
 Mass to Celebrate Opening of School Year at Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary, Indianapolis

August 30 – 2 p.m.
 Archdiocesan Wedding Anniversary Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, followed by reception at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center, both in Indianapolis

September 1 – 9 a.m.
 100th Anniversary School Mass at St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) Church, Indianapolis

September 1 – 11 a.m.
 Virtual Catholic Relief Services Budget and Finance Committee meeting

September 1 – 2:30 p.m.
 Department Gathering at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center

September 1 – 6 p.m.
 Hispanic Ministries and Young Adult Dinner, Indianapolis

September 2 – 11:30 a.m.
 Lunch with Indianapolis Imams at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center

September 2 – 2 p.m.
 Virtual Evangelization Summit Planning Team meeting

September 2 – 7 p.m.
 Confirmation Mass for the youths of St. Luke the Evangelist and St. Rita parishes, Indianapolis, at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

September 3 – 10 a.m.
 Leadership Team meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center

September 3-6
 Bishops’ Support Group, St. Meinrad

September 8 – 10:30 a.m.
 Priest Personnel Board meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center

September 8 – 5:30 p.m.
 Mass for the Season of Creation at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, Indianapolis



Vatican II’s vision for Christian education comes to life on ArchIndy Vox

Criterion staff report

A new episode of ArchIndy Vox explores “*Gravissimum Educationis*,” the Latin title of the Second Vatican Council’s “Declaration on Christian Education” and its vision for helping people grow in faith, virtue and their relationship with Jesus Christ.

Hosted by Ken Ogorek, the latest episode features Brian Disney, archdiocesan superintendent of Catholic schools and Dominican Sister John Paul Maher. Together, they discuss the role of parents as primary educators, the importance of fostering a Catholic culture and how Christian education prepares people to serve both the Church and society.

The episode is part of “The Church in Our Time: What Vatican II Means for Everyday Catholics,” a 16-episode series exploring each of Vatican II’s documents.

Watch this new episode on the ArchdIndy Vox YouTube channel at youtube.com/@IndianaCatholic/videos or listen through ArchIndy Vox on Spotify at tinyurl.com/ArchIndyVoxSpotify. †



Share your memories of 9/11

Memories of Sept. 11, 2001, fill the hearts and minds of people old enough to remember that tragic day 25 years ago.

The Criterion would like to hear your stories, memories and thoughts of Sept. 11, 2001, including how your faith was a source of strength and comfort on that challenging day, and how the events of that day have shaped your faith and your life since then.

Send your submissions to John Shaughnessy by e-mail to jshaughnessy@archindy.org or by mail in care of The Criterion, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202. Please include your parish and a daytime phone number where you can be reached. †



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NEWS FROM YOU!

Do you have something exciting or newsworthy you want to be considered to be printed in The Criterion?

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SONGS

continued from page 1

my wife’s Uncle Victor in 1990 in Fort Wayne, where I was working as a nursing home activity director and social worker. He observed me helping the patients and even when I helped with Mass.

“In November 1990, he invited me to dinner at a Chinese restaurant. At the end of the meal, he asked me if I was married. I said, ‘No, it’s too hard to meet a nice girl.’ He said, ‘Very good.’ And he gave me his niece’s address in Shanghai and said, ‘You can be her pen pal.’”

The letters led to love. “I traveled by myself to Shanghai in August,” he recalls. “We were married on September 1 at St. Ignatius Cathedral in Shanghai.”

Hummer and his wife, Siming, will celebrate their 35th wedding anniversary soon. Their love has led to three daughters, Valarie, Lillian and Ava.

“As the last 10 years I’ve been battling kidney disease, I want to thank my wife and our daughters for their help and support.”

Hummer focuses on two songs when he thinks of the love he has received from his family—“House of Love” and “Find A Way,” both by Amy Grant.

“They are ones I can relate to in terms of family support,” he says. “Spending time and doing small things with each other means a lot. And the phrase, ‘Love will find a way,’ is powerful in the sense of trying to deal with life’s challenges.

“We all need to count our blessings and not take anything for granted. Tell the people around you how you feel about them.”

A special summer memory

Songs about summer have a way of taking people back to carefree times of hanging out with friends, strolling on the beach, driving with the windows down

and cranking up the radio, and ... We’ll leave it up to you to continue your own memorable connections to summer.

For Rachel Gilman, the summer of 2014 evokes a set of memories that includes making new friends and drawing deeper into a relationship with God.

During that summer, Gilman was in the Echo Graduate Service Program at the University of Notre Dame in northern Indiana, a program that offers a master’s degree in theology while training young lay leaders “to pass on the beauty and truth of the Catholic faith.”

“I decided to join the choir we put together during our summer studies on campus,” recalls Gilman, now the director of youth ministry for the archdiocese. “I was thrust into a community of passionate young adults that was given full responsibility to plan the music at our program’s liturgies. One hymn in particular that was a favorite of the community was ‘O God, Beyond All Praising.’”

As the choir rose and began singing that song as the closing hymn, Gilman says, “It created a moment that I will never forget and one that I return to frequently.

“I was immediately impacted by how the church was filled with the voices of my fellow classmates singing this hymn at full volume in a way I had never experienced before at Mass. Our little community of only 30 students made the chapel feel like it was filled with hundreds.

“I got chills as I felt the music and my classmates’ voices swell during each verse. And I basked in the profound gift of being a part of a community that truly worshipped the Lord with full heart and voice at Mass. It not only brought me gratitude for the community I was now a part of, but it also led me into deeper worship and connection.”

That feeling stayed with Gilman as the choir continued to sing that hymn during summer Masses at Notre Dame. That feeling also continues 12 years later.



Rachel Gilman and Andrew Motyka share their musical talents to showcase the hymn that’s close to Gilman’s heart, “O God, Beyond All Praising.” Gilman is the director of youth ministry for the archdiocese and Motyka is the director of music for the archdiocese and for SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral Parish in Indianapolis. The combination of Gilman’s singing and Motyka’s accompaniment on organ for the song can be heard at tinyurl.com/GilmanMotyka. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)

“Now today, every time I have the opportunity to sing ‘O God, Beyond All Praising’ at Mass, I’m transported back to this initial profound experience with my classmates,” says Gilman, a member of Christ the King Parish in Indianapolis.

“As I sing, I can’t help but smile and feel the joy of not only the memories this song brings me, but also how it draws me in deeper to my worship at Mass. I’m grateful for the way this hymn continues to connect me to my classmates and this memory, even so many years later.”

(Whether it’s a song from popular culture or from a church hymnal, you are invited to share your story of how that song has led you to a deeper level of faith, humanity or love. Send your story and song[s] to John

Shaughnessy at jshaughnessy@archindy.org or by mail in care of The Criterion, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202. Please include your parish and a daytime phone number where you can be reached.) †



Scan this QR code to hear Rachel Gilman singing “O God, Beyond All Praising.”

Parents invited to listening session with Archbishop Thompson on Aug. 31

Criterion staff report

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson invites parents throughout the Archdiocese of Indianapolis to take part in a special listening session from 7-8 p.m. on Aug. 31 to share what it is like to live the Catholic faith as a family today.

Parents with children of all ages and stages may participate in person at the Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center, 1400 N. Meridian St., in Indianapolis, or virtually online. The deadline to register for the in-person session is Aug. 26. Babysitting will be available for in-person attendees who indicate a need on the registration form.

The session offers parents an opportunity to speak directly with Archbishop Thompson about the joys and challenges of family life, how they seek to share Christ with others and how parishes, schools and archdiocesan ministries can better support families in living their faith.

What Archbishop Thompson hears from archdiocesan families will be taken to a fall meeting of bishops from around the world with Pope Leo XIV at the Vatican focused on how the Church can more effectively accompany and support families.

Parents are encouraged to register now and make their voices part of this important conversation. To register, scan the QR code below or go to tinyurl.com/archindylisteningession. Those who choose the “virtually online” option on the form will receive a link to the live session. †



Pope Leo’s prayer intentions for September



- **For the care of water**—Let us pray for a just and sustainable management of water, a vital resource, so that everyone may have equal access to it. †

See Pope Leo’s monthly intentions at archindy.org/popesintentions.



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OPINION



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, *Publisher*
Sally Krause, *Associate Publisher*
Mike Krokos, *Editor*

Editorial



Pope Leo XIV greets residents of a home for the elderly run by the Little Sisters of the Poor in Istanbul during his visit on Nov. 28, 2025. (OSV News photo/Vatican Media/Catholic Press)

Celebrating the wisdom and blessings of our grandparents and the elderly

We had a chance to celebrate them last month, and we will have another opportunity to show our love and affection for them in September. They are our grandparents and the elderly, who provide us wisdom, gifts and blessings that at times go unnoticed or unappreciated. And most importantly, they are among those who often show us unwavering love. While the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly was celebrated this year on the Church calendar on July 26 (the fourth Sunday of July near the July 26 feast day of Jesus’ grandparents, SS. Joachim and Anne), in the United States it was transferred to the first weekend after Labor Day (on Sept. 12-13), coinciding with a pre-existing national holiday here that celebrates grandparents. The theme this year, as reported by OSV News, draws on a powerful promise from Scripture: “I will never forget you” (Is 49:15). Sadly, some in society have forgotten about the elderly, and in his message for the sixth celebration of the day, Pope Leo XIV reminded Catholics that this promise should shape how all treat older adults. “The painful feeling of being forgotten is, unfortunately, shared by many people, and among them are quite a few elderly people,” Pope Leo wrote, echoing Pope Francis’ reasons for establishing the day in 2021. As Pope Francis reminded us in 2022, we have a responsibility to care for the elderly and cherish their wisdom rather than regard them as a burden on society. They are not part of a throwaway culture, where some in the world seek to “erase the elderly,” he said. “This is a betrayal of one’s humanity, this is the ugliest thing, this is selecting life according to one’s usefulness, according to one’s youth and not with life as it is, with the wisdom of the elderly, with the limitations of the elderly,” Pope Fancis said. “Elderly people have so much to give us because there is the wisdom of life,” he added. “They have so much to teach us. That is why we must also teach children to look after their grandparents and to go to their grandparents” for guidance. Pope Leo offered some suggestions to celebrate the day: —Take time to see the unique person, and remember your worth as a child of God. The pope warned that the elderly can become invisible as they age,

becoming isolated in their homes or becoming just a bed number or an illness in a care home. Observing this day is “an opportunity to rediscover that the Church is called to be a mother to all and that at any age it is always possible to recognize ourselves as sons and daughters of God.” —Make a real human connection, not just a digital one. “The digital culture multiplies connections and offers new opportunities for interaction; yet, the human heart retains an irrevocable need for genuine closeness” (#239), Pope Leo wrote, quoting from his encyclical “Magnifica Humanitas: On Safeguarding the Human Person in the Time of Artificial Intelligence.” The Holy Father encouraged young people to “revive the beautiful custom of visiting their grandparents,” elderly family members and “even those who have no one to visit them.” Nursing homes, assisted living facilities and independent living homes have senior residents who have no nearby or living relatives. Why not as a family adopt a senior at one of these homes, develop a friendship and show them they are not forgotten and are still loved? —It’s never too late to turn to God. “For many, the discovery of God’s tenderness takes place over the course of their lives, sometimes even in its final stages,” Pope Leo wrote. “Old age—beginning with the questions that arise with greater urgency during this season of life—can become the right time to begin or resume a spiritual life.” —Don’t be afraid of human frailty. “It is precisely this weakness that holds within itself a new potential that also illuminates the other stages of life,” wrote Pope Leo. All people are in need of one another, the pope said, and embracing this need is a strength that can “become an invitation not to resort to the ways of arrogance and power to ensure human coexistence, but to the ways of reconciliation and true peace.” —Pray and work for peace across generations. “In this time, so harshly marked by the violence of war and social unrest, many wonder what the world in which their grandchildren will grow up will be like” the pope wrote. “I urge you, dear friends, to join me in praying earnestly that peace may soon come to the whole world.” —Mike Krokos

Be Our Guest/Elizabeth Scalia

I brought a heart full of fury with me to Mass. I left it there.

Small sparks of feeling that become all-consuming conflagrations can happen at any time, even, sadly, as one is preparing for Mass. I write, of course, from experience. The details aren’t important. Life is hard, sometimes. Living with others, even when we love and value them, can still be a challenge. Stupid arguments

encourage thoughtless pronouncements that turn seeming scud missiles—destructive enough—into H-bombs, where exteriors look unharmed while inside there is startling, shriveling death.

It doesn’t matter what starts it, a hard word, or a headline: suddenly one feels a kind of incandescent fury that is probably all out of proportion to the case, but for one reason or another (and our “reasons” can seem ridiculous unless we’re willing to chase them down our peculiar rabbit-holes of mind and memory) we cannot tamp it down. We are like little arsonists, too enamored of our teeming flames; we want to let them go wild.

Perhaps your mileage is different; perhaps your personal pilot light only flames when you’re looking to make popcorn, and has no “flip your lid” setting. If so, congratulations—you’re probably not a member of my tribe, and are blessed.

I don’t often bring my livid guts to Mass, but it happened recently, to my regret. I offered them, racing and blood-red, to Jesus as soon as I hit the pew (and it did immediately help!), but my preoccupied prayer continued all the way to the sign of peace. By then, thankfully, I was able to offer good will with an authentic heart, determined to make my further amends as soon as possible.

This is how the prayer went: Lord, because you are both fully human and fully divine, you understand the experience of mortal outrage—how quickly it can arise, how easily it may be sustained and how efficiently it can grow deep and deadly roots within us. I come to you now, bearing a heart full of anger and realizing that however just or unjust this feeling may be, it is far too much for me to carry.

Receive my rage, Lord; it is doing me no good. I surrender to you all of my clanging fury over (this situation), trusting that you will temper whatever righteousness is

there with triune balms of mercy, wisdom and purpose, and that you will saturate the falsehoods I have quite naturally fed into this fiery wrath with your humbling truth. Help me to remember that when you showed your outrage toward the merchants and moneychangers debasing the Temple, you did so with a purity of intention (and from a place of authority), that I can never begin to possess, no matter how justified my ire may seem. Help me to remember that the bigger and stormier my anger feels, the smaller and more regrettable my words and my actions will become, tempting me toward sins of spite, malice and thoughtless cruelty. Help me to recall St. Catherine of

Siena’s warning that such is a “foretaste of Hell.” Help me to understand what complexities of my own mind and soul have contributed to this surging vehemence, that I may finally exhale and find some grace for its object, and for myself, too, because we do not, cannot, make sense of all we do and feel. It is said “the self is more distant than any star,” and you alone understand fully the little mysteries within that you have permitted to form us, the little buttons that can set us off so easily, and then entrench us in hostility. Turn my mind, please, toward the better moments; help me to remember small actions of kindness—even if I don’t want to be generous

enough, or real enough, to call them “good” just yet. If such memories serve up a dollop of shame on my part, I’ll take it. Better to be ashamed of my jagged rancor than to forget moments that inspired hope, or warm gratitude, or even love. Keep helping me, Lord. Help me to get to the other side of this deadly feeling! Amen. The Mass is the most powerful prayer we possess, and I believe that at the moment of consecration the veil between heaven and Earth is at its thinnest, as Christ becomes truly present to us. I always regret it when I succumb to the Liturgy of the Wandering Mind and miss that moment. However we bring ourselves to worship, though, even when we are not as completely present as he is, Christ will work with us throughout the hour, touching even our fuming guts with his grace and peace. And then amen, and amen!

(Elizabeth Scalia is editor-at-large for OSV. Follow her on X @the anchoress.) †

Letters Policy

Letters from readers are published in The Criterion as part of the newspaper’s commitment to “the responsible exchange of freely-held and expressed opinion among the People of God” (Communio et Progressio, 116). Letters from readers are welcome and every effort will be made to include letters from as many people and representing as many viewpoints as possible. Letters should be informed, relevant, well-expressed and temperate in tone. They must reflect a basic sense of courtesy and respect. The editors reserve the right to select the letters that will be published and to edit

letters from readers as necessary based on space limitations, pastoral sensitivity and content (including spelling and grammar). In order to encourage opinions from a variety of readers, frequent writers will ordinarily be limited to one letter every three months. Concise letters (usually less than 300 words) are more likely to be printed. Letters must be signed, but, for serious reasons, names may be withheld. Send letters to “Letters to the Editor,” The Criterion, 1400 N. Meridian Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367. Readers with access to e-mail may send letters to criterion@archindy.org. †

ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO CHARLES C. THOMPSON



Christ the Cornerstone

Mary’s ‘yes’ leads to Christ’s birth and her glory

Tomorrow, August 22, we celebrate the Memorial known as The Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This is not a major Marian feast, but it has important connections to The Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which we celebrated on August 15, because Mary reigns as Queen of the Universe by virtue of her privileged position as Christ’s Mother in heaven.

Mary was assumed into heaven—body and soul—because her Immaculate Conception freed her from the burden of human sinfulness. This is what God intended for all human beings: a seamless transition from earthly life to heavenly joy.

Our first parents’ original sin changed things radically and made death something that must be endured—often painfully. Mary’s experience not only shows us the way things were meant to be, it also prefigures the way things will be at the end of time.

We Christians believe “in the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.” In the Nicene Creed, we profess our belief that Jesus “ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.” Mary accompanies her Son as his Mother.

She has no authority of her own, but she shares in the Divine Power of her Son, and she participates in his glory just as our moon reflects the light generated by the sun.

This principle is reflected in the biblical pattern of the Davidic monarchy, in which the king’s mother held a distinctive position of honor. The Church sees Mary as the fulfillment of this pattern: she is the mother of the Messiah, the Son of David, and the woman whose consent enabled the Incarnation.

Mary’s royal dignity is also witnessed in her great song of praise, the Magnificat: “All generations will call me blessed” (Lk 1:48). Mary does not claim this honor as self-exaltation. She immediately directs all praise to God: “the Almighty has done great things for me” (Lk 1:49). Her queenship, like every grace bestowed upon her, magnifies God rather than herself. It is her profound humility that allows her to be raised up beyond all ordinary expectations.

This is a great Christian paradox. The humble young woman from Nazareth (an obscure village in a far corner of the ancient world) becomes Queen of the Universe because of her response to God’s messenger, her *fiat*:

“Let it be done, in accordance with God’s will” (Lk 1:38).

The result is the greatest miracle imaginable. God becomes man. The Lord of the Universe takes on Mary’s human nature and is irrevocably united with all humankind. Mary’s role is not insignificant. She first gives her free consent, and then she bears God’s Son in her womb becoming in the process the Mother of God (*Theotokos*) and the new Eve, the mother of all the living.

Mary’s queenship is like the authority of a mother within a family: personal, compassionate, protective and directed toward the good of her children. Her royal dignity is expressed through intercession and service rather than domination.

Mary’s queenship is connected with her role in salvation history. She did nothing by her own power, independently of Christ. He alone is the Savior of humankind. But God chose to involve Mary uniquely in the mystery of the Incarnation and, in a subordinate and dependent way, in the unfolding of Christ’s saving work.

The clearest biblical image associated with Mary’s queenship appears in the Book of Revelation:

A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the

moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. (Rv 12:1)

The woman gives birth to a child “destined to rule all the nations with an iron rod,” a reference to the Messiah’s royal rule (Rv 12:5). The passage presents the woman as glorified, crowned, and involved in the cosmic conflict between the child and the dragon.

Mary’s queenship means that she stands with Christ in the triumph of grace over sin and death. Revelation 12 portrays the woman in conflict with the dragon, symbolizing the struggle between God’s kingdom and the powers opposed to it. Mary’s queenship prefigures the ultimate destiny of the Church: victory through fidelity to God and participation in Christ’s triumph.

We venerate Mary because she shows us in practical ways how to be faithful missionary disciples of her Son. She was the first to follow in Jesus’ footsteps, including on the Way of the Cross. And, when the time was right, she followed him to his heavenly homeland, where she serves as the Queen of the Universe.

In Mary’s honor, let us pray together the *Salve Regina*: Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope. ... Amen. †



Cristo, la piedra angular

El ‘sí’ de María da lugar al nacimiento de Cristo y a su gloria

Mañana 22 de agosto celebramos la festividad conocida como Santa María, Reina del cielo y de la tierra. Esta no es una fiesta mariana importante, pero tiene vínculos significativos con la Solemnidad de la Asunción de la Santísima Virgen María, que celebramos el 15 de agosto, porque María es la Reina del Universo gracias a su posición privilegiada como Madre de Cristo en el cielo.

María ascendió al cielo—en cuerpo y alma—porque su Inmaculada Concepción la liberó de la carga del pecado humano. Esto es lo que Dios tenía previsto para todos los seres humanos: una transición sin contratiempos de la vida terrenal a la alegría celestial.

El pecado original de nuestros primeros padres cambió radicalmente las cosas e hizo de la muerte algo que hay que soportar, a menudo de manera dolorosa. La experiencia de María no solo nos muestra cómo debían ser las cosas, sino que también presagia cómo serán al final de los tiempos.

Nosotros, los cristianos, creemos “en la resurrección de los muertos y en la vida del mundo futuro.” En el Credo de Nicea, profesamos nuestra fe en que Jesús “subió al cielo y está sentado a la derecha del Padre.” María acompaña a su Hijo como su Madre. Aunque no

tiene autoridad propia, comparte el poder divino de su Hijo y participa de su gloria, del mismo modo que nuestra luna refleja la luz que genera el sol.

Este principio se refleja en el modelo bíblico de la monarquía davídica, en el que la madre del rey ocupaba un lugar de honor especial. La Iglesia ve a María como el cumplimiento de este modelo: ella es la madre del Mesías, el Hijo de David, y la mujer cuyo consentimiento hizo posible la Encarnación.

La dignidad real de María también se ve reflejada en su gran canto de alabanza, el Magnificat: “Todas las generaciones me llamarán bienaventurada” (Lc 1:48). María no reclama este honor como una forma de autoexaltación. De inmediato, atribuye toda la gloria a Dios: “Porque ha hecho en mi favor cosas grandes el Poderoso” (Lc 1:49). Su reinado, como cada gracia que se le ha concedido, glorifica a Dios más que a ella misma. Es su profunda humildad la que le permite elevarse más allá de todas las expectativas comunes.

Esta es una gran paradoja cristiana. La humilde joven de Nazaret (un pueblo desconocido en un rincón remoto del mundo antiguo) se convierte en Reina del Universo gracias a su respuesta al mensajero de Dios, su *fiat*: “Hágase en mí según tu palabra” (Lc 1:38).

El resultado es el mayor milagro

que se pueda imaginar: Dios se hace hombre. El Señor del Universo asume la naturaleza humana de María y se une para siempre a toda la humanidad. El papel de María no es nada insignificante: en primer lugar, da su libre consentimiento y, luego, lleva en su vientre al Hijo de Dios, convirtiéndose así en la Madre de Dios (*Theotokos*) y en la nueva Eva, la madre de todos los vivientes.

La realeza de María es como la autoridad de una madre dentro de una familia: personal, compasiva, protectora y orientada hacia el bien de sus hijos. Su dignidad real se expresa a través de la intercesión y el servicio, más que de la dominación.

La realeza de María está ligada a su papel en la historia de la salvación. Ella no hizo nada por sus propios medios al margen de Cristo. Solo Él es el Salvador de la humanidad. Pero Dios decidió involucrarla de manera única en el misterio de la Encarnación, así como en el desarrollo de la obra salvífica de Cristo, aunque en forma subordinada y dependiente.

La imagen bíblica más clara relacionada con la condición de reina de María aparece en el Libro del Apocalipsis:

Apareció en el cielo un signo sorprendente: una Mujer vestida de sol,

con la luna bajo sus pies y tocada con una corona de doce estrellas. (Ap 12:1)

La Mujer dio a luz un Hijo varón, “el que ha de regir a todas las naciones con cetro de hierro.” Pero su hijo fue arrebatado y llevado hasta Dios y su trono (Ap 12:5). El pasaje presenta a la mujer como glorificada, coronada y participe del conflicto cósmico entre el niño y el dragón.

La realeza de María significa que ella se encuentra junto a Cristo en el triunfo de la gracia sobre el pecado y la muerte. El capítulo 12 del Apocalipsis describe a la mujer en conflicto con el dragón, lo que simboliza la lucha entre el reino de Dios y las fuerzas que se le oponen. La realeza de María presagia el destino definitivo de la Iglesia: la victoria a través de la fidelidad a Dios y la participación en el triunfo de Cristo.

Veneramos a María porque ella nos muestra de manera concreta cómo ser discípulos misioneros fieles de su Hijo. Fue la primera en seguir los pasos de Jesús, incluso en el Vía Crucis. Y, cuando llegó el momento oportuno, lo siguió hasta su patria celestial, donde ejerce su reinado como Reina del Universo.

En honor a María, recemos juntos la *Salve*: Dios te salve, Reina y Madre de misericordia, vida, dulzura y esperanza nuestra. ... Amén. †

Events Calendar

For a list of events for the next four weeks as reported to The Criterion, log on to www.archindy.org/events.

Wednesdays

St. John the Evangelist Parish, Corpus Christi Parish Hall, 126 W. Georgia St., Indianapolis. **Catholics in Recovery Support Group**, 7 p.m., meets every Wednesday, Catholic 12-step program serving those with addictions and unhealthy attachments. Information: 317-557-8888, jjdav887@gmail.com.

August 26 or 27

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Fatima Focus Group**, 6-9 p.m., provide input on retreat house’s three-year plan, includes dinner, free, registration required. Registration: fm.retreatportal.com/events, 317-545-7681, lcoons@archindy.org.

August 28-30

St. Joseph Parish, 1401 S. Mickley Ave., Indianapolis. **Festival and Food Fair**, Fri. and Sat. 5-11 p.m., Sun. 1:30-7 p.m., rides, gaming, beer garden, bingo, international food: Vietnamese, Mexican, African, Italian, American, free admission. Information: 317-244-9002.

August 29

St. Mary Parish, 1331 E. Hunter Robbins Way, Greensburg. **On Eagles Wings** 5K Run/Walk, Sat. 8 a.m. registration, 8:30 a.m. kids’ games open, 9 a.m. race, 10 a.m. Kids

Fun Run, 10:15 a.m. awards, go to oneagleswings5k.com for pricing and registration. Information: 812-663-8427.

August 29-30

St. Mary Parish, 1331 E. Hunter Robbins Way, Greensburg. **Festival**, Sat. 5:30-11 p.m.: adult night, games, beer garden, pie auction, pork burger or pulled pork dinners, concessions, live music 7 p.m.; Sun. 11 a.m.-2:30 p.m.: Family Day, kids’ games, live entertainment, silent auction, 50/50 raffle, fried chicken and pulled pork dinners; free admission. Information: 812-663-8427.

September 2

MCL Cafeteria, 5520 Castleton Corner Lane, Indianapolis. **Solo Seniors**, 5:30-8:30 p.m., Catholic, educational, charitable and social singles—separated, widowed or divorced—ages 50 and older, new members welcome, also call about regular Friday 1 p.m. lunch events. Information: 317-796-8605.

September 5-6

Project Joseph Retreat for men suffering from abortion, location disclosed upon registration, sponsored by the archdiocesan Office of Human Life and Dignity and the Diocese of Lafayette’s Office of Family Life. Information: 765-860-6006, dbangs1@gmail.com (all inquiries kept confidential).

September 6

St. Catherine of Siena Parish, St. John the Evangelist Campus, 9995 E. Base Road, Greensburg. **Annual Church Picnic**, 11 a.m.-4 p.m., raffles, basket booth, beer garden, kids’ games, country store, Fireside Inn chicken and roast beef dinners, adult dinners \$15, child dinners \$7. Information: 812-212-8384, stcatherine47240@gmail.com.

September 7

St. Anthony of Padua Parish, 4773 E. Morris Church St., Morris. **Labor Day Picnic**, 11 a.m.-6 p.m., fried chicken dinners, kids’ games, raffles live music, free admission. Information: 812-934-6218.

St. Peter Parish, 1207 East Road, Brookville. **Labor Day Picnic**, 10 a.m.-8 p.m., fried chicken dinners, dine in air-conditioned hall, cash and quilt raffles, country store, games, turtle soup, bingo, beer garden, handicapped accessible, free admission. Information: 765-647-5462, brookvilleparishes@gmail.com.

Virtual Discernment Lounge, 7-8 p.m., for Catholic women ages 18-41 discerning a religious vocation; prayer, conversation, reflection, free, sponsored by the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. Information, registration: Events.SistersofProvidence.org, 361-500-9505, jluna@spsmw.org.

September 8

Church of the Immaculate Conception, 1 Providence Pl., Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Taizé Prayer: Journey Toward Wholeness**, 7-8 p.m., prayer, music, reflection time, livestream link available on website, free. Information: Taize.SistersofProvidence.org, 812-535-2952.

September 10

Ritz Charles, 12156 N. Meridian St., Carmel, Ind. (Lafayette Diocese). **Luxury Bingo**, 6 p.m. cocktails and heavy hors d’oeuvres, 6:45 p.m. opening remarks and bingo begins, fundraiser for Women’s Care Center’s two Indianapolis locations, \$150, sponsorships available. Information, registration: tinyurl.com/luxurybingo26, 317-829-6800.

September 11

Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Parish, 520 Stevens St., Indianapolis. **Pro-life Film Series**, 6 p.m., Father Jeffrey Dufresne, Alex Mingus and Bailey Harkins speaking, screening of documentary “Better Off Dead” on assisted suicide, panel discussion and pizza follow, freewill donations accepted. Information: 317-407-6881, stjohnsindy.org/pro-life-film-series.

September 11-12

St. Mary Parish, 212 Washington St., North Vernon. **Community Festival**, Fri. 5-11 p.m., Sat. noon-11 p.m., games, rides, beer garden, live music, free admission. Information: 812-346-3604.

September 12

St. Joan of Arc Parish, 4217 Central Ave., Indianapolis.

French Market, noon-10 p.m., live music, 50 artisan booths, French food, beer/wine, kids’ area, bake sale, raffle, church tours, Mass at 5:30 p.m., free admission. Information: 317-283-5508, sjoa.org/about-french-market.

SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi Parish, 5901 Olive Branch Road, Greenwood. **Living Water Morning of Reflection**, 9 a.m.-noon, optional Mass 8 a.m. followed by confession, small-group discussion on Indiana bishops’ Pastoral Letter: Integral Ecology: A Sacramental Vision, visit parish-based pilgrimage sites for Jubilee of St. Francis, free, register by Sept. 11, sponsored by archdiocesan Catholic Charities-Social Concerns. Information, registration: 463-253-1185, tinyurl.com/ssfcreflection26, lsheehan@archindy.org. †

Retreats and Programs

For a complete list of retreats as reported to The Criterion, log on to www.archindy.org/retreats.

September 11-13

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Lifted High: A Retreat for the Exaltation of the Holy Cross**, Benedictine Father Kolbe Wolniakowski presenting, \$350 single, \$550 double. Registration: 812-357-6611, saintmeinrad.org/retreats.

September 18-20

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **You are Not Alone: Retreat for Survivors of Suicide Loss**, Fri. 6:30-9 p.m., Sat. 8:30 a.m.-8:30 p.m., Sun. 8:30-12:30 p.m., certified therapist Christine Turo-Shields, Father James Farrell, loss survivors panel Lisa Thibault and Shelly and Shea Wynn presenters, \$250, includes program, meals, snacks, private guest room to use during the days of program, overnight stay

available for additional \$42 per night. Information, registration: 317-545-7681, fm.retreatportal.com/events, lcoons@archindy.org.

Mother of the Redeemer Retreat Center, 8220 W. State Road 48, Bloomington. **Living the Litany of Humility**, 6 p.m. Fri.-10 a.m. Sun., Father Jerry Byrd presenting, \$290 for single, \$480 double, \$670 triple, \$860 quadruple, includes four meals and room for two nights, commuter \$90 includes four meals. Information, registration: 812-825-4642, ext. 1, motheroftheredeemer.com.

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Pilgrims of Hope**, Benedictine Father Adrian Burke presenting, \$350 single, \$550 double.

Registration: 812-357-6611, saintmeinrad.org/retreats.

September 22

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Fall Day of Reflection with Fr. Jim**, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., Father James Farrell presenting, includes Mass, Confession, breakfast snacks, lunch, register by Sep. 21, \$55. Information, registration: fm.retreatportal.com/events, 317-545-7681, lcoons@archindy.org.

September 25

Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **Quiet Day of Renewal**, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., \$20 (or \$80 with spiritual direction). Information, registration: oldenburgfranciscancenter.org/quiet-day-of-renewal, 812-933-6437, center@oldenburgfranciscans.org. †

Archbishop Thompson will celebrate Mass for Season of Creation on Sept. 8

The annual Mass for the Season of Creation will be celebrated by Archbishop Charles C. Thompson at Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM) Church, 5692 Central Ave., in Indianapolis, at 5:30 p.m. on Sept. 8, followed by a reception and presentation in the parish’s gathering space. The Season of Creation is celebrated by many faiths each year between Sept. 1, the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, and Oct. 4, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, patron saint of ecology. At the reception, members of the IHM Care for Creation team will present on

the parish’s solar panel project—to be implemented this fall—including why the parish chose to install solar panels, where they will be placed, anticipated benefits and more. Light refreshments will be served, and a few seventh- and eighth-grade students have been invited to share their essays about environmental concerns and how the Catholic faith is integral to ecology. All are invited to the Mass and reception, which is sponsored by the archdiocesan Creation Care team. For more information, contact Larry Coan at 317-797-4502 or coachcoanihm@gmail.com. †

Wedding Anniversaries

M. STEPHEN AND CATHERINE (MEYER) AMRHEIN, members of Holy Family Parish in Oldenburg, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on Aug. 20. The couple was married in the former St. Anne Church in Hamburg on Aug. 20, 1966. They have eight children: Lisa Flannery, Michelle Lepper, Mary Meyer, Annette, Brian, Daniel, Jason and Stephen Amrhein. The couple also has 12 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.



TOM AND JACKIE (MILLER) QUARTO, members of St. Pius X Parish in Indianapolis, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on Aug. 13. The couple was married in Christ the King Church in Indianapolis on Aug. 13, 1966. They have two children: Teresa Nunley and Michael Quarto. The couple also has four grandchildren.



ROBERT AND SHEILA (BURK) BEURAIN, members of St. Thomas More Parish in Mooresville, will celebrate their 55th wedding anniversary on Aug. 28. The couple was married in St. Joseph the Workman Cathedral in La Crosse, Wis., on Aug. 28, 1971. They have two children: Jennifer Engel and Susan Pierce. The couple also has three grandchildren.



TIMOTHY AND HARRIET (CECIL) CONNER, members of St. Paul Parish in Tell City, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on Aug. 28. The couple was married in St. Philip Neri Church in Indianapolis on Aug. 28, 1976. They have three children: Abbey Hines, Michael and Nicholas Conner. The couple also has 10 grandchildren.



GRANT AND JULIE (TRAUSCH) MONAHAN, members of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Indianapolis, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on Aug. 14. The couple was married in St. Joan of Arc Church in Indianapolis on Aug. 14, 1976. They have two children: Meghann Roseman and Kevin Monahan. The couple also has four grandchildren.



Announcements for couples celebrating 50, 55, 60, 65, 70 or more years of marriage are accepted. Go to cutt.ly/anniversaries or call 317-236-1585.

In illo uno unum (In the One Christ we are one)

One in Christ/Daniel Conway

Let Blessed Virgin Mary’s humility inspire us, Pope Leo advises

The first encyclical letter of Pope Leo XIV is titled “*Magnifica Humanitas*: On Safeguarding the Human Person in the Time of Artificial Intelligence.” It is a powerful reflection on the incomparable dignity of the human person made in the image and likeness of the Creator.

Pope Leo is a welcome participant in the conversation about artificial intelligence; his voice is particularly strong, especially when he explains the moral implications of this increasingly powerful technology in the light of Catholic social teaching.

It is significant that the concluding section of “*Magnifica Humanitas*” (#243–245) reflect on the *Magnificat*, the song of praise sung by the Blessed Virgin Mary when she visited her cousin Elizabeth (Lk 1:46-55). “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord” (Lk 1:46), Mary sings. “My spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed: the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his Name” (Lk 1:47-49).

Pope Leo sees Mary’s greatness as a sign of the dignity that God intends for all members of the human family. It is no accident that the Creator of all humankind chose “a young, poor and humble girl for his plan of salvation” (#243). This is a revelation about God’s preferences. The world situation in Mary’s time was much like it is today. Political power subjugates ordinary people, and economic might exercises rigid control over the daily lives of millions throughout the world.

And yet, everything has changed since Mary’s humble acceptance of her role in salvation history, her “yes” to the Word of God. As the Holy Father writes:

God has already shown the strength of his arm; he has already scattered the proud, cast down the mighty, lifted up the lowly, filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty-handed. He has already helped Israel, his servant. God takes the part of the lowly. His plan is one that is often hidden beneath the opaque context of human events that see “the proud, the mighty and the rich” triumph. Yet his secret strength is destined in the end to be revealed. (#243)

Through Mary, human dignity is revealed in all its splendor. The Light of the World, which is hidden in her womb, shines brightly, and the Truth that is God

Incarnate speaks so that all who have ears to hear it are deeply moved.

Pope Leo reflects on Mary’s role in salvation history. He says:

The Blessed Virgin Mary not only teaches us to recognize God’s invisible work, but also directs our gaze to the points at which humanity is broken and the world becomes distorted: the contrast between the humble and the powerful, the poor and the rich, the satiated and the hungry, teaching us to look at the world from a lower position: through the eyes of those who suffer rather than the mighty; to view history through the eyes of the little ones, rather than through the perspective of the powerful; to interpret the events of history from the viewpoint of the widow, the orphan, the stranger, the wounded child, the exile and the fugitive. (#244)

Clearly, God’s understanding of “magnificent humanity” is very different from what the world understands it to be. Mary is a “lowly servant,” not a person of power. She stands with the poor and the hungry rather than with those whose appetites have been satisfied. She sees the world with the eyes of those who suffer, and she understands what it means to be truly human from the perspective of those who are lowly.

“I entrust our desire to the Mother of Christ, to the woman of the *Magnificat*,” the Holy Father writes, “that she may guide our steps through this time of change and preserve in each of us true faith in the Gospel, so that we may bear witness to the grandeur of humanity, in which God has made his dwelling.” (#245)

Pope Leo calls Mary a “weaver of hope” (#245). She is someone who takes the raw materials of life—its sorrows and hardships as well as its comforts—and she transforms them. She gives witness to the greatness of God in the humility of her own life.

May her experiences as a woman of faith, hope and love inspire us to “safeguard the human person during this time of artificial intelligence” so that the grandeur of our humanity outweighs the practical advantages of political and economic power.

(Daniel Conway is a member of The Criterion’s editorial committee.) †

Uno en Cristo/Daniel Conway

El Santo Padre aconseja que nos dejemos inspirar por la humildad de la Santísima Virgen María

La primera encíclica del papa León XIV se titula “*Magnifica Humanitas*: sobre la custodia de la persona humana en el tiempo de la inteligencia artificial.” Se trata de una reflexión contundente sobre la dignidad incomparable de la persona humana, creada a imagen y semejanza del Creador.

La presencia del papa León XIV en el debate sobre la inteligencia artificial es bienvenida; su voz es particularmente contundente, sobre todo cuando explica las implicaciones morales de esta tecnología cada vez más poderosa a la luz de la doctrina social católica.

Resulta significativo que las secciones finales de “*Magnifica Humanitas*” (#243-245) reflexionen sobre el *Magnificat*, el canto de alabanza entonado por la Santísima Virgen María cuando visitó a su prima Isabel (Lc 1:46-55). “Alaba mi alma la grandeza del Señor” (Lc 1:46), canta María. “Y mi espíritu se alegra en Dios mi salvador, porque ha puesto los ojos en la pequeñez de su esclava. Desde ahora, todas las generaciones me llamarán bienaventurada, porque ha hecho en mi favor cosas grandes el Poderoso, Santo es su nombre” (Lc 1:47-49).

El papa León considera que la grandeza de María es un signo de la dignidad que Dios destina a todos los miembros de la familia humana. No

es casualidad que el Creador de toda la humanidad haya elegido a “una joven pobre y humilde para su plan de salvación” (#243); esto revela la preferencia de Dios. La situación del mundo en la época de María era muy similar a la actual. El poder político subyuga a la gente común, y el poder económico ejerce un control rígido sobre la vida cotidiana de millones de personas en todo el mundo.

Y, sin embargo, todo ha cambiado desde que María aceptó con humildad su papel en la historia de la salvación, desde su “sí” a la Palabra de Dios. Tal como escribe el Santo Padre:

Dios ya ha hecho proezas con el poder de su brazo, ya ha dispersado a los soberbios, ha derrotado a los poderosos, ha elevado a los humildes, ha colmado de bienes a los hambrientos y ha despedido a los ricos con las manos vacías. Él ya ha auxiliado a Israel, su siervo. Dios «se pone de parte de los últimos. Su proyecto a menudo está oculto bajo el terreno opaco de las vicisitudes humanas, en las que triunfan “los soberbios, los poderosos y los ricos.” Con todo, está previsto que su fuerza secreta se revele al final.” (#243)

A través de María, la dignidad humana se revela en todo su esplendor.

La Luz del Mundo, que se esconde en su vientre, resplandece con fuerza, y la Verdad—que es Dios encarnado—habla de tal manera que todos aquellos que tienen oídos para escucharla quedan profundamente conmovidos.

El papa León reflexiona sobre el papel de María en la historia de la salvación. Al respecto, comenta:

La Virgen María no sólo nos enseña a ver la obra invisible de Dios, sino que dirige también nuestra mirada “a los puntos de fractura de la humanidad, allí donde se produce la distorsión del mundo, en el contraste entre humildes y poderosos, entre pobres y ricos, entre sacios y hambrientos,” enseñándonos «a adquirir un punto de vista diferente para mirar el mundo desde abajo, con los ojos de quien sufre, no con la óptica de los potentes; para ver la historia con la mirada de los pequeños y no con la perspectiva de los poderosos; para interpretar los acontecimientos de la historia desde el punto de vista de la viuda, del huérfano, del extranjero, del niño herido, del exiliado, del fugitivo.” (#244)

Es evidente que el concepto que Dios tiene de la “magnífica humanidad” es muy diferente de lo que el mundo entiende por ello. María es una “sierva humilde,” no una persona de poder.

Se pone del lado de los pobres y los hambrientos, y no del de aquellos cuyos apetitos han sido saciados. Ve el mundo con los ojos de quienes sufren, y comprende lo que significa ser verdaderamente humano desde la perspectiva de los humildes.

“Encomiendo este deseo a la Madre de Cristo, a la mujer del *Magnificat*, para que acompañe nuestros pasos en el presente que cambia y custodie en cada uno de nosotros la confianza en el Evangelio, de modo que podamos testimoniar la belleza de una magnífica humanidad habitada por Dios.” (#245)

El papa León se refiere a María como “tejedora de esperanza” (#245). Es una persona que aprovecha y transforma las materias primas de la vida: sus penas y dificultades, así como sus alegrías. Da testimonio de la grandeza de Dios a través de la humildad de su propia vida.

Que sus experiencias como mujer de fe, esperanza y amor nos inspiren a “custodiar a la persona humana en el tiempo de la inteligencia artificial,” para que la grandeza de nuestra humanidad prevalezca sobre las ventajas prácticas del poder político y económico.

(Daniel Conway es integrante del comité editorial de The Criterion.) †

In illo uno unum (En el único Cristo somos uno)



Seminarians Todd Seiler, left, Lucas LaRosa and Ted Tobias kneel in prayer during an Aug. 10 Mass in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel of SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis. Seiler, LaRosa and Tobias were admitted to candidacy for ordination during the liturgy, a step seminarians make when they enter the last four years of priestly formation. (Photos by Sean Gallagher)

CONVOCAATION

continued from page 1

were already open to the possibility of a priestly vocation. The congress or the pilgrimages deepened or solidified it.” This phenomenon is not isolated to just the archdiocese, Father Augenstein added. “I am hearing from other vocations directors around the country that there is a swell of seminarian numbers this year across many dioceses.”

‘Goose bump’ moments

Abraham Schwartz is one of those 16 new archdiocesan seminarians who looks back to the eucharistic congress as a turning point in his discernment. A member of All Saints Parish in Dearborn County, Schwartz is a recent homeschooled high school graduate. He spoke with *The Criterion* on Aug. 12 at the conclusion of the three-day annual archdiocesan seminarian convocation held at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House in Indianapolis. He especially recalled a presentation that Father Mike Schmitz, author, speaker and “Bible in a Year” podcaster, gave during a general session at the congress in Lucas Oil Stadium. “The passion with which he spoke and him talking about what the priest is had a big impact on my discernment,” Schwartz said. “At that point, I wasn’t quite

ready to commit myself to seminary. But I knew that what he said was going to be influential.” So was praying in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament with 50,000 Catholics in a silence that filled the cavernous stadium. “It was really powerful,” Schwartz recalled. “I definitely had goose bumps at more than one point.” Those moments of adoration during the congress similarly touched new seminarian Joseph Cheever, a member of St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) Parish and a recent graduate of Father Thomas Scecinca High School, both in Indianapolis. He was also impressed by witnessing the great variety among the 1,300 priests and 1,200 men and women religious who attended the eucharistic congress. “Just seeing the diversity of the priests and religious there really helped me think about how it was something that was possible for me to do,” Cheever said. He’ll experience some of that diversity among his 15 fellow new seminarians for the archdiocese. Some are recent high school graduates like himself. Others took a couple of years off after high school before discerning a priestly vocation. Some just graduated from college. One new seminarian spent 10 years in the workforce before hearing God’s call. And the new seminarians come from seven of the archdiocese’s 11 deaneries. Such diversity among the archdiocese’s seminarians is a blessing, according to Father Augenstein, who

also serves as vice rector of Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary in Indianapolis where 12 of the new seminarians will begin formation. “I think it makes formation easier,” he said. “Formation takes who you are as a man and a disciple and forms you into the priest that God is calling you to be. We’re not cookie cutter priests. Having variety among our seminarians helps that approach that formation is individualized.”

‘This is where I belong’

In addition to the historic high number of new seminarians, the archdiocese starts this new year of formation with 34 seminarians overall, the most it’s had since 1994. Of those 34, 21 are enrolled at Bishop Bruté, 12 will receive priestly formation at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad, and one is serving in a pastoral internship in an archdiocesan parish. Archbishop Thompson spent time with all of them during the convocation, including celebrating Mass for them on Aug. 10 at the Blessed Sacrament Chapel at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis. He spoke with *The Criterion* after the liturgy about the seminarians and his gratitude for them. “It’s great to have all our seminarians together, especially when we have such a great number of 34,” Archbishop Thompson said. “But more important than the number is the quality. That’s the key, having good quality young men for formation toward the priesthood. “I’m grateful for their courage, their generosity, their humility and their willingness to discern a vocation to the priestly service in the local Church here in central and southern Indiana.”

During the Mass, three archdiocesan seminarians were admitted to candidacy for ordination, a step that takes place when seminarians enter what is called the “configuration stage” of priestly formation. It begins when a seminarian enters his last four years of preparation for priestly life and ministry. One of those seminarians admitted to candidacy is Todd Seiler, a member of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Parish in Aurora. He described for *The Criterion* his reaction to the step he took in his priestly formation. “This feels right,” said Seiler. “This feels good. This is where I belong and this is what I’m supposed to be doing.” The three archdiocesan seminarians admitted to candidacy wore clerical attire—a black Roman-collared shirt, black pants and black shoes—at the Aug. 10 Mass. They’ll also wear them at all public events at Saint Meinrad where they are enrolled, and will have the option of wearing them in the archdiocese when assisting in liturgies and taking part in pastoral ministry in parishes. “For me, just wearing them reminds you that you’re not here for yourself,” said Seiler. “You’re here for other people and for Christ.” The 16 new seminarians for the archdiocese are the people he and other veteran seminarians were there for during the convocation, making them feel welcomed and

Peoria priest shares priestly insights of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen

By Sean Gallagher

The annual convocation of archdiocesan seminarians that takes place in early August before they go off for a year of priestly formation at their seminaries always includes elements of a retreat for the potential future priests. Each day, they pray the Liturgy of the Hours together, worship at Mass, and pray in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament during a Holy Hour. This year, Msgr. Jason Gray, a priest of the Diocese of Peoria, Ill., also offered the seminarians reflections on the priesthood from the insights of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, who will be declared blessed during a beatification Mass on Sept. 24 in

St. Louis. Msgr. Gray serves as executive director of the Fulton J. Sheen Foundation and has been highly involved in his beatification and canonization cause. The first of his reflections for the seminarians was given on Aug. 9 during a Holy Hour at St. Rita Church in Indianapolis where Archbishop Sheen, who died in 1979 at 84, preached on two occasions. Msgr. Gray focused specifically on how Archbishop Sheen understood priests as victims that they themselves offer to God, a view on the priesthood rooted in Christ’s sacrifice of himself on the cross for the salvation of all humanity. Msgr. Gray noted that many times Archbishop Sheen offered himself in this way through his grace-filled struggles



Msgr. Jason Gray, a priest of the Diocese of Peoria, Ill., gives a reflection on Aug. 9 at St. Rita Church in Indianapolis during the annual convocation of archdiocesan seminarians. The priest, who has been highly involved in the beatification and canonization cause of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, spoke during the convocation about the insights of the late archbishop, who died in 1979. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

with difficulties in his life. “He said he had a fear of the cross at different stages when he was first called [to the priesthood],” Msgr. Gray said. “The idea of embracing the cross, embracing sacrifice, is something that you have to grow into. For Sheen, there was a lot of growth that occurred before he reached that point where he was

really more immersed in that thinking.” Part of a priest’s life in which he can offer himself as a victim, Msgr. Gray said, is through acts of humility and obedience, something he noted marked the early priestly life of Archbishop Sheen. After being ordained a priest in 1919 for the Diocese of Peoria, he was sent away for graduate studies in philosophy, earning two doctorates in the field. This led him to be offered teaching positions at prestigious schools like Oxford University in Great Britain and Harvard University in Cambridge, Mass. So, he wrote the bishop in Peoria about which invitation he should accept. “The bishop said to come home,” Msgr. Gray said. “He assigned him to a downtown parish in Peoria where he was just a parochial vicar. And Sheen accepted that assignment. “He threw himself into that work, dedicated himself to it, and was actually very successful in that. He preached well. He cared for the people.” After a year in the assignment, Msgr. Gray said that the bishop allowed then-Father Sheen to take a position at The Catholic University of America in Washington, noting that in assigning him to ordinary parish ministry he had been “testing his obedience.” Although Archbishop Sheen established his intellectual prowess at a young age and could have sat on his laurels, Msgr. Gray said he always had a great desire to learn more and renew his perspective on the subjects he taught and spoke on. “When he finished a course, he would

tear up his notes,” Msgr. Gray said. “Then, when he would teach the course the next time, he would start fresh.” This, he said, was another way that Archbishop Sheen offered himself as a victim since it required constant work on his part, work that he could have avoided simply by using his previous course notes. Msgr. Gray encouraged the seminarians to take the same approach as priests when preparing to preach to their parishioners. “A priest who is preaching should also continue to be growing in his own spiritual life,” he told the seminarians. “We should use this as an opportunity for the Scriptures to continue to challenge us, so that way we’re trying to still discover even deeper insights into individual passages, so that way our preaching becomes fresh. “If you are a father, so a spiritual father is a priest, so don’t feed your family stale food.” While he had many struggles in his life, Msgr. Gray said that Archbishop Sheen sought to remain joyful in the midst of them. “Sheen was someone who was known in particular for his humor, and yet he also would talk about the fact that there was intense suffering in his experience,” Msgr. Gray said. “Sheen was able to maintain joy while also being very much aware of personal suffering.” This was a practice that Msgr. Gray encouraged the seminarians to make their own. “We can be familiar with the cross and then be completely depressing and dour,” he said. “I don’t know that that’s helpful. So, maintaining a sense of joy is, I think, also something that we should also think about.” †

helping them to become acclimated to the life of a man in priestly formation.

“There’s definitely a lot of newness here, fresh faces,” Seiler said. “It gives me and some of the other older guys an opportunity to share our experiences with them. We were once in their place.”

Seiler spoke about this at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Museum, which the seminarians visited on Aug. 11. They took a bus ride through the speedway’s famed Gasoline Alley where race teams have their garages, and spent time in the Pagoda, its five-story control tower, and Victory Circle, where the winner of the Indianapolis 500 celebrates with a drink of milk.

An outing like this ordinarily happens at the annual convocation to help build fraternity among the seminarians. Father Augenstein said this effort had “more intentionality” to it this year given the number of new seminarians.

“And there’s definitely more responsibility for our senior seminarians to be something of a big brother to welcome the new guys in,” he added.

New seminarian Josh Waddell appreciated the hospitality shown him by the archdiocese’s veteran seminarians during the convocation.

“It makes me feel that I’m joining something bigger than myself,” said Waddell, 27, a member of St. Augustine Parish in Jeffersonville. “You can draw a lot of strength from that. I’ve felt more at peace about the decision to continue the process of discernment in the seminary, knowing the support and seeing the experiences of guys who are going through something very similar.”

(For more information about a vocation to the priesthood in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, visit HearGodsCall.com.) †



Above: with several seminarians gathered around him on Victory Circle at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway in Indianapolis, archdiocesan seminarian Nathan Huynh pretends to drink milk like a race driver who has just won the Indianapolis 500. The seminarians’ outing to the speedway on Aug. 11 was part of the annual archdiocesan seminarian convocation.



Left: Archbishop Charles C. Thompson elevates a chalice during an Aug. 10 Mass in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel of SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis. The liturgy was part of the annual convocation of archdiocesan seminarians. Concelebrating the liturgy are, from left, Father Timothy Wyciskalla, Father Michael Keucher and Father Eric Augenstein.

The gift of a father: ‘I will be forever grateful to God who gave him to me’

(Editor’s note: The Criterion has invited our readers to share their stories about how their father’s influence has shaped their life and their faith. Here is one of their stories.)

One in an occasional series

By John Shaughnessy

In our childhoods, our fathers are often our heroes, the people we aspire to be one day.

As we grow older, some of us can look down on the person we once looked up to—at least before another change in perspective happens.

Mark Twain captured that changing perspective perfectly when the great American author noted, “When I was a boy of 14, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be 21, I was astonished at how much he had learned in seven years.”

Irene Evans is one of the fortunate people who never went through those times of changing perspectives. As one of the four daughters of her late father, Frank Wojtanowski, her view of him as her hero has never changed.

“He seemed bigger than life to me, yet he stood only 5 feet, 9 inches tall,” says Evans, a member of St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis. “He was strong, an amateur boxer in his early life who taught us a few boxing moves. To this day, I know how to do a headlock. My father was a protector.

“Losing his mother to a heart condition when he was only 10 profoundly affected my father. But it didn’t harden him. Instead, throughout his life, he celebrated each new child born into our large extended family as hope for the future. And he was asked to be a godfather to so many I’ve lost count of them all. My father was a champion for life.”

Her memories of him also include his love for his wife, Evans’ mother.

“When freshly out of the Navy in World War II, he met my mother on a blind date and never looked back,” Evans says. “He described it as love at first sight when she answered the door to her parent’s modest home. My father became a faithful and loving husband.”

Her view of him as a hero also extends to his service to his country during World War II.

“One of my very first memories with my father is sitting in a theater watching the movie, *Wing and a Prayer*,” she recalls. “The movie features life and actual battle scenes on the USS Yorktown, the Navy aircraft carrier that my father served on. He was a gunner in the planes that flew many nighttime missions in key victories in the South Pacific.

“As I watched the movie, I struggled to see over the seat in front of me. I remember stretching up my young self as high as I could without leaving my seat as my father said several times, ‘Look! There I am.’ Whether or not it was actually him, I’m not sure, but I believed it was, and I

was so proud.”

Evans says it was one of the rare times he talked about his service to his country, noting that “his medals were discreetly locked away.”

He showed that same humility in his later life.

“Whenever he was recognized for his volunteer work as a prime member of our church’s Dad’s Club, or for being the bingo number caller, or for the fact that he worked three jobs at times to support his family, he shied away from praise.”

Instead, he focused on his faith daily.

“It is with great love and tenderness that I remember this humble man who knelt every night saying the rosary that otherwise hung on his bedpost,” Evans notes. “Later in his retirement home, he led the rosary for those who joined him each week.”



One of Irene Evans’ favorite family photos captures her and her father Frank Wojtanowski sharing a birthday celebration together. (Submitted photo)

All these qualities add up to her image of her father as her hero.

“Was he an inspiration? Did he teach me to love? To serve? Did he model his deep and abiding faith? The love of our country? Yes, yes. A thousand times yes.

“I will be forever grateful to God who gave him to me as my father.” †

READY, SET, LEARN

Students across the Archdiocese of Indianapolis are beginning a new school year filled with learning, friendship and faith.



SCAN ME

These photos capture special first-day moments from schools throughout the archdiocese.

See the full gallery at <https://cutt.ly/CriterionBackToSchool2026>



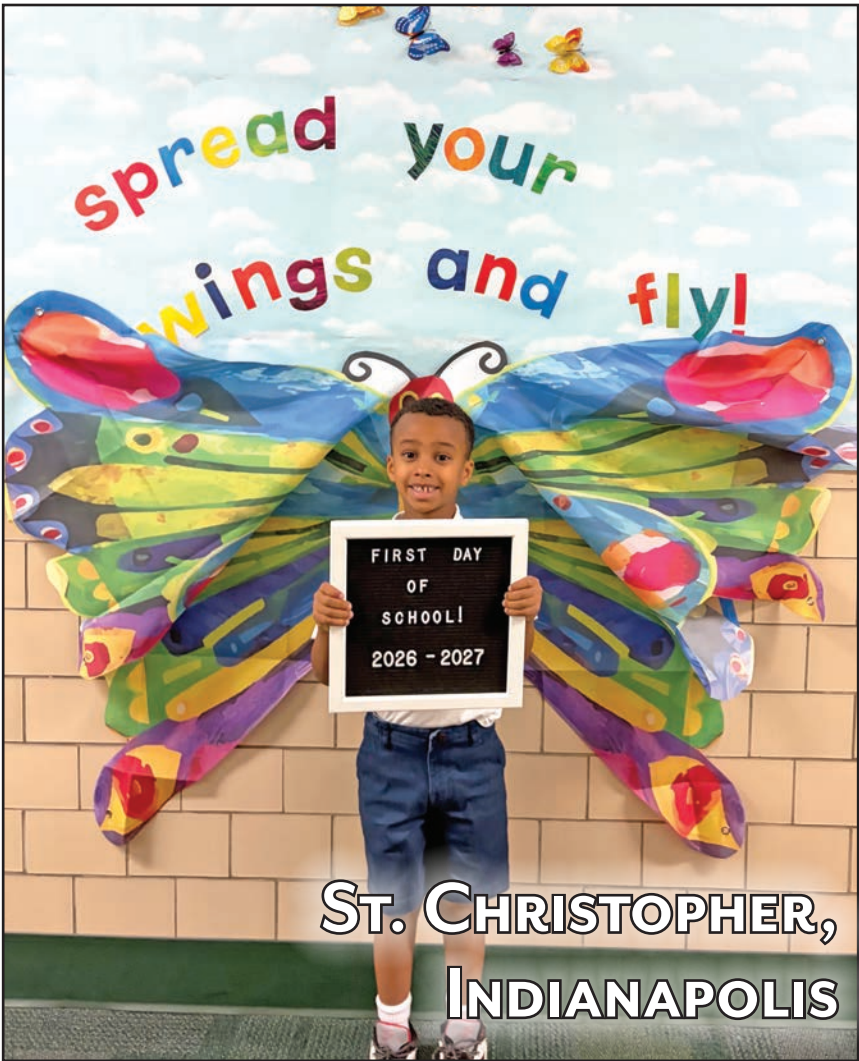
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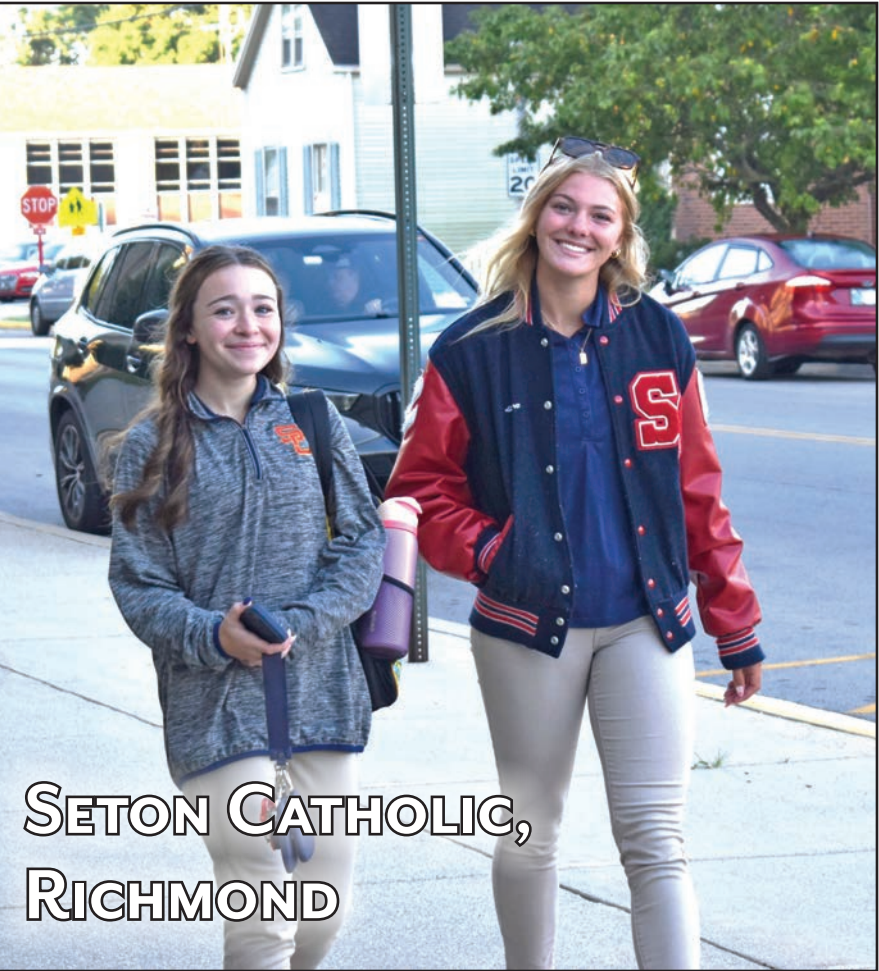
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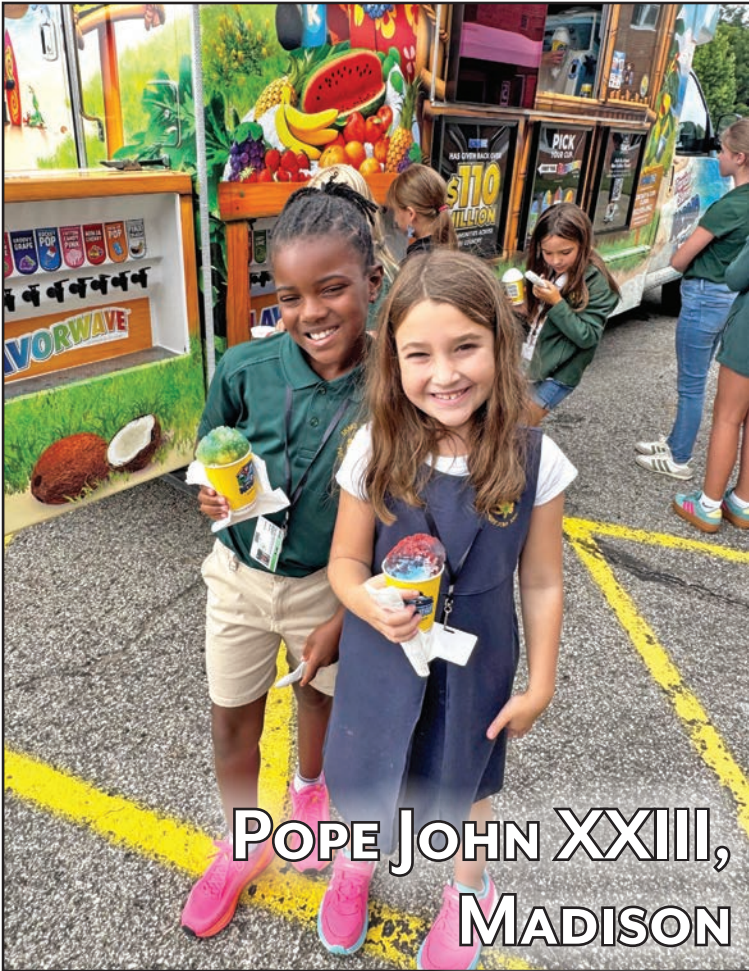
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OUR LADY OF THE GREENWOOD, GREENWOOD



POPE JOHN XXIII,
MADISON

Indiana’s Catholics reflect American spirit of courage and sacrifice

As the United States celebrates its 250th anniversary this year, the country acknowledges this landmark moment by recalling the stories of its founders, its heroes and the everyday people who have graced America with their courage, their sacrifice and their willingness to confront challenges and overcome them.

In that same spirit, *The Criterion* is sharing stories of Catholics from Indiana’s past and present who have displayed those same qualities in leaving their mark on our archdiocese, our state, our country and our world.

As we continue this series, we hope you enjoy these stories and are inspired by the people in them. †



Grandmother quietly shares the power of a life deeply rooted in God, humanity and nature

By John Shaughnessy

The story of America is the story of immigrants—and the dreams that have led them to want to come to a country that has long offered a combination of freedom and opportunity.

The story of America is also the story of immigrants who have blessed this country with their hard work, their emphasis on family and their belief that God is with them as they pursue their dreams and try to overcome their struggles.

Ray Golarz has been blessed to be born in such a family. And at the age of 85, he is in the midst of writing a book that features some of his defining memories and stories of his immigrant family, including his Polish grandmother, Busia.



Ray Golarz

“I was born just before the beginning of World War II in a Polish ghetto just southeast of Chicago,” recalls Golarz, a member of St. Paul Catholic Center in Bloomington. “My parents were both born in that ghetto, and my grandparents were all immigrants who lived there and had come to America from Poland.

“Because my parents both worked in the steel mills during the war, I spent most of my early, growing-up years with Busia and Dziadzia (his grandfather). A simplistic definition of my Busia would be a Polish peasant unpretentiously in love with her God.”

The depth of that love shines through in a few stories that Golarz has written about his grandmother. The first one involves a scene shortly after World War II ended.

“Once as a child, I went to town with Busia,” he recalls. “To get there, we walked the tracks to save the five cents each for the bus ride. When Busia had completed her shopping, the weather had turned quite cold, and it was beginning to sleet. So, we went to the bus stop. Three elderly Black women were standing in the sleet on the side of the bus but not boarding.

“The bus driver waved Busia to come aboard. But she just stood there stoically. He then came out into the rain. Busia just stood there and pointed to the Black women. He waved her off, then went back into the bus. He came out again and motioned Busia to get in. She again pointed to the Black women. Finally in anger, he relented and motioned them to board. Busia and I boarded with them, and we all sat together in the back of the bus.

“At home I asked her what that all meant. She explained that the Black women were not permitted to board until the bus was ready to leave and all the white people who wanted to ride were on the bus. I remember being upset and saying, ‘But that’s not fair.’

“She nodded and replied, ‘In old country, these things happen. In America, not supposed to. Remember Raymund, if more and more people let that happen, then more and more it happen. You understand?’ I said, ‘I think so.’ She concluded, ‘Always fight them, Raymund, or America become like old country. Remember Raymund, it is God’s way to fight them.’ ”

Her connection to God also showed in other ways. Golarz remembers the way she said night prayers with him, kneeling by his bed. He also saw the way she would go into her bedroom during the day to pray the rosary. And he noticed a powerful, faith-filled gesture she made each week.

“Every Monday, sometimes on the dining room table and sometimes on her bedroom dresser, Busia would spread out a small, embroidered handkerchief,” Golarz writes. “During the course of the week, any change she found—or that had been left over from a dollar spent for bread, meat and such—she would place in the handkerchief.

“On Sunday morning, she would fold and gently knot the handkerchief and take it to church. At collection time, all would be emptied in the collection basket as it came by. Seldom was there as much as a dollar in change, sometimes less than a dime. The consistency was that all was given.”

His grandmother’s faith also showed in the only time he saw her angry.

A life rooted in God and humanity

“It happened on a warm, mid-summer day near the side of the house where her apple tree grew,” Golarz recalls. “My brother Joe and I had gotten into an apple-throwing war with neighborhood kids. The warring weaponry was apples that had fallen to the ground. When Busia saw us, she rushed into the yard. She was livid.

“The warring enemy ran, and we were alone with her. As she pointed her finger at us, shaking it repeatedly, we could see that her anger had brought her to tears. Our immediate assumption was that we had provoked her wrath as a consequence of fighting. We were wrong.

“Through her broken English, we began to understand something very different. We, her grandsons, had been abusing a gift of precious food that God in his goodness had given to her and her family. Still sobbing, she picked up the battered apples lying on the ground, brushed off the dirt, and gently placed them into her apron. She left us there feeling a shame we had never before felt.

“Every year, I had watched her faithfully plant and tend her garden and her fruit trees. I had even assisted her with the plants, pulling the weeds and hoeing the soil. But until we had seen her express such anger, neither I nor my brother Joe had understood what this all meant to her.

“This growing, nurturing and eventual harvesting was not just a way of life; it was a daily communion with her God. Each plant and each tree was an act of faith that would bring a response in the form of a harvest—a response promised to an old peasant woman who understood and cherished this bond.”

As he looks back across the years, Golarz cherishes even more the bond he had with Busia. Memories of her fill his thoughts. At the same time, he encourages everyone to embrace the love of nature, humanity and God at the root of her life.

“In the late summer and fall, the harvesting of her trees and plants was done in the manner of one accepting gifts from a gift-giver you are very fond of,” he writes. “During those times, in quiet evenings, she often hummed the tunes I believe she carried to this land from the old country. They were probably melodies she had learned as a child while assisting with the harvestings or as she walked through meadows tending the animals.

“I have not, since my time with Busia, spent my life with farmers. As I grow older, I wish I had. I’m not sure that any of us should ever get too far from the soil or from those who spend their lives there. They seem to have learned better how to live their lives in a simpler, more harmonious way with their God and his creation.”

He knows the same is true about his grandmother. †

A full-circle moment shows the depth of a woman’s love and faith

By John Shaughnessy

Some of the best stories of our lives are full-circle moments.

A coach who guided young players is touched when they rally around him years later during a hard time.

A boy and a girl who went to their high school prom as friends reunite years later for dinner on the opposite coast of the country, leading to their marriage.

For Angela Espada, her favorite full-circle moment involves a faith-filled aunt and that woman’s dedication to the Blessed Mother and praying the rosary.

“Mary Weathers had an unshakable faith in God and a deep appreciation for being Catholic,” says Espada, a member of Holy Angels Parish in Indianapolis. “Her faith touched my life almost from the moment that I was born.

“With a due date of mid-May, I arrived in February in 1961 weighing a mere 3 1/2 pounds. Aunt Mary immediately began to pray the rosary nonstop for me. The doctors didn’t express much hope for my survival, but Aunt Mary was faithful.”

Her aunt’s faithfulness and prayers continued to guide Espada through some challenging times in her formative years.



Mary Weathers

“There were times when I was young that I didn’t fully appreciate Catholicism,” Espada notes. “As an Africana American growing up, there weren’t many other Catholics in my neighborhood. The differences in my way of worshiping compared to my friends and neighbors could have made me feel like an outsider. It was Aunt Mary who helped me to see the differences as something to celebrate.

“While I didn’t fully understand why there were differences, I knew that I wanted to be a part of something that made her so happy and peaceful. Appropriately, she was my sponsor when I was later confirmed.”

Beyond the prayers and the guidance, Espada also saw how her Aunt Mary put her faith into action.

“Despite not having children of her own, she and her husband, Edward, allowed many of her nephews and me to live with them for extended periods of time,” Espada recalls. “We all experienced love, support and encouragement in their home. It was Aunt Mary’s faith that brought her husband to the Church and helped him open his heart, home and wallet to us all.”

Her Aunt Mary also opened Espada’s eyes about the best way to live life.

‘Her faith had taught me to have faith’

“It was watching Aunt Mary put her faith in action that taught me the importance of leadership through service,” Espada says. “She was a eucharistic minister at Saints Peter and Paul Cathedral Parish, as well as a volunteer to clean the cathedral. Weekly, she volunteered at St. Francis Hospital and was even named volunteer of the year. Her actions taught me to help others whenever I could.

“When I later expressed an interest in law school, she encouraged me to be an advocate to help, instead of focusing on earning a big salary.”

After earning her law degree, Espada pursued a career path that included serving as a Marion County deputy prosecutor, a law school administrator and the executive director of the Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC), the public policy voice of the Church in Indiana.

Serving the ICC from 2019 to 2024, Espada was the first woman to lead the state conference and the first woman of color to be the director of a Catholic conference nationwide. In working with Indiana legislators, she advocated the Church’s position of fighting on issues that helped the poor and vulnerable and protected the sanctity of life at all stages.

Espada believes her aunt would have been pleased to know that the baby she once prayed for to live worked for the cause of life—and a better life—for others.

That feeling also connects to the full-circle moment in Espada’s life.

“A little over 30 years to the day when I was born, my daughter, Maya, arrived,” Espada shares about that moment in 1990. “She was also early. With a due date of mid-April, she was born in February. I was told that she was having trouble breathing. She had to be closely monitored. Therefore, it would be a while before I could hold her.

“I was concerned but not alarmed. I wasn’t alarmed because my husband, Jose, also told me that Aunt Mary was at the hospital. Aunt Mary was outside of the nursery, rosary in hand, nonstop once again praying the rosary and interceding to the Blessed Mother. Her faith had taught me to have faith. Our daughter came home with me the next day.”

Espada’s Aunt Mary died in 2013, but the way she lived her life continues to influence her family.

“She believed in the Blessed Mother Mary and the Sacred Heart of Jesus,” Espada says. “Through her overwhelming love, she became the beloved heart of our family.” †

Archbishop Daniel Buechlein Excellence in Catechesis honoree from Tell City loves ‘watching the faith click for people’

By Natalie Hoefer

Megan Rust was working for AT&T several years ago when she was invited to help with her Evansville, Ind., parish’s youth ministry at-home mission trip.

“I had no background with kids,” says Rust. “It was just a determined priest who thought I’d do well with kids, and people-pleasing me who couldn’t say no.”

The priest’s hunch was right. Rust “fell in love with youth ministry” and began volunteering as a catechist for sophomores at her parish.

Her love for “helping people find Christ” became a calling. Nine years ago, she left AT&T to become the parish catechetical leader for St. Paul Parish in Tell City.

“It’s the best job in the whole world because it doesn’t feel like a job,” says Rust. “I truly mean that. I love what I get to do.”

The love she’s poured into her ministry for nearly 10 years was recognized recently when Rust received the Archbishop Daniel Buechlein Excellence in Catechesis Award, the highest honor given by the archdiocesan Office of Catechesis.

“My favorite thing about Megan Rust is her genuine enthusiasm for the faith and her deep love for others,” says Deanna Dean, archdiocesan coordinator of catechetical resources. “God has blessed her with a wonderful sense of humor, which she thoughtfully uses to connect with and minister to those around her, ... serving others with excellence.”

But the highest praise comes from a mother moved by Rust’s approach in preparing her autistic child for first Communion.

‘A true disciple of Christ’

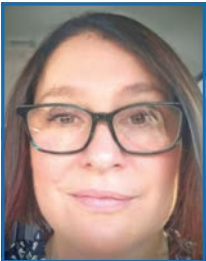
“Her soft voice and kindness toward [him] was ever present in all she did,” the woman wrote to Ute Eble, archdiocesan director of catechesis.

The mother appreciated the special catechetical material used to help her son understand the sacrament.

But even more touching to her was how Rust “held him, hugged him, offered breaks, asked for the music to be softer. ... Through her love, kindness and devotion to her job and to the children, she made my autistic son feel loved, safe, heard and understood.”

The woman also “greatly appreciated the love and generosity” Rust extended to her as well, calling St. Paul’s catechetical leader “a true disciple of Christ.”

Rust’s area of responsibility extends beyond St. Paul. The parish shares resources and leadership with three other Tell City Deanery faith communities: St. Mark in Perry County, St. Michael in Cannelton and St. Pius V in Troy. Among various groupings of the “quad parishes,” she leads kindergarten through eighth-grade religious education and preparation for certain sacraments. For all of the parishes, she oversees youth ministry, Order of Christian Initiation for Adults, adult faith formation and works on behalf of the Tell City Deanery with the leaders of the one-



‘My favorite thing about Megan Rust is her genuine enthusiasm for the faith and her deep love for others. God has blessed her with a wonderful sense of humor, which she thoughtfully uses to connect with and minister to those around her, ... serving others with excellence.’

—Deanna Dean, archdiocesan coordinator of catechetical resources

week Totus Tuus summer youth faith program.

“I love that no day is ever the same in my job,” she says. “It’s not 50% office work and 50% time with people—it’s more like 10% and 90%.”

She’s particularly pleased with the growth of the quad parishes’ youth ministry.

“When I started, we didn’t have a regular youth group—we just did NCYC [National Catholic Youth Conference] and mission trips,” Rust recalls.

She and her “team of fabulous volunteers” created an official youth ministry which the kids named IMPACT Youth: Influencing Many People as Catholic Teens. It includes monthly gatherings and programs like Java with Jesus and Lunch on Us, with as many as 40 youths participating at a time.

“To grow from nothing to that—it just warms my heart that these kids keep coming back,” says Rust. “One of my favorite parts of my job is watching the faith click for people.”

That reward holds true for adults as well as youths.

‘Supporting and loving people’

Rust admits that working with kids “is a primary part of my job.”

But this past spring during an adult class, she was moved by “watching people work really hard to develop that relationship [with Christ] and deepen their faith. That really drives me. If I leave somewhere and you know that Jesus loves you and there’s nothing you can do to change that, then I feel like I’ve done my job.”

Being a catechist requires patience, the ability to adapt quickly and an open mind, says Rust.

“Every time I meet with catechists, I tell them we have to meet [people] where they are and that we’re plantings seeds we may never see the results of,” she says.

Rust is drawn to three particular saints in her ministry. She is inspired by St. Maximillian Kolbe offering his life in the place of a concentration camp prisoner in Auschwitz in 1941 selected for death who had a family. She is motivated by St. Catherine of Siena’s quote, “Be who God meant you to be, and you will set the world on fire.”

And she draws strength from the lesser-known St. Maria Troncatti, a Salesian sister canonized in 2025 whose order sent her to evangelize in the



Megan Rust, parish catechetical leader for St. Paul Parish in Tell City, poses in the parish's church with the faith community's pastor Father Anthony Hollowell after he presented her the archdiocese's Archbishop Daniel Buechlein Excellence in Catechesis Award on Aug. 16. (Submitted photo by Brooke Greene)

Amazon region of Ecuador in 1922.

“They wanted to send her to the jungle, and she was like, ‘No, I’m good,’ but they sent her anyway,” says Rust. “She let go of her will.”

“My job is like that. At first, I was resigned to saying ‘no’ because, as a single person, finances are a huge thing, and working for the Church, you won’t get rich in money—but you get rich in so many other ways.”

Rust admits she “got a little teary-eyed” when she learned about receiving the Archbishop Daniel Buechlein Excellence in Catechesis Award. “It was very unexpected—I just do my job every day.”

It’s a job she says she “can’t do alone.” Rust expresses gratitude for the support she receives from St. Paul’s staff and its pastor Father Anthony Hollowell, from the other parishes she serves, and “from my ministry support group of fellow women who work across the archdiocese.”

She says her job is “so much more than teaching the faith.”

“I get to build relationships with people,” says Rust. “I get to know them and be there for some of the brightest parts of their life and sometimes the saddest. It’s all about supporting and loving people.”

In the end, she gets more than she gives, says Rust.

“This job has deepened my faith in ways I didn’t know it needed to deepen.” †

‘Catechesis for Discipleship Award’ honors witnesses to Christ

Criterion Staff Report

The “Catechesis for Discipleship Award” is an honor given annually to catechists from parishes by the archdiocesan Office of Catechesis.

Pastors, parish life coordinators and parish catechetical leaders are asked to identify a catechist in their faith communities who excels at teaching the faith and witnessing to the life-changing power of a disciple relationship with Jesus—lived in full communion with his body, the Church.

Following is the list of honorees for the 2025-26 year as selected by parish leaders throughout central and southern Indiana:

—John Black, St. Michael the Archangel Parish, Indianapolis

—Mindy Cooke, Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ Parish, Indianapolis

—Erin Fuhrman, Holy Family Parish, New Albany

—Tyler Hagedorn, St. Mark Parish, Perry County

—Norma Hernandez, St. Ambrose Parish, Seymour

—Kay Holsclaw, St. John the Baptist Parish, Starlight

—Shannon Lindauer, St. Paul Parish, Tell City

—Nina Lira, Holy Trinity Parish, Edinburgh

—Chad Lyons, St. Francis Xavier Parish, Henryville

—Magda Martinez, St. Anthony Parish, Indianapolis

—Nicole Masoudi, Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Indianapolis

—Paula Metzger, St. Anthony of Padua Parish, Clarksville

—Mary Meyer, St. Michael Parish, Brookville

—Amy Miranda, St. Joseph University Parish, Terre Haute

—Patty Moore, St. Rose of Lima Parish, Franklin

—Heather Piecuch, St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross Parish, Bright

—Cuberto Salazar, St. Monica Parish, Indianapolis

—Alex Soto, St. Michael Parish, Charlestown

—Theresa Spears, St. Martin of Tours Parish, Martinsville

—Sarah Beth Volk, St. Louis Parish, Batesville

—Faith Wade, St. John Paul II Parish, Sellersburg

—Brenda Wilhelm-Waggoner, St. Peter Parish, Franklin County

—Children’s Liturgy of the Word team, St. Matthew the Apostle Parish, Indianapolis

Please continue praying for catechists and your parish catechetical leader.

Is God calling you to teach the faith to your fellow parishioners? Make an appointment with your parish catechetical leader today to discuss your role in fulfilling the great commission of our Lord Jesus: “Go and make disciples” (Mt 28:19). †

SIMPLY CATHOLIC

Cardinal Spellman sought to harmonize the Catholic faith and patriotism

(Editor’s note: With 2026 being the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States, this story is part of a continuing series of occasional “Simply Catholic” articles about great Catholics who have called America their home.)

By Russel Shaw

(OSV News)—Many cardinals have had books written about them, but few have become the fictionalized heroes of best-selling novels. Cardinal Francis J. Spellman, archbishop of New York from 1939 to 1967, was one—possibly the only one.

The novel was called *The Cardinal*. The work of Catholic author Henry Morton Robinson, it topped the best-seller list for many months after its publication in 1950. It was made into a movie in 1963.

With many embellishments, the story mirrored the real-life career of Cardinal Spellman—hard-fought climb to the top of the hierarchical ladder, trusted adviser to a pope and a president, and behind-the-scenes unofficial diplomat engaged in sensitive wartime missions.

When *Time* magazine, marking his elevation to cardinal, featured his cherubic features on the cover of its Feb. 25, 1946, issue, the artist situated the dome of St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican and a spire of St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York in the background.

They might have tossed in the White House, too—for Cardinal Spellman, operating at the topmost levels of Church and state, embodied the fusion of Americanism and Catholicism that had been taking shape for a century and was nearing its apex just then.

Francis Joseph Spellman was born on May 4, 1889, in Whitman, Mass., the oldest of five children of William and Ellen (Conway) Spellman. His father was a grocer, and both parents were of Irish ancestry. Young Francis attended the local high school, where he was manager of its baseball team, and then Fordham University in New York, graduating in 1911.

By then, he’d decided to become a priest. As a seminarian of the Boston Archdiocese, he received priestly formation at the Urban College in Rome, exhibiting a notable talent for cultivating friendships with men who would rise to high positions in the Roman Curia.

Ordained a priest in 1916, he returned to Boston. There he appeared to have had some kind of falling-out with Cardinal William O’Connell, the imperious and autocratic cleric who ruled the archdiocese with an iron hand. Whatever the cause, Father Spellman spent the next several years in a series of insignificant temporary assignments.

Even so, he kept up his Roman contacts. A breakthrough came in 1925, when he accompanied a pilgrimage group to Rome. There he secured a post in the Vatican Secretariat of State and wangled the job of director of several Roman playgrounds funded by the Knights of Columbus.

He also made friends with two American Catholics—Count Enrico Galeazzi, a layman and consummate Vatican insider, and Archbishop (soon to be Cardinal) Eugenio Pacelli, then the Holy See’s nuncio to Germany whom Pope Pius XI named Secretary of State in 1929.

When Pope Pius XI in 1931 issued an encyclical sharply critical of Benito Mussolini’s fascist regime, the fascists wouldn’t allow its publication in Italy. Father Spellman’s superiors then assigned the young American priest to smuggle the document to Paris, where it received international media attention.

In 1932, Father Spellman was named auxiliary bishop of Boston and ordained in St. Peter’s with Cardinal Pacelli serving as the principal consecrator. With the approval of Pius XI, he adopted the pope’s own episcopal motto as his own: “*Sequere Deum*”—follow God.

Bishop Spellman may have been a hero in Rome, but it was a different story in Boston. Cardinal O’Connell hadn’t asked for an auxiliary bishop—and certainly not this one. The cardinal sent his unsought auxiliary into a kind of exile—a parish assignment with as little public visibility as possible.

But Bishop Spellman was not so easily thwarted. With funding from his friend, Boston multi-millionaire Joseph P. Kennedy, father of a future president, he organized a 1936 U.S. visit by his great Vatican friend, Cardinal Pacelli, and accompanied him on a cross-country tour, flying on an airliner chartered by Kennedy.



New York Cardinal Francis J. Spellman is greeted on June 30, 1966, by St. Paul VI at the Vatican. Serving as archbishop of New York from 1939 until his death in 1967, Cardinal Spellman sought to harmonize the demands of the Catholic faith with being a patriotic American. (OSV News photo/Giancarlo Giuliani, CPP)

A high point of the trip was a meeting, arranged by Bishop Spellman, between the cardinal and President Franklin D. Roosevelt at Hyde Park, the president’s New York estate.

On Sept. 4, 1938, Cardinal Patrick J. Hayes of New York passed away. Pope Pius XI died on Feb. 10 the following year. On March 2, the cardinals elected Cardinal Pacelli to succeed him. He took the name Pius XII. On April 24, the Holy See announced that Bishop Spellman had been appointed archbishop of New York. The first person besides family members whom Archbishop-elect Spellman notified was President Roosevelt.

As the world plunged into war and the United States edged toward entering the conflict, Roosevelt more and more turned to Archbishop Spellman as an adviser on Catholic affairs. At the end of 1939, Pope Pius XII named him to the post of Military Vicar—prelate of a diocese-like ecclesiastical entity responsible for the pastoral care of Catholics in the armed forces, a precursor to today’s Archdiocese for Military Affairs. Archbishop Spellman served in this role in addition to his leadership of the New York Archdiocese.

Not only did the military role heighten his national and international profile, more and more, a historian writes, Archbishop Spellman “closely identified Catholicism and American patriotism.”

In January 1943, with Roosevelt’s permission and American government help, Archbishop Spellman was preparing for the first of what would be a series of annual trips to visit American servicemen overseas. At a White House meeting, Roosevelt gave him an additional mission whose nature became clear when on Feb. 12 he met in Madrid with Spanish dictator Francisco Franco and explained America’s wartime aims. The session was credited with helping ensure Spanish neutrality during the war.

This remarkable trip extended until July and also included stops at the Vatican and in North Africa, the Middle East and the Holy Land. In London, Archbishop Spellman lunched with Winston Churchill. In Rome, he appears to have met with high-ranking officials of the Italian government. In Istanbul in May, he made the acquaintance of the apostolic delegate, Archbishop Angelo Roncalli—later, Pope St. John XXIII.

Returning to the United States, he urged Roosevelt in several White House meetings to treat Rome as an “open city” and refrain from bombing it—a plea that had only partial success.

In 1944, he was sounded out about becoming Vatican Secretary of State, but he was indifferent to the offer and stayed in New York. During the war, Pope Pius XII named no new cardinals, and it was

no surprise when Archbishop Spellman was part of the first postwar batch, elevated to the College of Cardinals on Feb. 18, 1946.

In the years that followed, Cardinal Spellman was active on numerous fronts. As a champion of anti-communism, he was an early supporter of Sen. Joseph McCarthy’s efforts to out communists in government posts. (Following McCarthy’s largely self-inflicted fall, he privately extended a helping hand to the senator and his family.) A vocal critic of anti-Catholicism, he had a well-publicized falling-out with Eleanor Roosevelt, the president’s widow, over aid to parochial schools.

At the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), Cardinal Spellman, a theological conservative, supported ecumenism on pragmatic grounds. He also took Jesuit Father John Courtney Murray, a theologian of Church-state relations, to Rome with him as an adviser and, like other American bishops, strongly backed Vatican II’s endorsement of religious liberty.

In December 1965, during an overseas trip to visit the troops, the cardinal declared support for U.S. involvement in Vietnam in the words of Stephen Decatur: “My country, may it always be right, but right or wrong, my country.” The criticism he received for this ranged from sharp to vicious. He died in New York on Dec. 2, 1967.

Jesuit historian Father Gerald P. Fogarty writes that “American and Roman were the attributes of [Cardinal Spellman’s] career as the most influential American Catholic prelate of his age.” No one has captured that better than Henry Morton Robinson in *The Cardinal*.

At a crucial point in the novel, Stephen Fermoye, the book’s Spellman look-alike hero, finds his dual loyalty to Rome and America challenged by a skeptical Churchman. Fermoye’s subsequent soul-searching has this result:

“After months of intense and disciplined study, Stephen came to the private conclusion that the democratic idea with its emphasis on tolerance and individualism was the most hopeful manifestation of Christ’s spirit in human affairs. And despite [his critic’s] opinion to the contrary, Stephen continued to believe that the American phenomenon of a free Church in a free state had produced a Catholicism as stanch, loyal and vigorous as any that preceded it.”

Paulist Father Isaac Hecker, Cardinal James Gibbons—and Cardinal Spellman—would have said, “Amen.”

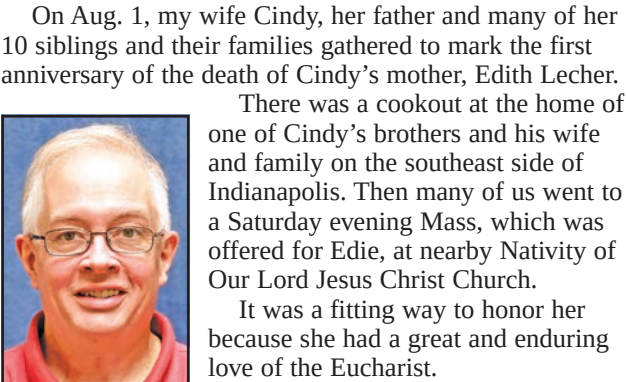
(Russell Shaw, a longtime journalist and writer, was the author of more than 20 books, including three novels. He died in January 2026.) †

Faith and Family/Sean Gallagher

The Eucharist maintains our bonds with our deceased loved ones

On Aug. 1, my wife Cindy, her father and many of her 10 siblings and their families gathered to mark the first anniversary of the death of Cindy’s mother, Edith Lecher. There was a cookout at the home of one of Cindy’s brothers and his wife and family on the southeast side of Indianapolis. Then many of us went to a Saturday evening Mass, which was offered for Edie, at nearby Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ Church. It was a fitting way to honor her because she had a great and enduring love of the Eucharist.

There’s a deep meaning in the connection in the ties that bind together the Eucharist, our prayers for our deceased loved ones and us giving thanks for the life we were blessed to share with them. The English Catholic scholar and novelist J.R.R. Tolkien reflected on this in a 1941 letter he wrote to his son Michael, who was then serving in the British Army in World War II. J.R.R. had been a soldier in World War I, serving at the terrible Battle of the Somme in 1916 in which 57,000 British soldiers were killed on the first day of the battle alone.



In this letter, he wrote about the Eucharist, telling Michael that he had learned “out of the darkness of my life, so much frustrated,” that the Eucharist was “the one great thing to love on Earth.” There, J.R.R. suggested, “you will find romance, glory, honor, fidelity and the true way of all your loves on Earth.” While written in inspiring prose, these are insights other authors have written about. What surprised me in the letter was another thing that J.R.R. said can be found in the Eucharist: death. But death here is seen as a gift, which is a theme in his fictional writings. He wrote that there is a “divine paradox” in that death, “that which ends life, and demands the surrender of all,” gives us a “taste—or foretaste” of what all people seek in their earthly bonds with their friends and loved ones: “love, faithfulness, joy” and the “eternal endurance, which every man’s heart desires.” How does this relate to the Eucharist? The great and mysterious grace of this sacrament brings worshippers here and now to Christ’s death on Calvary 2,000 years ago. In that death, Christ completely expressed his infinite love for each of us individually and all of us

together. And in this complete sacrifice of himself, Christ opened anew to us the doors to a life forever with him in heaven, the doors that had been closed by our first parents in their original sin. Christ gave us the Eucharist on the night before he died so that all of us who have been, are and will be his followers until the end of time can be drawn into his death and the great gift of eternity in heaven it makes possible. The Eucharist, then, gives us “a taste—or a foretaste” of the “eternal endurance” of the “love, faithfulness [and] joy” that we seek in our human relationships. Some of this came to mind when Cindy and I visited the grave of J.R.R. Tolkien and his wife Edith outside of Oxford in our travels in England in June. It dawned in my heart even more when I gathered with Cindy and her family at Mass on Aug. 1. I pray that the “eternal endurance” that Tolkien reflected on 85 years ago in his letter to his son is now his, a prayer I also make for Edith. I invite you to make this prayer for all of your loved ones, especially when you worship at Mass. †

Joy and Hope for Today and Tomorrow/Ken Ogorek

Listening, decision-making and decision-taking as disciples of Christ

What does it mean to be a listening Church? How should decisions be made within our Church? And how might we embrace decisions made by Church leaders—even if the path chosen wouldn’t have been our own, personal first choice? While these questions are timeless in a sense, they’ve become prominent in recent years. How we address these questions will help determine our Church’s path on her pilgrim journey throughout time and history. **A listening Church** We are a listening Church—much more so than many folks realize. Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, for example, consults with various individuals and groups before making significant decisions. But there’s room for improvement in how we listen. We can listen better to more individuals and groups; for example, the poor, the imprisoned, our young adults and Christians not in full communion with the Catholic Church, as well as people of faiths other than Christianity. And we can listen better to each other generally speaking. A way of having table discussions, called “Conversation in the Spirit,” can help us listen without interrupting or getting distracted by our own thoughts, ensuring that each participant has a fair opportunity to share her or his thoughts and feelings. Basic information about “Conversation in the Spirit” can be found here: tinyurl.com/ConvInSpiritEng (case sensitive).

Decision-making It’s important to distinguish between governance and leadership in our Church. Jesus definitely endows specific people—for example, bishops and pastors of parishes—with decision-making authority. But many Catholics can show leadership in our Church in various ways, and all are called to participate in the life of faith—including decision-making processes. When Church authorities arrive at decisions that differ from advice they’ve received, it can be helpful to offer a brief explanation of the reasoning or rationale

behind the decision. This sort of transparency, combined with the fact that advice given by several individuals and groups often demonstrates internal conflict, helps give the faithful assurance that they’ve been heard—even if a final decision wasn’t their initial idea.

‘By growing together as a listening Church, our processes for decision-making will be better. And we’ll be more docile to the Holy Spirit, as all of us—from pope to Joe Parishioner—are called to be.’

Can you live with a well-made decision? Decision-making is one side of a coin. The other is how well—or poorly—we accept decisions made by those with governance authority in our Church. Do you only feel heard when every decision aligns with your individual will? Or when you’ve had a chance to share your opinion and the reasons behind it—to make your case—can you accept an alternate decision discerned via a prayerful, consultative process, trusting that the Holy Spirit sometimes moves in directions not of your choosing? **Strong parishes, deep communion, healed divisions** Our archdiocesan pastoral plan asserts that “Strong parish communities facilitate healing, reconciliation and charity in order to repair the divisions among us and strengthen our unity as Missionary Disciples of Jesus Christ.” In our parishes, schools and agencies we should see steps taken to “facilitate healing, reconciliation and charity to repair division and strengthen communities.” By growing together as a listening Church, our processes for decision-making will be better. And we’ll be more docile to the Holy Spirit, as all of us—from pope to Joe Parishioner—are called to be. We’ll be better decision-takers, embracing ownership and responsibility for helping to implement decisions that might diverge, at least initially, from our personal, individual will. May God’s holy and perfect will be done, always.

(Ken Ogorek is executive director of the archdiocesan Secretariat for Evangelizing Catechesis. His monthly column explores how the Gospel takes root within our everyday lives and communities, especially through the lens of our archdiocesan pastoral plan, “Go Forth in Joy and Hope as Missionary Disciples.” E-mail him at kogorek@archindy.org.) †

Faith at Home/Laura Kelly Fanucci

In marriage, we need each other, but let’s remember we need God most of all

Bless our hearts, when my husband and I had been married all of three months, we signed up to become a team couple with our local Engaged Encounter program. We had enjoyed the retreat that we took as a requirement of our pre-Cana preparation, surprised to find it fun and helpful, not the drudgery we’d expected. In the years before babies started coming and our lives got so full that volunteering for a whole weekend away became impossible, we loved the chance to serve by speaking with other engaged couples. Later I would come to know the need for both peers and mentors on any vocational journey. We need the companionship of peers walking a few paces ahead on the path and the wisdom of those who know this trail well, having traveled it for years. For this reason, the Engaged Encounter retreats always included a younger couple and an older couple, to offer a variety of experiences and perspectives on marriage. We were bright-eyed and 25 years young, God bless us, besotted with each other. We must have studied our vows before we spoke them to each other, at least I want to hope we did. But how could we have known at the start

what it would mean to stay together in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, for richer and for poorer, for better and for worse? Life doled out both sides, as life always does. We got heaps of joy and heaps of grief. We lost our way along the way. We needed peers and mentors, old and young, to help us keep going. We needed to remember we were never alone, even (and especially) in the hardest parts. This is the gift of every sacrament. In good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, for richer and for poorer, for better and for worse, God stays with us. Yes, in our particular marriage, I believe we chose the right partner. Yes, we worked hard to survive what could have broken us. But all along it was grace that held us. The wonder that when two became one, we were always three: the trinity of a marriage made in love. From the beginning, God has been the third partner in our union, the sacred silent presence moving between us. In hard seasons that threatened to pull us apart, I knew that God was the only thing keeping us going. This is the power of sacraments as a vessel of God’s grace. God is the glue that holds us together, that helps repair the broken parts. God is the grace that surprises us, the laughter through tears, the reconciliation after pain, the awe of discovering

someone anew after decades spent by their side. Twenty years later, I still hesitate to write about marriage. I have walked with friends through separation and divorce. I know there is no simple formula for the life God calls each of us to live. But what marriage has taught me beyond a shadow of a doubt is one simple truth: God loves with us. Not only as a spouse, but as a parent, sibling, child and friend, I have been able to love most deeply when I remember that God is part of every relationship. The trinity of marriage taught me that every love—in families and between friends—has God as its creator and sustainer. Whenever the demands of love test our limits, the third partner of any relationship is already waiting to step in and shape whatever comes next. What relief to accept that we cannot make it on our own. Through marriage, I have come to know God in my love for my children, my parents, my siblings and my friends. The mystery of love is wider than we know, for the Trinity gives the model. We need each other, and we need God most of all. (Laura Kelly Fanucci is an author, speaker and founder of Mothering Spirit. Her latest book is Living Easter: 50 Days to Practice Resurrection.) †



Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, August 23, 2026

- Isaiah 22:19-23
- Romans 11:33-36
- Matthew 16:13-20

The first section of the Book of Isaiah provides this weekend’s Mass with its first reading.



The author of this section of Isaiah lived when the southern Hebrew kingdom, or the kingdom of Judah, still existed. Only later was this kingdom, and the other Hebrew kingdom, the

kingdom of Israel, overwhelmed by outside invaders.

As has been and is so often the case with national rulers, the king of Judah governed the country with the assistance of aides and subordinates. The principal assistant wore a distinctive badge, which was a key, to indicate to all that he acted on the king’s behalf.

In this reading, God, speaking through the prophet, stated that a chief minister would be selected to serve the king and to carry out the royal will. This official would wear the key.

An important point in this reading is that God clearly intervenes in human lives and uses human agents to accomplish his will and to communicate with his people.

The prophet, the king and the chief minister were all in the roles of human agents commissioned to bring God to the people and the people to God.

St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans again is the source of the second reading. Passages from this letter have been proclaimed for the past several weekends.

This weekend’s reading is a testimony to the majesty of God. As such, it is a great profession of Paul’s own faith. The Apostle emphasizes God’s infinite transcendence, noting that his judgments are “inscrutable” and his ways are “unsearchable” (Rom 11:33).

For its third reading this weekend, the Church offers us a passage from St. Matthew’s Gospel. It is an especially descriptive and enlightening reading.

The occasion occurs at Caesarea Philippi, a place in Galilee northeast of

Capernaum. At the time of Jesus, the place was a resort. The River Jordan forms here from springs, and small creeks flow from it. Still picturesque, it is a modern, popular place for relaxation and for delighting in nature.

Central to the reading is St. Peter’s confession of faith in Jesus. The Lord asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” (Mt 16:13). Jesus identified with the “Son of Man” of the Old Testament, a title used in reference to a special agent of God, who was unfailingly true to God.

Peter replied that the people are confused. Some saw Jesus as a prophet, such as John the Baptist or even Elijah.

The Lord pressed the question, and Peter declared that Jesus was the “Son of the living God,” a profound proclamation of the Lord’s own divinity (Mt 16:16). Peter had faith and this gave him insight and wisdom.

Reflection

It has been a long time since the prophets were concerned about the danger facing the two Hebrew kingdoms because of the threat of foreign invasions. It has been a long time since the contemporaries of Jesus faced their problems.

But the revelation of God in his holy word in all times and places provides solutions to problems, or the way to live with those problems and to prevail in peace of mind, confidence and a sense of purpose.

Jesus did not come into the world with God’s message of hope and then left it behind. He designated the Apostles, and their successors in the Church, to carry on his mission for all the generations that would live in the future, including our own.

The last reading, from St. Matthew’s Gospel, describes the moment when the Lord set this process in motion, when he chose Peter to be the chief spokesman of the message. It began a succession that endures today in Pope Leo XIV.

The Church, guided by Peter’s successor, is our link with Christ and with the wisdom of God that guides us through every difficulty. †

Daily Readings

Monday, August 24
St. Bartholomew, Apostle
Revelation 21:9b-14
Psalm 145:10-13, 17-18
John 1:45-51

Tuesday, August 25
St. Louis
St. Joseph Calasanz, priest
2 Thessalonians 2:1-3a, 14-17
Psalm 96:10-13
Matthew 23:23-26

Wednesday, August 26
2 Thessalonians 3:6-10, 16-18
Psalm 128:1-2, 4-5
Matthew 23:27-32

Thursday, August 27
St. Monica
1 Corinthians 1:1-9
Psalm 145:2-7
Matthew 24:42-51

Friday, August 28
St. Augustine, bishop and doctor of the Church
1 Corinthians 1:17-25

Psalm 33:1-2, 4-5, 10-11
Matthew 25:1-13

Saturday, August 29
The Passion of St. John the Baptist
1 Corinthians 1:26-31
Psalm 33:12-13, 18-19, 20-21
Mark 6:17-29

Sunday, August 30
Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time
Jeremiah 20:7-9
Psalm 63:2-6, 8-9
Romans 12:1-2
Matthew 16:21-27

Monday, August 31
1 Corinthians 2:1-5
Psalm 119:97-102
Luke 4:16-30

Tuesday, September 1
1 Corinthians 2:10b-16
Psalm 145:8-14
Luke 4:31-37

See READINGS, page 19

Question Corner/Jenna Marie Cooper

Church and secular governments both have an interest in regulating marriages

Q I’m returning to the Church after many years away, and I’ve talked to my priest about having a convalidation ceremony. From what I understand, I need to do this because my first marriage was invalid in God’s eyes. Does this mean I need a new civil marriage license? How does this work if the Church considers Catholic weddings to be valid even without a civil marriage ceremony? (Ohio)



A The short answer is no. If you are already married civilly from the point of view of the local secular government, then you do not need to get a new civil marriage license in order to have your marriage regularized in the Catholic Church. But it’s understandable why this might have seemed confusing, since marriage is one area where the Church and state tend to overlap.

Of course, there are some aspects in which the concept of marriage for Catholics diverges from the state’s concept of marriage.

For instance, unlike the secular government, Catholics do not see divorce as something truly possible on an ultimate spiritual level, which is why a Catholic with a prior marriage bond cannot be remarried in the Church, even if the state would permit this in a civil wedding.

Yet overall, both the Church and the secular state have their own legitimate interest in promoting and regulating marriage. That is, the Church has an interest in governing marriage since, for Catholics, marriage is a sacrament with profound spiritual effects.

On the other hand, the state also has an interest in overseeing marriage, as on a natural level marriage is the most stable foundation for family life and the raising of children. As such, it is the fundamental building block of human society in general.

In many countries like the United States where, despite our constitutional separation of Church and state, the secular government broadly supports the positive role religion in general can have in the lives of its citizens, the secular government will routinely acknowledge religious leaders as valid officiants in civilly binding wedding ceremonies.

Using Catholics as an example, when a couple marries according to what is called in the Church the “canonical form” in the ceremony the Church requires for a valid Catholic marriage, the state will automatically recognize the Catholic wedding as civilly binding. So, a Catholic who marries in the Church has no need for an additional civil wedding (although this might not be the case in countries that have a more radical emphasis on secularity).

The Church is also aware of and comfortable with the fact that we “share” concern for marriage with secular governments. In light of this, canon law broadly envisions Catholic weddings taking place in harmony with the requirements of civil governments whenever possible.

For example, as canon 1071 of the *Code of Canon Law* tells us: “Except in a case of necessity, no one is to assist without the permission of the local ordinary [i.e., the diocesan bishop or his vicar general] at ... a marriage which cannot be recognized by the civil law or celebrated in accordance with it.”

Put more simply, this means that, apart from some sort of extreme emergency, Catholic clergy are not permitted to officiate at a Catholic marriage ceremony where the couple will remain civilly unmarried, unless the local bishop grants special permission for this.

While there can be good reasons for what is technically called a “clandestine marriage,” for the most part the Church would hold that a person who wants to be married must be publicly considered to be married in every relevant context.

In your particular situation, it sounds like you as a baptized Catholic contracted a merely civil wedding which the state recognizes. Your issue is that, in your current situation, your marriage is not considered valid by the Church. But because your convalidation will address a spiritual and religious problem that the state has no interest in, no further secular action is required.

(Jenna Marie Cooper, who holds a licentiate in canon law, is a consecrated virgin and a canonist whose column appears weekly at OSV News. Send your questions to CatholicQA@osv.com.) †

My Journey to God

Our Father’s Will

By Natalie Hoefer

Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior,
Grant, I pray, this urgent favor:
Make my heart like unto thine,
That, through me, Your light may shine
As is our Father’s will.

Make my heart so meek and humble.
Let my will before You crumble.
In its stead build up a fire
To desire what God desires—
That is our Father’s will.

Till my heart’s infertile field
To pliant soil that will yield
To Your abundant grace, and render
A heart that peacefully surrenders
To our Father’s will.

Then in Your Sacred Heart make room
For me to rest as in a womb,
That I may go where’re You go,
Because You always seek, I know,
To do our Father’s will.



(Natalie Hoefer is a member of St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis and is a reporter for The Criterion. Photo: A woman touches a slab of rock in the Church of All Nations, also known as the Church of the Agony, in the Garden of Gethsemane in Jerusalem, Israel, on Feb. 10, 2015, during an archdiocesan pilgrimage. The rock is believed to be where Christ prayed, “Father, ... not my will but yours be done” [Lk 22:42] in the garden on the night before his crucifixion.) (File photo by Natalie Hoefer)

Investing with Faith/Jolinda Moore

Now is the time to start planning year-end gifts to the Church

In recent Investing with Faith columns, our staff and volunteers have written about the archdiocesan



Catholic Community Foundation (CCF), as well as various types of tax-efficient giving strategies donors might utilize. In this week’s column, the archdiocesan Office of Stewardship and Development writes

with an appeal to *Criterion* readers—don’t wait until the end of the year to initiate your gifts to the Church; act now.

As summer’s conclusion quickly approaches, the beginning of school and the onset of busy schedules will take all of us to the end of the year.

We find that most donors choose to support the United Catholic Appeal,

parishes, schools or ministries in December. While we understand Advent is a popular time to think about and act on charitable goals, we encourage you to think about and plan your giving today.

In addition to a more immediate impact for the Church, a gift today allows you to get ahead of the busy giving season. This is especially beneficial if your charitable goals include gifts of appreciated stock, qualified charitable distributions from your IRA or grants from your donor advised fund. These types of gifts are administered by the Office of Stewardship and Development for the archdiocese, and the influx of gifts at the end of the year can create longer than normal processing times. This is in addition to the processing times from your financial advisors or custodians.

The first step in making any of these types of gifts is to contact your financial

advisor or IRA custodian to request a gift to your ministry of choice. The next step is to complete the appropriate form located in the “For Donors” tab at archindy.org/CCF. This notifies our team of your donation so that we can anticipate and allocate your gift in line with your intentions.

If you’re thinking about partnering with the Catholic Community Foundation to create or contribute to a CCF endowment fund or donor advised fund, we encourage you to contact our team sooner rather than later. This allows us ample time to review your charitable goals and the financial needs across the archdiocese together. Our team strives to align your goals with the needs of the Church, ensuring your generosity provides long-term financial stability for parishes, schools and agencies. In order to guarantee we can discern

together, establish and receive your gifts to fund a CCF endowment or donor advised fund by year-end, conversations should begin as soon as possible.

Whatever your charitable goals, our team is here to accompany you as you support the Church in central and southern Indiana. We look forward to serving you as we head into the final months of the year.

(Jolinda Moore is a member of SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi Parish in Greenwood and serves as the executive director of the archdiocesan Office of Stewardship and Development and the Catholic Community Foundation. Tax or legal information provided herein is not intended as tax or legal advice. Always consult with your legal, tax or financial advisors before implementing any gift plan.) †

ASSUMPTION

continued from page 1

“that in Mary’s heart, heaven and Earth, time and eternity, meet.”

To understand what one has in common “with the beautiful young woman depicted on the altarpieces of our churches,” the pope said Christians must “unite the two signs we have mentioned: the incorrupt body of the Mother of God and her immaculate heart.”

“For it is the purity of the soul that, in Mary—as in us—by the grace of God, illuminates and transfigures the whole person, leading us to the glory of heaven,” he said.

Reflecting on modern beauty standards, Pope Leo said they “risk trapping us in burdensome expectations, causing us to waste precious energy on what does not really matter and does not last forever.”

“In everyday life, we encounter people whose faces are marked by the years and by suffering, yet who are capable of radiating serenity, kindness and peace

around them; just as we may observe others who are perhaps outwardly attractive but hard and cold at heart,” he said. “It is easy to see where true beauty lies and where, on the other hand, there is still a need for conversion, forgiveness and healing.”

In order “to discover and nurture” divine beauty, the pope continued, Christians must learn to see it in “the wrinkles of an elderly person as in the tender face of a child as well, in the maturity of an adult as in the liveliness of a young person as well, in work clothes and tools as well as in festive decorations.”

Each of those realities, he added, contains unique stories of love that offer “small glimpses of heaven.”

“Love is humanity’s most beautiful adornment,” the pope said. “Love transfigures, transforms, ennobles and lifts us up, making us light, free and close to God, even amid life’s ups and downs.”

Turning to the Gospel reading from St. Luke, in which Mary visits her

cousin Elizabeth and “proclaims the greatness of the Lord” (Lk 1:46), Pope Leo said Christians need not look far to understand Mary’s humble exclamation of “the magnificent mysteries she experienced.”

Those mysteries, he explained, are visible wherever true charity exists. The pope noted the examples of weary parents to their children “after a long day,” grandparents caring for grandchildren, morally courageous

young people, and ordinary workers who “help bring a little bit of heaven to Earth.”

“The beautiful face of Our Lady of the Assumption is unique; it transcends any possible representation, and yet, at the same time, is familiar to us,” Pope Leo said. “Even at this very moment, we can see her face in the people who are close to us, such as the brothers and sisters with whom, in faith, we share the daily offering of our lives.” †

Calling all poets! Submit your work for possible publication in The Criterion

Do you ever write poems in response to God moments in your life? Do you jot down rhymes that come to mind in adoration or write verses when reflecting on Scripture or spiritual reading? Does the beauty of God’s creation inspire you to express your awe in poetry?

The *Criterion* is seeking faith-based poems written by its readers for possible publication in the paper’s My Journey to God section.

The choice of topic is as broad as the circumstances that inspire spiritual verse:

- The sacraments
- Scripture
- Feasts related to Christ
- Mary and her feast days
- Saints
- Advent and Christmas
- Lent, Christ’s passion and resurrection
- Pentecost
- Nature and seasons
- Hope, faith, trust, charity, joy, grief, forgiveness, healing
- Attributes of God the Father, Christ and the Holy Spirit
- Priesthood
- Civil holidays like Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, Grandparents Day,

- Fourth of July
- Current events
- Pro-life
- Friendship

The list goes on. The only topical requirement is that the poem is written through the lens of faith and does not contradict Church teaching.

No experience or prior publication is necessary. Any form of poetry from rhyming to free verse is welcome from those of all ages. Due to space limits, poems should be no more than 25 lines with a maximum of 80 characters per line, or 50 lines with a maximum of 35 characters per line. Each poem must be written by the person who submits it, or by a family member in the case of children or poems written by a deceased relative. Anonymous poems will not be considered.

Send poems for consideration to Natalie Hoefer at nhoefer@archindy.org, and include the name and location of your parish. For those without access to e-mail, poems may be sent to Natalie Hoefer in care of *The Criterion*, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202. Please include your parish name and location and a daytime phone number where you can be reached. †

READINGS

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Wednesday, September 2

1 Corinthians 3:1-9
Psalm 33:12-15, 20-21
Luke 4:38-44

Thursday, September 3

St. Gregory the Great, pope and doctor of the Church
1 Corinthians 3:18-23
Psalm 24:1bc-2, 3-4ab, 5-6
Luke 5:1-11

Friday, September 4

1 Corinthians 4:1-5

Psalm 37:3-6, 27-28, 39-40
Luke 5:33-39

Saturday, September 5

St. Teresa of Calcutta, virgin
1 Corinthians 4:6b-15
Psalm 145:17-21
Luke 6:1-5

Sunday, September 6

Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time
Ezekiel 33:7-9
Psalm 95:1-2, 6-9
Romans 13:8-10

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From the Archives



In This Photo

In this photo taken on Oct. 25, 1998, ground is broken for a new church building at St. Jude the Apostle Parish in Spencer. From 1951 to 1998, the parish worshiped in a house that had been converted into a church. Pictured are Father Paul Dede, pastor of the parish at that time, and members of the parish council and building committee. The new church was dedicated on May 14, 2000, and the original church building became the Paul M. Dede Parish Center.

Trivia Question

Visitors to which nearby state park might also visit St. Jude Church in Spencer? Let us know your answer at bit.ly/ArchivesTrivia

Previous Trivia Answer

Our Lady of Consolation is title of the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary found at St. Augustine Parish in Leopold.

MON-FRI 8AM – 4PM

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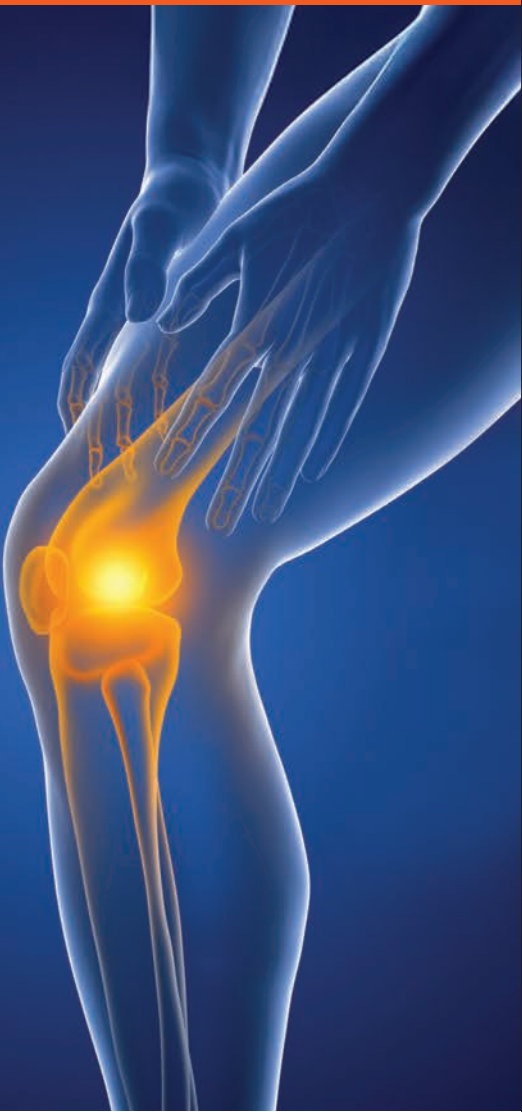


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