



The

Criterion

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Special Bond

The closeness of a mother and child leads to a touching farewell in a song, page 3.

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At Loads of JOY laundry service in North Vernon, Kelly Elkins displays a copy of the painting “Saturday Rays,” also known as “Our Lady of the Laundry,” while holding Elliot, her 3-year-old bundle of joy with Down syndrome. Loads of JOY’s threefold mission is to help mothers in need, benefit Gabriel Project of Jennings County and offer support and resources to parents of unborn or newborn children diagnosed with Down syndrome. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

Loads of JOY laundry service offers ‘village’ of support for moms and more

By Natalie Hoefer

NORTH VERNON—Holding her 3-year-old son Elliot, Kelly Elkins reaches up and takes a framed image down from the mantel.

“I love this picture,” she says. It’s a reproduction of a late 19th-century painting depicting the Blessed Mother hanging laundry as she smiles down at baby Jesus, who holds a small cross.

Called “Saturday Ray,” the painting is also known as Elkins refers to it: “Our Lady of the Laundry.”

When a friend gave it to her several years ago, she had no

idea how perfectly the image would parallel a unique endeavor she recently launched.

Bags nearby of clothes to be washed speak to the nature of the venture, and the inspiration behind it smiles joyfully while propped on her waist—Elliot, her son with Down syndrome.

The painting, clothes and little boy tell the story of Loads of JOY, the laundry business Elkins opened in April in North Vernon to help mothers in need, benefit Gabriel Project of Jennings County and offer support and resources to parents of unborn or newborn children diagnosed with Down syndrome.

See LAUNDRY, page 16

Archbishop grants dispensation for Mass attendance related to immigration

Criterion staff report

As a result of the recent surge of immigration enforcement across Indiana, Archbishop Charles C. Thompson has granted a dispensation through the end of September from the obligation to participate in Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation.

In his statement, the archbishop notes: “The recent surge in immigration enforcement activity in Indiana has caused fear and uncertainty for many families, particularly when detention results in the sudden separation of parents and children.

“While recognizing the need for law enforcement to protect and defend, it is gravely concerning to witness families being torn apart. The family, the fabric of stability in our society, must be cherished and defended. The inherent dignity of being created in the image of God demands that every person be treated with dignity, compassion, and respect.” †

See decree in English and Spanish, page 15.

El arzobispo Thompson concede una dispensa para la asistencia a Misa

Como consecuencia del reciente aumento de las medidas de control migratorio en todo Indiana, el arzobispo Charles C. Thompson ha concedido una dispensa—vigente hasta finales de septiembre—de la obligación de asistir a Misa los domingos y días de precepto.

En su comunicado, el arzobispo señala: “El reciente aumento en la actividad de control migratorio en Indiana ha provocado temor e incertidumbre en muchas familias, particularmente cuando la detención resulta en la separación repentina de padres e hijos.

“Si bien se reconoce la necesidad de que
Ver ARZOBISPO, página 15

9/11 memories: Rediscovering the gift of life amid the heartbreak

(Editor’s note: Memories of Sept. 11, 2001, still fill the hearts and minds of people old enough to remember that tragic day 25 years ago when terrorist attacks rocked the United States and the world. The Criterion has invited our readers to share how the events of that time have shaped their faith and their life then and still. Here are some of their stories.)

By John Shaughnessy

Every generation in the United States seems to have a moment when people can clearly recall years later where they were and how they felt.

The bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941. The assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963. American astronaut Neil Armstrong walking on the

See 9/11, page 8



A woman grieves at the inscription of her late husband’s name at the national 9/11 Memorial and Museum in New York City on Sept. 11, 2014. Twenty-five years after the 9/11 terrorism attacks that claimed the lives of nearly 3,000 people, Catholic family members who lost loved ones that day have credited their faith with getting through the losses. (OSV News photo/Chang Lee, Reuters)

Life Chain events will take place on Sept. 27, Oct. 4

In honor of Respect Life Sunday, always celebrated on the first Sunday of October, Life Chain events will take place throughout central and southern Indiana on Oct. 4, as well as one the week before on Sept. 27. These are peaceful witnesses of individuals in public areas for 60-90 minutes praying for our nation and for an end to abortion. It is a visual statement of solidarity by the Christian community that human life is sacred from the moment of conception until natural death.

The following Life Chain events in central and southern Indiana were reported to *The Criterion*:

- Sept. 27**
 —Richmond: 2-3 p.m., S. A Street at S. 16th Street. Information: Debbie Sams, 765-969-0254.
- Oct. 4**
 —Brazil: 2-3 p.m., Highway 40 at Alabama Street.
 —Bright: noon-1:30, in front of Gibson Cemetery, 23258 State Line Road, Lawrenceburg. Information: Duane Meyer, 812-290-5096.
 —Brookville: 2-3 p.m., Main Street at the Courthouse. Information: Jerry

- Mersch, 513-702-4949.
 —Columbus: 2-3 p.m., Second Street in front of City Hall. Information: Bartholomew County Right to Life, 812-350-2731.
 —Greensburg: 2-3 p.m., on downtown square, park in lot at corner of Franklin and Main. Information: Patricia Louagie, 812-614-2528.
 —Indianapolis: 2:30-3:30 p.m., N. Meridian Street between 12th and 16th streets; tables with signs and prayer aids available along the four blocks, go to centralindianalifechain.org for church assignments for each table location or to order T-shirts in advance; parking available at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center, 1400 N. Meridian St., from 1:45-4:15 p.m.; T-shirts available for purchase. Information: centralindianalifechain@gmail.com.
 —Lawrenceburg: 10:30 a.m.-noon, U.S. 50 between Walnut and Front streets. Information: Duane Meyer, 812-290-5096.
 —North Vernon: 2 p.m., line up along State Street. Gathering and sign distribution at North Vernon Park. Information: Timothy O’Donnell, 317-372-0040. †



Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

September 13 – 22, 2026

September 13 – 11 a.m.
 Mass at St. Rita Church, Indianapolis

September 15-16
 USCCB Administrative Committee, Washington, D.C.

September 16-17
 Catholic Relief Services Board meeting, Baltimore, Maryland

September 19 – 10:30 a.m.
 Installation of Permanent Diaconate Candidates as Acolytes at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis

September 20 – 5 p.m.
 Confirmation Mass for the youths of St. Ambrose Parish at St. Ambrose Church, Seymour

September 22 – 9 a.m.
 Breakfast with Catholic legislators at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center, Indianapolis

September 22 – 1 p.m.
 Council of Priests meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center

September 22 – 6 p.m.
 IndyCatholic Dinner, Indianapolis

Pope asks Our Lady of Good Counsel for aid to make courageous, wise decisions

(OSV News)—Pope Leo XIV returned on Sept. 7 to the Marian shrine of Our Lady of Good Counsel, where he asked the Virgin Mary for aid to bring God’s word to light through “courageous and wise decisions.”

The pope traveled to Genazzano, a small town about 35 miles east of Rome, to celebrate an evening Mass at the Basilica Shrine of Our Lady of Good Counsel on the vigil of the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.



Pope Leo XIV

The visit was the second he has made to the basilica since becoming pope. Pope Leo recalled how he previously made a surprise visit to the shrine just days after his election in the May 2025 conclave to pray before the image of the Virgin Mary to whom he has long been devoted.

“As you may remember, ‘in the early days of my pontificate, I felt the duty and a deep desire to visit Genazzano, the Shrine of Our Lady of Good Counsel, who has accompanied me throughout my life with her maternal presence, her wisdom and the example of her love for her Son, who is always the center of my faith,’ ” the pope said at the start of his homily, quoting words he wrote in the shrine’s guest book on his first visit.

Reflecting on the birth of the Virgin Mary, which the Church celebrates on Sept. 8, the pope said that “Mary is the

dawn of a new day, of our world finally freed from evil.

“Let us ask her for her good counsel, so that we may welcome the divine Word, keep it within us, and bring it to light through courageous and wise decisions, decisions of authentic conversion,” he said.

The shrine holds special significance for Pope Leo, who visited many times prior to his election as pope. The Augustinian Province of Chicago, where then-Robert Prevost entered religious life, was dedicated to Our Lady of Good Counsel, and he has visited the Genazzano sanctuary for decades since his first visit while studying in Rome in the early 1980s.

His pilgrimages to pray before the image continued throughout his time as prior general of the Augustinians, bishop of Chiclayo, Peru, and later as a cardinal.

The shrine, entrusted to the Augustinians since the 14th century, has drawn many pilgrims over the centuries, among them several popes, including Urban VIII, Blessed Pius IX, St. John XXIII and St. John Paul II, who are depicted in frescoes on the walls of the basilica.

Pope Leo arrived in Genazzano shortly after 5 p.m. and greeted pilgrims gathered outside and inside the basilica who enthusiastically kissed his ring. He first knelt in prayer before the main altar and then visited the chapel containing the revered image of Our Lady of Good Counsel, where he prayed silently and presented a golden rose, a traditional papal gift.

Before Mass, a new fresco on the wall of the basilica was unveiled depicting the current Augustinian pope kneeling before the Marian image. †



Religious freedom: Sharing faith with courage and respect

ARCHINDY VOX PODCAST

Criterion staff report

Religious freedom is more than the ability to worship as we choose. It is rooted in the God-given dignity of every person—and it calls us to seek truth, form our consciences and respectfully make room for others to do the same.

In the latest episode of “The Church in Our Time: What Vatican II Means for Everyday Catholics,” host Ken Ogorek, executive director of the archdiocesan Secretariat for Evangelizing Catechesis, explores “*Dignitatis Humanae*,” the Second Vatican Council’s Declaration on Religious Freedom. He is joined by Roarke LaCoursiere, former associate director of the Indiana Catholic Conference, and Marion County Judge David Certo.

Together, they consider what this decades-old document can teach us about living and sharing our faith today. Their lively conversation touches on bringing faith into the public square, listening with patience and charity, and speaking about Christ without coercion or fear.

The guests remind listeners that religious freedom brings both rights and responsibilities. Catholics are called to share the joy and hope they have found in Christ while respecting the dignity, freedom and beliefs of every person.

Watch ArchIndy Vox episodes on the Archdiocese’s YouTube channel (@IndianaCatholic) or listen on Spotify, Amazon Music, iHeartRadio, Castbox or Apple Podcasts. To receive notifications about new episodes, follow ArchIndy Vox on Spotify at tinyurl.com/ArchIndyVoxSpotify. Tune into Relevant Radio on the fourth Saturday of each month at 1:30 p.m. to listen to episodes, too. †





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The closeness of a mother and child leads to a touching farewell in 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 is one of the songs—and why it is special—that has been shared so far.)

One in an occasional series

By John Shaughnessy

The bond between a mother and a child is special.

So is the gift that God gave both Ann Lewis and her mother, Mary Ann Goetz, connecting them on a deeper level.

They were each blessed with singing voices that could touch people emotionally. People also noted that their voices sounded alike. And they each developed their gift as sopranos through musical training.

Lewis’ training occurred while she lived in New York City for a period, a time that included the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center towers on Sept. 11, 2001. During that time, she sang as a cantor for Masses at St. Margaret of Cortona Church in the Bronx.

“The parish I was in was a very Irish parish, so we had a lot of people who were first responders—firefighters and police officers who went down to 9/11, trying to find the remains of people killed in the towers,” recalls Lewis, now a cantor and a member of SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral Parish in Indianapolis. “They’d come in covered in dust and crying.

“Father wanted me up in front. But I didn’t want to be up in front because I was emotionally involved in their suffering. Father said, ‘They need you up there. They need to know you’re there for them.’ ”

Lewis sang from the front of the

church, including during the funeral Mass for a firefighter who died in the towers, the father of twin sons.

As emotional as those Masses were for Lewis, singing during another Mass was even more poignant for her—the funeral Mass for her mother in 2008.

The song she chose to honor her mom is one that, she says, “I truly love to sing” —*Pie Jesu* from the *Requiem* by French composer Gabriel Fauré.

“The lyrics translate to ‘Loving Lord Jesus, grant them eternal rest,’ ” says Lewis, communications coordinator for the archdiocese. “This plea is reflected in the simple, flowing melody that is, in itself, comforting and peaceful. Singing it is like asking for, and receiving, a gentle hug from the Lord to soothe one’s grieving soul.”

As she prepared to sing, Lewis had already started her grieving.

“I was with my mom for the last two weeks of her life with my sister,” notes Lewis. “You get a lot of grieving out when you’re there. So, when it came down to the funeral, I was OK. I was still grieving, but I was better off than my sisters and brothers. I did cry during the funeral, but the singing part was more consoling for me.”

The pureness of her voice—combined with her love for her mother—poured out from Lewis, touching the hearts of everyone in the church that day, especially her siblings.

“It was a sense of joy,” Lewis says. “I got to share something for her that she would have loved. Because she was a singer, too. I felt as though my mother was singing it with me on her way to her eternal reward.”

(To hear Lewis sing ‘Pie Jesu,’ use the QR code or go to tinyurl.com/AnnLewisPieJesu.)



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](mailto: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.)†



Ann Lewis shares a moment of joy with her mother, Mary Ann Goetz, on her wedding day in 1997. (Submitted photo)

Pope Leo: Catholics cannot be ‘unengaged spectators’ amid world’s current events

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—The faithful are called to leave behind “all passivity and indifference” toward current events and the lives of others, especially amid the “rapid and profound changes we are experiencing today,” Pope Leo XIV said at his weekly general audience.

“We cannot remain as unengaged spectators; rather, we must listen with our hearts, allow ourselves to be challenged, and become involved,” the pope said on Sept. 2 in St. Peter’s Square.

The pope began a series of reflections on the Second Vatican Council’s “Pastoral constitution on the Church in the Modern World,” known also by its

Latin title “*Gaudium et Spes*.”

Recalling St. John XXIII’s warning against the “prophets of doom,” Pope Leo said Christians are instead called to share in the life of humanity as Christ did.

Such closeness to humanity, the pope said, also opens the way to a deeper understanding of events and of revelation itself.

“This is not, in fact, merely a moral imperative,” he said.

Addressing pilgrims, Pope Leo said it is the Church’s pastoral responsibility to engage with the contemporary world, share in its joys and sorrows and advocate for the poor and marginalized. †

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Under Marc’s leadership, the Indiana March for Life grew into one of the state’s largest pro-life gatherings, while his work with legislators helped protect unborn children and support vulnerable mothers.

Marc led with conviction, humility, and compassion, believing deeply in the dignity of every human life. This year’s dinner honors his legacy while carrying his mission forward. Please join us as we celebrate Marc and recommit to the cause he served so faithfully.

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Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, *Publisher*
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Editorial



People walk away from the World Trade Center in on New York City Sept. 11, 2001. Twenty-five years after the 9/11 terrorism attacks that claimed the lives of nearly 3,000 people, Catholic family members who lost loved ones that day have credited their faith with getting through the losses. (OSV News photo/Shannon Stapleton, Reuters)

May we always remember those who sacrificed their lives on 9/11

A crystal-clear blue sky greeted early-morning commuters in New York City.

Clear, cool sunny weather with low humidity is how workers in Washington, D.C., began their day.

Residents near Shanksville and in southwestern Pennsylvania witnessed a warm, exceptionally clear and nearly cloudless morning, providing what many meteorologists noted as ideal, calm conditions for flying.

What began as a near-perfect morning on the East Coast on Sept. 11, 2001, quickly shifted into what would become known as one of the darkest and most tragic days on American soil.

Today, Sept. 11, 2026, marks the 25th anniversary of a day where the heinous acts of al Qaeda terrorists turned a beautiful, sun-splashed morning into a day of infamy. As a result, nearly 3,000 souls perished.

After two planes that morning crashed into the World Trade Center’s twin towers in New York City within minutes of each other, another jet barreled into the Pentagon outside Washington, D.C. Shortly thereafter, terrorists on a fourth hijacked plane—United Flight 93—likely heading to the U.S. Capitol or the White House, were overtaken by heroic passengers, resulting in the plane crashing in an open field near Shanksville, Pa.

It was evident America was under attack.

How would our country and its people respond to this tragedy of tragedies?

Heroism can be defined as the quality of exhibiting exceptional courage, bravery and selflessness, often by putting others first or facing extreme danger for the common good. We saw plenty of heroism on Sept. 11, 2001, and in its aftermath.

The passengers and crew aboard United Flight 93 were among the first to put bravery into action, overtaking the hijackers on their plane, which was en route from Newark, N.J., to San Francisco. Their aircraft crashed near rural Shanksville. All aboard died, including passenger Lauren Catuzzi Grandcolas and her unborn child. (See related story on page 9.)

The heroic actions didn’t end there. There were the first responders—

firefighters, police officers, emergency medical technicians and countless others—who rushed into harm’s way to do all they could to assist those in need. Many of them died that day, and others died years later from 9/11-related illnesses. Their extraordinary bravery and courage must never be forgotten.

Many found solace in their faith. Houses of worship of various faith traditions were packed in the days and early weeks after 9/11. People turned to our Creator and sought the comfort of faith communities as they tried to better grasp why such an act of evil occurred.

In a reflection he shared with *The Criterion* in 2021 on the 20th anniversary of 9/11, Archbishop Charles C. Thompson remembered the response of faith by so many during that challenging time.

The archbishop noted “... that the events of Sept. 11, 2001, caused people to re-evaluate what was most important in their lives; namely, God, family and friends. It also caused people to feel more vulnerable which, consequently, rapidly increased security measures in travel and a variety of ways. Our world was changed, and our way of living was altered.”

Moving forward, he wrote, would require an unwavering faith. “The key to surviving any crisis, like 9/11, is not to lose hope. As people of faith, our hope is in God. Jesus Christ is our hope and salvation.”

While some may have realized that truth in the early months and years after 9/11, others since have put faith on a backburner and no longer prioritize it in their lives. Faith must be at the heart of who we are as disciples of Christ.

As we mark 25 years since that fateful September day, we pray we remain Christ-centered and rooted in prayer.

May we always honor and remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice on 9/11 and beyond.

And despite the ongoing chaos and conflict we see around the globe, may we always strive to be people of peace.

—Mike Krokos

Be Our Guest/Leonard J. DeLorenzo

That we might behold

When we read the Gospel, it is tempting to think of ourselves as gathering information. We want to know what happened, what Jesus said, what it means.



That is good and necessary, but it is not the whole of what the word asks of us. To contemplate the Gospel is to be drawn in with more than the intellect. It asks for our attention and our will, and for something we are often shy to bring to Scripture: our imagination. We are meant to stand in the crowd, to smell the bread, to feel the weight of the water jars at Cana.

I have been thinking about this because of a piece of music. My colleague at the McGrath Institute for Church Life at the University of Notre Dame in northern Indiana, Carolyn Pirtle, has written a musical called “Behold God’s Love,” composed in service to the National Eucharistic Revival. What interests me is what it reveals about how we come to the Word, and through the word to the one who is the Word.

The musical moves in three acts, and the movement is itself a eucharistic image. “Root” takes us into the Exodus and the gift of manna, the Old Testament prefigurings of the Eucharist. “Vine” sets us at the Last Supper and lets the Apostles step out of the scene to remember other meals with Jesus—at Cana, at Martha and Mary’s table, at the multiplication of the loaves. “Branches” brings us to a house church in Corinth, where the first Christians grapple with what it means to eat his body and drink his blood.

What strikes me most is the mode of remembering the work relies upon. The liturgy has a name for it, *anamnesis*: a remembering in which a past event, recalled, becomes present. At Mass, we do not merely think back to the Passion and Resurrection; through the grace of the Spirit, those events are made present here and now. In the musical, a memory is not narrated at a distance but summoned onto the stage, where it happens again before us. This is what contemplation of the Gospel is meant to do in the theater of the praying heart.

A performed art teaches this in a way a page cannot, for you cannot receive music all at once. It exists only as it unfolds. To let a scene play at its own speed, rather than the speed of our hurry, is to be schooled again in what we have nearly forgotten: to wait, to attend, to let the word work on us rather than rush to extract its point.

There is a discipline of reading Scripture well that this kind of work quietly enforces. Coming to the Old Testament, we are anxious to leap ahead to the Gospel and move on. But you cannot see the fullness of a prefigurement unless you first let the image stand on its own terms. The manna has to be manna before it can be the Bread of Life. In the musical, the actor who plays Moses returns as Jesus, so the typology is felt before it is explained, the older image keeping its weight even as it opens toward its fulfillment.

I want to be careful about the claim. A musical, however beautiful, does not replace the Gospel text, and is not meant to. Scripture finds its fullest home when proclaimed in the liturgy, and no work of art stands in for that. What a work like this offers is a way in, a means of entering the story more deeply so that we return to the text and the altar with our imaginations awakened and our attention retrained. It is a door, not a destination.

That entering happens in two ways. First, simply by listening, we are invited to imagine, to stand inside the scenes and let them become present to us. Second, for a community, there is the deeper labor of studying a work by preparing it for performance. Carolyn’s cast were volunteers, 27 of them, from children to people in their 60s, and the hope is eventually to license the musical so that parishes, schools and universities can stage it themselves. To learn a role is to live for a while inside a scene of the Gospel, reckoning with a person’s words until they become nearly your own, a form of study the intellect alone could never accomplish.

In the end, what any of this serves is encounter. The point is not the music, nor even the story, but the One the story is about.

Carolyn hopes that someone, the next time they go to Mass, might remember a scene from the third act, Paul consecrating the elements while Jesus stands unseen behind him, and think: I cannot see him, but I know that Christ is here. That is the whole of it. We bring our intellect and attention, our will and imagination, to the word not to master a text, but to be met by the One present in it, who waits, still, for us to behold him.

(Leonard J. DeLorenzo is a professor of the practice in the McGrath Institute for Church Life and concurrent professor in the department of theology at the University of Notre Dame. His most recent book is *The Rule of the Sacred Heart: Finding Rest in a Restless World*. You can find his writing at leonardjdelorenzo.com.) †



The monstrance is held on the altar during adoration in the Cathedral Basilica of St. Augustine in Florida on May 24 during the kickoff of the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage. (OSV News photo/George Martell)

ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO CHARLES C. THOMPSON



Christ the Cornerstone

As we mark a day of horror, let us also honor the hope of Mary

Today, September 11, we remember with great sorrow the day 25 years ago when so many of our sisters and brothers lost their lives because of senseless acts of violence and terror. Nearly 3,000 people died on this day in 2001 in New York, Washington, D.C. and Shanksville, Pa.

9/11, as this day has come to be known, was a day of horror and destruction, but it was also a day when many first-responders from diverse backgrounds and walks of life demonstrated extraordinary heroism and courage. We mourn the victims with bitter tears, but we also thank God for the men and women of 9/11 whose heroism is an enduring sign of hope in a world too often consumed by despair. During today's 25th anniversary remembrance, millions of Americans will join together in a powerful expression of unity—putting aside differences to remember those who gave their lives on this tragic day.

Let us pray that the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Peace, will unite us with our fellow Americans, and with people from every race and nation throughout the world, in working to make nonviolence a permanent way of life for all. May our observance of tragic days like 9/11 be a vivid reminder that peace is only possible

when we refuse to allow anger, hatred, racism and religious intolerance to exist in our hearts and in our world.

Tomorrow, Saturday, September 12, we will celebrate the Memorial of the Most Holy Name of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Our Blessed Mother is known by many different names and titles that emphasize her various honors and that identify specific places or circumstances that are associated with her such as Guadalupe, Lourdes and Fatima.

Tomorrow's feast, for example, was added to the liturgical calendar by Blessed Pope Innocent XI in thanksgiving for the deliverance of the city of Vienna from the Ottoman siege on September 12, 1683. The victorious Christian commander at Vienna, Polish King Jan Sobieski, had previously entrusted his army to Mary's protection before the image of Our Lady of Czestochowa. Thus, a particular devotion to the Blessed Virgin was seen as influencing the outcome of this historic battle, and her holy name is revered on this day because of her closeness to Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

Catholics venerate the Blessed Virgin Mary because God gave her a special role in the Incarnation and in the life of the

Church. To *venerate* means to show deep respect, honor or reverence for a person, place or thing, often because of great age, wisdom, holiness or talent. Veneration is not worship which belongs to God alone.

Mary receives a high honor among God's people because of her absolutely unique relationship to Jesus and because God's grace was exceptionally manifested in her life. We Catholics believe that honoring Mary ultimately protects and proclaims the truth about who Jesus is as both divine and human. The honor given to the mother flows from the dignity of her Son.

In the great scriptural hymn, The *Magnificat*, Mary declares: "All generations will call me blessed" (Lk 1:48). Believers see Marian veneration as a fulfillment of this biblical prophecy. Mary does not attribute her greatness to herself; she immediately explains it by saying that "the Almighty has done great things for me" (Lk 1:49). Catholics honor Mary both because God has acted so magnificently in and through her and because her free acceptance of God's will for her set in motion Christ's incarnation, his public ministry, and his passion, death and resurrection.

As he was dying on the cross, Jesus said to St. John the Apostle, "Behold, your mother" (Jn 19:27). The Church understands John, the beloved disciple, as representing all who are faithful disciples. Mary, the Mother of God (*Theotokos*) became, in a spiritual sense, Mother of the Church and our mother. We venerate her with the same reverence and respect that we owe to all our mothers, and we recognize the name "mother" as being among the greatest of the holy names of Mary.

Whenever Pope Leo XIV urges the leaders of the world, and all of us, to pray and work for peace, he invokes the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Peace. "As our world continues to be wounded by wars in the Holy Land, in Ukraine, and in other parts of the world," our Holy Father invites faithful Catholics, and all people of good will, to pray and fast "imploping the Lord to grant us peace and justice, and to wipe away the tears of those who suffer because of ongoing armed conflicts."

Let us join with Pope Leo in praying, "May Mary, Queen of Peace, intercede so that people everywhere may find the path of peace." †



Cristo, la piedra angular

Al conmemorar un día de horror, honremos también la esperanza de María

Hoy, 11 de septiembre, recordamos con gran dolor el día, hace 25 años, en que tantas de nuestras hermanas y hermanos perdieron la vida a causa de actos sin sentido de violencia y terror. Casi 3,000 personas fallecieron este día en el año 2001 en Nueva York, Washington, D.C., y Shanksville, Pensilvania.

El 9/11, como se lo suele llamar, fue un día de horror y destrucción, pero también fue un día en el que muchos socorristas de diversos orígenes y condiciones sociales demostraron un heroísmo y un valor extraordinarios. Lloramos a las víctimas con lágrimas amargas, pero también damos gracias a Dios por los hombres y mujeres del 9/11, cuyo heroísmo es un signo perdurable de esperanza en un mundo que, muy a menudo, se ve consumido por la desesperación. Durante la conmemoración de hoy, en el 25.º aniversario, millones de estadounidenses se unirán en una poderosa expresión de unidad, dejando de lado las diferencias para recordar a quienes dieron su vida en este trágico día.

Oremos para que la Santísima Virgen María, Reina de la Paz, nos una a nuestros compatriotas estadounidenses y a personas de todas las razas y nacionalidades en el esfuerzo por hacer de la no violencia una forma de vida permanente para todos. Que la

conmemoración de días trágicos como el 9/11 sea un recordatorio vívido de que la paz solo es posible cuando nos negamos a permitir que la ira, el odio, el racismo y la intolerancia religiosa existan en nuestros corazones y en nuestro mundo.

Mañana, sábado 12 de septiembre, la Iglesia celebrará el memorial del Santísimo Nombre de la Virgen María. A nuestra Santísima Madre se la conoce por muchas advocaciones y títulos diferentes que resaltan sus diversos atributos y que identifican lugares o circunstancias específicas asociadas a ella, como Guadalupe, Lourdes y Fátima.

La festividad de mañana, por ejemplo, fue incorporada al calendario litúrgico por el beato papa Inocencio XI en agradecimiento por la liberación de la ciudad de Viena del asedio otomano el 12 de septiembre de 1683. Jan Sobieski, rey polaco y comandante cristiano que luchó y conquistó la victoria en Viena, había confiado previamente a su ejército a la protección de María ante la imagen de Nuestra Señora de Czestochowa. Por lo tanto, se consideró que una devoción particular hacia la Santísima Virgen influyó en el resultado de esta batalla histórica, y su santo nombre es venerado en este día debido a su cercanía a Jesús, el Príncipe de la Paz.

Los católicos veneramos a la Santísima Virgen María porque Dios

le otorgó un papel especial en la Encarnación y en la vida de la Iglesia. Venerar significa mostrar profundo respeto, honor o reverencia por una persona, un lugar o una cosa, a menudo debido a su avanzada edad, sabiduría, santidad o talento. Veneración no es sinónimo de adoración, la cual le corresponde únicamente a Dios.

María recibe un gran honor dentro del pueblo de Dios debido a su relación absolutamente única con Jesús y porque la gracia de Dios se manifestó de manera excepcional en su vida. Nosotros, los católicos, creemos que honrar a María, en última instancia, protege y proclama la verdad sobre quién es Jesús, tanto en su naturaleza divina como humana. El honor otorgado a la Madre emana de la dignidad de su Hijo.

En el gran himno bíblico, el *Magnificat*, María afirma: "Desde ahora, todas las generaciones me llamarán bienaventurada" (Lc 1:48). Los creyentes consideran que la veneración mariana es el cumplimiento de esta profecía bíblica. María no se atribuye a sí misma su grandeza; la explica de inmediato diciendo que "ha hecho en mi favor cosas grandes el Poderoso" (Lc 1:49). Los católicos honramos a María tanto porque Dios ha obrado de manera tan magnífica en ella y a través de ella, como porque su libre aceptación de la voluntad de Dios para con ella puso en marcha

la Encarnación de Cristo, su ministerio público y su pasión, muerte y resurrección.

Mientras agonizaba en la cruz, Jesús le dijo a san Juan el Apóstol: "Ahí tienes a tu madre" (Jn 19:27). La Iglesia entiende que Juan, el discípulo amado, representa a todos los que son discípulos fieles. María, la Madre de Dios (*Theotokos*), se convirtió, en un sentido espiritual, en Madre de la Iglesia y en nuestra madre. La veneramos con la misma reverencia y respeto que les debemos a nuestras madres, y reconocemos que el nombre de «madre» se encuentra entre los más sagrados de los nombres de María.

Cada vez que el papa León XIV exhorta a los líderes del mundo, y a todos nosotros, a orar y trabajar por la paz, invoca la intercesión de la Santísima Virgen María, Reina de la Paz. "Mientras nuestra tierra sigue herida por las guerras en Tierra Santa, en Ucrania y en muchas otras regiones del mundo, invito a todos los fieles a vivir la jornada del 22 de agosto en ayuno y oración, suplicando al Señor que nos conceda la paz y la justicia y que seque las lágrimas de los que sufren a causa de los continuos conflictos armados."

Unámonos al papa León en la oración: "Que María, Reina de la Paz, interceda para que los pueblos encuentren el camino de la paz." †

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.

September 18

Liter House, 5301 Winthrop Ave. Indianapolis.
Catholic Business

Exchange, rosary 6:35 a.m., Mass 7 a.m., buffet breakfast and program following, Marian University president Daniel Elsener presenting “The Distinct and Transformative Mission of Catholic Higher Education,” \$20 members, \$25 non-members. Register by 4 p.m. Sept. 15. Information, registration: cutt.ly/CBE-Reg.

St. Thomas Aquinas Parish, 4625 N. Kenwood Ave, Indianapolis.
St. Thomas Aquinas Speaker Series: Fireside Chat on Race in the Catholic Church, 6:15-9 p.m., Federal District Judge Tanya Pratt presenting, free. Information: 317-253-1461, churchinfo@staindy.org.

September 18-19

Prince of Peace Parish, 201 State St., Madison.
School

Festival, 5-11 p.m., carnival rides, kids’ games, food, \$5 admission. Information: 812-273-5835.

St. Louis Parish, 13 E. St. Louis Pl., Batesville.
Festival, Sat.: 5-11 p.m., live music, pulled pork dinners, raffles, pull tabs; Sun.: 10 a.m.-5 p.m. fried chicken and roast beef dinners, games, beer garden, cash raffle, beat-the-bid, country store, free admission. Information: 812-934-3204.

St. Luke the Evangelist Parish, 7575 Holliday Dr. E., Indianapolis.
Fall Fest, Fri.: 5:30-11 p.m., silent auction, bingo 6:30 p.m., parking lot party 8:30-11 p.m.; Sat: 3-11 p.m., Family Fun Day, live music, kids’ games and activity area, silent auction, beer garden, food vendors, free admission. Information: 317-259-4373.

St. Malachy Parish, 9833 E. County Road 750 N., Brownsburg.
Country Fair and Hog Roast, Sat. 4-11 p.m., Sun. 3-11 p.m., midway rides, food, games, casino, live music, free admission. Information: 317-852-3195.

St. Thomas More Parish, 1200 N. Indiana St., Mooresville.
September Fest, 5-10 p.m., food, kids’ games, corn hole,

raffle baskets, silent auction, casino tent, beer and wine tent, free admission. Information: 317-831-4142.

September 19

St. Bridget of Ireland Parish, 404 E. Vine St., Liberty.
Oktoberfest, 4-10 p.m., German food, kids’ activities, raffles, games, free admission. Information: 765-825-8578.

St. Rita Parish, 1733 Dr. Andrew J. Brown Ave., Indianapolis.
Health Fair, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., free flu shots, COVID-19 shots (\$15 without insurance), vendors, food, free admission. Information: boradeelight@gmail.com.

Fatima Event Center, 1040 N. Post Road, Indianapolis.
Be the Change Gala, 5:30-9:30 p.m., benefiting God’s Embrace Coffee Shop, which employs adults with cognitive disabilities; dinner, dancing, silent auction, registration open until maximum seating capacity of 150 is reached, \$60, accepting donations for the silent auction. Information, registration: bit.ly/4uuhBlo, godsembraceindy@gmail.com.

September 20

St. Meinrad Parish, 19570 N. 4th St., St. Meinrad.
Fall

Picnic, 9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. CT, live music, fried chicken dinners, soup, games, church tours, raffles, country store, activities for all ages, free admission. Information: 812-357-5533.

St. Mary Parish, 212 Washington St., North Vernon.
The Emotional Rollercoaster of Motherhood, 12:30 p.m., doors open at noon, Birdie Meyer presenting, lunch provided, free. RSVP by Sept. 14. Information, registration: text 812-350-4631

September 21

Virtual Sister Thea Bowman
Black Catholic Women’s Prayer Group, 7 p.m., meets online monthly on third Monday, sponsored by archdiocesan Black Catholic Ministry, all women welcome. Meeting: tinyurl.com/SrTheaPrayerGrp. Information: iowhosomaddox@archindy.org,

317-261-3381.
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis.
Information Session for April 1-12, 2027, Ignatian Pilgrimage to Spain, 6:30 p.m., learn about upcoming reflective/ walking Ignatian pilgrimage from Loyola to Barcelona, Spain, free. Information: 317-545-7681, pnavarrete@archindy.org.

September 24-26

SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi Parish, 5901 Olive Branch Road, Greenwood.
Fall Festival, Thurs. 5-9 p.m., rides, fish fry; Fri. 5-11 p.m. and Sat. noon-11 p.m.: rides, cake wheel, quilt raffle, silent auction, craft fair, wine tasting bar, free admission, ride ticket presale begins in September. Information: 317-859-4673, ss-fc.org.

September 26

Immaculate Conception Parish, 2081 E. County Road 820 S., Millhousen.
Festival, 3-11 p.m., Stone’s fried chicken, mock turtle soup, beer, Ertel’s wine, Hillbilly Corner ice cream, live music, 50/50 raffle, pull tabs, kids’ games, free admission. Information: 812-591-2362.

Cornerstone Center for the Arts, 520 E. Main St., Muncie, Ind. (Lafayette Diocese).
Muncie Catholic Women’s Conference, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., doors open 8:30 a.m., author and radio host Kathryn Whitaker speaking on “Living with a Grateful Heart,” opportunities for reconciliation, adoration, Mass, and more; for women of all ages, \$45 adults, \$25 students. Register by Sept. 20. Information, registration: 765-288-5308, awood@parish.dol-in.org. †

Wedding Anniversaries

MICHAEL AND JACKIE (STAHLHUT) CESNIK, members of St. Ann Parish in Indianapolis, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on Aug. 27. The couple was married in St. Ann Church in Indianapolis on Aug. 27, 1966. They have five children: Lisa Cesnik Ferguson, David, Jason, Kevin and the late Adam Cesnik. The couple also has eight grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.



TOM AND MARY MARTHA (BABCOCK) COSTELLO, members of St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) Parish in Indianapolis, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on Sept. 11. The couple was married in Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Indianapolis on Sept. 11, 1976. They have three children: Jeff, Ryan and Tom Costello. The couple also has four grandchildren.



MARK AND ANN (MUELLER) HAUSER, members of St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on Sept. 11. The couple was married in St. Lawrence Church in Indianapolis on Sept. 11, 1976. They have three children: Rachel Summers, Eric and Paul Hauser. The couple also has five grandchildren.



MARTIN AND DEBORAH (WILSON) SCHINDLER, members of St. Mary-of-the-Knobs Parish in Floyd County, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on Sept. 10. The couple was married in St. Anthony of Padua Church in Clarksville on Sept. 10, 1976. They have two children: Crystal Dearing and Martin Schindler, Jr. The couple also has four grandchildren.



TERRY AND PAULA (FASBINDER) VOLZ, members of St. Louis Parish in Batesville, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on Aug. 21. The couple was married in St. Louis Church in Batesville on Aug. 21, 1976. They have one child: Eric Volz. The couple also has two 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.

October events at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods honor St. Mother Theodore Guérin’s feast day, canonization

The Sisters of Providence will offer two events in October honoring their founder St. Mother Theodore Guérin. Both events will take place at 1 Providence Pl., Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, in St. Mary-of-the-Woods. A Mass for the saint’s feast day will take place in the Church of the Immaculate Conception at 11 a.m. on Oct. 3. A livestream link will also be available for viewing the Mass. The link will be posted at events.sistersofprovidence.org. Next, all are invited to celebrate the 20th anniversary of St. Mother Theodore Guérin’s canonization from 9:30 a.m.-1 p.m. on Oct. 11. St. Mother Theodore Guérin founded the Sisters of Providence in 1840. She was born Anne-Therese Guérin on Oct. 2, 1798, in the village of Étables in Brittany, France. She was canonized by

Pope Benedict XVI on Oct. 15, 2006, and her feast day was designated for Oct. 3. She is the first Indiana saint and the eighth Catholic saint from the United States. The celebration will begin at 9:30 a.m. with a pilgrimage through the motherhouse grounds, where Mother Theodore founded the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. At 11 a.m., all are welcome to attend a special Mass in St. Mother Theodore’s honor in the Church of the Immaculate Conception. A picnic luncheon will follow. There is no cost to attend, but registration is needed to know how many people will be attending. For more information or to register for the Oct. 11 anniversary celebration, go to events.sistersofprovidence.org, call 812-535-2952 or send an e-mail to msolis-deal@spsmw.org. †

Marian Authentic Women’s Conference set for Oct. 17 in Indianapolis

A Marian Authentic Women’s Conference will take place at the Primo Banquet and Conference Center, 2615 National Ave., in Indianapolis, on Oct. 17. The one-day Catholic event is designed to renew, inspire and empower Catholic women in every season of life. Rooted in the Catholic faith and modeled after the virtues of the Blessed Mother, this conference brings together women of all walks of life: wives, mothers, daughters, single women, religious and seekers-for a day of spiritual growth and authentic sisterhood. The conference is co-sponsored by the archdiocesan Office of Marriage and Family Life and Living Our Vocations Everyday (LOVE) Ministries. This year’s conference theme is “Fiat: Let it be Done.” The conference will feature keynote addresses by Lisa Hendey,

author and founder of www.CatholicMom.com; Kristy Malik, author and CEO and co-founder of Jonah Company; and Father Anthony Hollowell. There will be opportunities for Mass, adoration and confession. A Catholic marketplace will be available. Vendor applications will be accepted through Sept. 25. The cost, which includes lunch and snacks, is \$60 per person or \$55 per person for groups of at least eight. The cost for students ages 14-24 is \$20, and the conference is free for consecrated religious. Several levels of supporting sponsorship are also available. The deadline to register is Oct. 13. For more information or to register for the conference, go to loveministriesindy.org/mawc. For questions, email info@loveministriesindy.org or call 317-361-8361. †

Filmmaker sees dream come true in documentary on Gothic churches

By Sean Gallagher

Branden Stanley had big dreams when he started his own video production company as a teenager growing up near Indianapolis.

Now 34, a husband and father of five children, Stanley looks back on his early days as a filmmaker and laughs a bit as he sees a teenager wet behind the ears and more than a bit naïve.

Yet this former member of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Parish in Indianapolis recognizes something true in his dreams from his homeschooled high school years.

“I had a desire to create something of lasting beauty,” recalled Stanley in a recent interview with *The Criterion*.

To hone and expand his knowledge of videography, he studied at Ball State University in Muncie, Ind.

Soon after graduating from there 12 years ago, Stanley was hired by Chicago-based Spirit Juice Studios, a video production company that seeks to contribute to the Church’s mission of evangelization. During his years at Spirit Juice, Stanley has risen to serve as its chief creative officer.

Through it all, he never forgot his high school dream.

Now, Stanley is days away from people across the country getting to see how that dream has come true.

About three years ago, Spirit Juice partnered with Word on Fire, a ministry founded by Bishop Robert E. Barron of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester in Minnesota, to create the 90-minute feature-length documentary *Heaven in Stone and Glass*.

It will be shown in more than 1,000 theaters across the country, including several in and near the archdiocese, on Sept. 20 and 23, with additional dates and theaters possibly to come.

The documentary, narrated by Bishop Barron, explores the profound beauty and deep spiritual meaning of five medieval Gothic churches in France: the cathedrals of Notre Dame in Paris, Notre Dame in Chartres, Notre Dame in Rheims and Notre Dame in Amiens, and the abbey church of San Denis in Paris.

Stanley served as the co-director of the documentary, overseeing filming in all five churches during four trips to France that spanned 45 days.

“I can’t think of too many other things as permanent and as beautiful as these cathedrals. They’re kind of the definition of lasting beauty,” said Stanley, who described the documentary as “the perfect project for me.”



Bishop Robert E. Barron of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester in Minnesota prays the rosary outside Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris during the filming of *Heaven in Stone and Glass*, a feature-length documentary about Gothic churches in France. Branden Stanley, a young adult filmmaker who grew up in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, co-directed the film. (Photo courtesy of Spirit Juice Studios)

‘So much beauty’

The project, so focused on soaring beauty, was largely inspired by its near destruction when Notre Dame in Paris caught fire on April 15, 2019.

“The entire office was just glued to our screens,” Stanley said, recalling his memories of the day. “It was really difficult to work that day.”

In a Word on Fire podcast, Bishop Barron recalled how sad he was that day, thinking back to the times in the early 1990s when he had been a tour guide at Notre Dame in Paris when he was a graduate student in the city.

But then he was struck by the strong reaction across society to the fire at the cathedral, wondering why people in a culture that was becoming increasingly secular would experience such heartbreak at the potential loss of a medieval church. Could it be, he wondered, because beautiful churches like Notre Dame in Paris speak to the deep desire for divine transcendence that is in every human heart, despite the growing tendency of people to turn away from the practice of any faith?

Questions like this were the starting point for *Heaven in Stone and Glass*.

After five years of restoration work, Notre Dame in Paris reopened for worship and visitors in December 2024. Not long afterward, Stanley and the team from Spirit Juice visited to do filming there.

It was Stanley’s first visit to the historic cathedral, and he was struck by its “fresh appearance.”

Even before the 2019 fire, Notre Dame in Paris, much like other medieval churches, had walls and ceilings that had become darkened over time by the soot of countless candles burning there.

All of that grime, in addition to the damage from the 2019 fire, was cleaned off. Walking into Notre Dame after its restoration gave Stanley and other visitors something of a view of what the church might have looked like when it was first completed some 800 years ago.

“So much of it had been restored and worked on and cleaned, that it was difficult to kind of rectify in my head that this was a newly restored building in a lot of ways,” Stanley said, “but one which maintained the beauty and design that a building from 800 years ago has. Those two things don’t often match in my head.”

As wonderful of an experience Stanley had not only at Notre Dame in Paris but also in Chartres, Rheims, Amiens and San Denis, the visits to those churches were very much times of work for him.



Branden Stanley, left, works with Bishop Robert E. Barron of Winona-Rochester in Minnesota, and Devin Dailey, who works for Word on Fire, a ministry founded by Bishop Barron, on July 15, 2025, in Notre Dame Cathedral in Rheims, France. Stanley, who grew up in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, is a co-director of *Heaven in Stone and Glass*, a documentary narrated by Bishop Barron about Gothic churches in France. (Photo courtesy of Spirit Juice Studios)

“We didn’t have a whole lot of time once we were there,” he said. “So much of our time was in setting cameras up and trying to get the appropriate shot and trying to locate things within the church, when there’s so much detail.”

Still, Stanley knows that the encounters he had with these centuries-old churches, filled from floor to ceiling with faith-imbued beauty, will have a lasting effect.

“When you’re immersed so much in all of that, you’re still going to get something,” he said. “There’s so much beauty around you, and it’s packed in so tightly that, even though it is work and you’re kind of having to focus on the task at hand, I think it’s hard to not feel something being in there.”

A hope to inspire ‘some introspection’

As much as Stanley had a dream when he was a teenager of what he wanted to do, he also had a clear idea then of what he wanted to avoid.

“I didn’t want to work on things that were a passing fad, something that you watch and forget about,” he said.

Secular media, especially in the film industry, Stanley said, sees movies just as “a form of entertainment” and as the final goal for secular filmmakers.

That’s not the approach that Stanley and his colleagues at Spirit Juice take.

“Certainly, we want *Heaven in Stone and Glass*, along with all the rest of our work, to be entertaining,” he said. “But that is not the end. The end of it is to inspire change in individuals.”

“My hope is that, by seeing these beautiful buildings on the screens, whether in the theater or whether at home, that it inspires some introspection. How much are we doing to preserve the beauty of our faith? How much are we doing to further the beauty of our faith?”

Stanley also hopes that the documentary will be a way for viewers to get closer to the historic churches in France than they’ve ever gotten before.

“I think about the people who will get to experience the cathedrals who might not have the opportunity to go and visit them in person,” he said. “This documentary brings so many visuals of the cathedrals into local theaters. After that, once it’s available on streaming or for purchase, it will be in so many homes as well.”

As dedicated as Stanley was in creating this documentary to help viewers see the beauty of the Catholic faith for the first time or to delve into it more deeply, he knew that he, and especially his wife Alea, had to make sacrifices for that to happen, including the 45 days he spent away from her and their four children,

who range in age from 8 to 15 months, with a fifth child who was born earlier this month.

“I think my wife definitely had the harder job between the two of us, since I was gone for such an extended period of time,” Stanley said. “That said, I think 10 years ago I would have welcomed every bit of being able to travel.”

“But honestly, going into this, outside of the fact that I was excited to film the piece and to get started, I was also kind of dreading it a bit because it had been a while since I’d been away from the kids and from Alea for so long.”

Many put ‘heart and soul into this’

Stanley has now worked on a variety of projects during the past 10 years with Bishop Barron, who is only surpassed in social media followers in the Catholic world by his fellow Chicago native, Pope Leo XIV.

Yet, Stanley says it’s “always been a joy” to spend time with him.

“He’s incredibly down to earth and humble,” Stanley added. “He’d talk with every member of the crew and learn about their background.”

Stanley was also impressed by how Bishop Barron could speak at some length in off-the-cuff moments in the documentary when he was asked to answer questions.

“He would just go and begin talking without skipping a beat,” Stanley said. “It was from the heart and impactful. Honestly, it’s a bit uncanny how much he can, just in one take, go through it all, and it’s perfect.”

Stanley is looking forward to watching the documentary in a theater with his Spirit Juice co-workers.

“We see it a lot on our small monitors here as we were working through it,” he said. “And we do have a projector set up to view it in our studio, but it’s still nothing like going to a theater and experiencing it that way.”

In addition to being grateful for all that Alea did for him while he was away filming in France, Stanley also appreciates the work his Spirit Juice colleagues did on the documentary, even if his name is listed as “co-director.”

“A lot of people worked very tirelessly on this piece to make it happen ...,” he said. “So many different people put their heart and soul into this because they knew that it was incredibly important.”

(For more information on *Heaven in Stone and Glass*, including where and when it will be shown in theaters in and near the archdiocese, and to purchase tickets, go to heaveninstoneandglass.com.) †

9/11
continued from page 1

moon in 1969. The start of the global COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, among others.

The events of Sept. 11, 2001, are vivid for many Americans who experienced that day. Ken Shanks is one of them.

“I was at work when 9/11 happened,” recalls Shanks, a member of St. Augustine Parish in Jeffersonville. “We had a radio on, and programming was interrupted with the announcement that a plane had hit one of the twin towers in New York City.

“At first no one knew why it happened, and there was the thought that it was likely an air traffic controller issue or a plane malfunction.” Shanks and his colleagues immediately put their work aside and found a television. “We watched in horror as a second plane hit the second tower. We all knew at that point that this was more than coincidence and had to be a planned attack.

“As we watched the fires—and then the people jumping out the windows—more than one person whispered, ‘Oh God,’ or ‘Dear God.’ I whispered, ‘Holy Mary.’ “Then the buildings collapsed. We knew no one would be saved. Some thought it would be the start of World War III. Others thought it was the end of time.”

Shanks held onto a more comforting belief. “I was consumed with grief over the whole thing, but ultimately I knew that nothing catches God off guard,” he says 25 years later. “He’s always in charge, always has a plan, and it’s never about revenge.

“Those victims were now with Jesus.”

‘I did not get through that day alone’

The shock and the horror kept increasing with each news report that day. After the twin towers were struck, the news of a plane crashing into the Pentagon followed. Then came reports of United Flight 93 going down in western Pennsylvania—a plane that terrorists likely targeted for the U.S. Capitol or the White House until that tragedy was averted by the heroic actions of the plane’s passengers and crew who sacrificed their lives in that effort.

The heartbreak and horror of it all overwhelmed Janine Schorsch. “I did not get through that day alone. God carried me,” says Schorsch, a member of St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross Parish in Bright.

Faith carries Catholics who lost family to 9/11 terror attacks 25 years ago

(OSV News)—Joseph Connor had his back turned to the large window of his 36th floor office when he “suddenly more felt than heard” the massive impact of a commercial jet slamming into the north tower of the World Trade Center a third of a mile away on Sept. 11, 2001.

As Connor watched pages and pages of office paper slowly rain down from the burning skyscraper against the clear sunny sky, the realization hit that his cousin Steven Schlag, a bond trader at the brokerage firm Cantor Fitzgerald, worked high up in one of the towers.

The banker suspected the number of lives lost was quickly rising as he frantically tried to call his cousin, a very close relative. Then, the middle of the second tower burst into a fiery ball, struck by a second jet. For Connor, this confirmed a terrorist attack.

“How could this happen again?” he remembers asking himself. “[Steven] had a wife—a foreign-born wife, like my mom was—and three kids. My mom had two. But why, God? What? How did you let this happen?”

He knew well the anguish of a young widow left with young children. It was the story of his mother on the day she lost her husband to a terrorist bombing 26 years earlier, at a historic tavern near his Wall Street office.

Connor, 60, recently described to OSV News the devastation that unfolded before his eyes in New York on Sept.

“The days following were filled with the shock of so many lives lost as well as the stories of brave heroes doing everything they could to help. Support and compassion poured in from around the world. Churches were full with prayerful petitioners.”

The shared grief connected people in a powerful way during that Sunday’s Mass.

“There were so many tears, understanding glances and comforting hugs when there were no words,” Schorsch says. “At the Our Father, I witnessed God reaching out his hands to each of us.

“We were holding hands with those near to us when a movement began—people stepping into the aisles, joining hands across the space. Literally, every person was connected.

“I will always remember that moment. People may have differing opinions, but at our core we are humans needing each other, reaching out our hands as children of God.

“God calls us to always be present to each other.”

A life remembered

The news of a tragedy can make us reflect on the fragile nature of our lives. And when the news connects us in some way to a person who has died in that tragedy, it can also have a lasting hold on us, making us want to make sure that the person and their sacrifice are remembered.

Twenty-five years after 9/11, Tim Kelly remembers where he was that day and what he was about to do. He also wants people to remember Lt. General Timothy Maude.

“On that morning, I was scheduled to be in Washington,” recalls Kelly, a member of Christ the King Parish in Indianapolis. “I arrived at the airport just as the second tower was hit. I went back to my office and joined in watching TV coverage with co-workers.

“In the news that followed, Indianapolis connections were covered. General Maude was mentioned. He died in the attack on the Pentagon. He was the highest-ranking officer to die that day.”

In the aftermath, Kelly also learned that Maude was a fellow alumnus of the former Latin School in Indianapolis, an archdiocesan high school seminary.

“There is a plaque in the courtyard of the former Latin School, 520 Stevens Street, honoring Lt. General Maude and other graduates who lost their lives in service to their country,” Kelly says.

“Although he didn’t find a priestly vocation, his life was one of service.”



The south tower of the World Trade Center bursts into flames after being struck by United Airlines Flight 175 in New York on Sept. 11, 2001. Twenty-five years after the 9/11 terrorism attacks that claimed the lives of nearly 3,000 people, Catholic family members who lost loved ones that day have credited their faith with getting through the losses. (OSV News photo/Sean Adair, Reuters)

From horror to a home

Just as it happened for many Americans, Amylou Porter was overwhelmed with emotion by the tragic events of 9/11.

“As the day unfolded, I remember feeling fear and overwhelming grief and feelings of complete helplessness,” recalls Porter, who lived in Memphis, Tenn., in 2001.

That devastating day was one when a person could lose their faith in humanity. Yet for Porter and countless Americans across the country, it was more so a day when they turned to God and a faith they had lost at some point in their lives.

“I had drifted away from the Church over the years, but on that day, I kept having the strong urge to pray a rosary, which I hadn’t done in a long time,” recalls Porter, special events coordinator

for the archdiocese.

“I didn’t even have a rosary. I remember looking for information about where I could purchase rosary beads in Memphis, and I located a Catholic bookstore that had some. I left work early that day—who could get anything done?—purchased my rosary beads and ended up visiting a parish that had opened up for prayer that evening.”

Shortly after she entered the church, she felt a sense of peace and home.

“It helped so much to be in community with people in prayer that night,” recalls Porter, now a member of St. Gabriel the Archangel Parish in Indianapolis. “I think being present at that time reminded me of how powerful prayer and our Catholic community are.”

That evening in community and shared prayer started Porter on a path to embracing her faith.

“Even though it took some more time for me to fully recommit myself to the Church, I think my road back began on 9/11 with the need to pray a rosary.” †

Connor said he has had no inclination to walk away from God, unlike some others he knew who lost loved ones on 9/11. The experience, he said, of losing his father and being raised by a mother and grandmother who were devout, Irish women kept him grounded and better able to handle the loss of his close cousin, whom he described as tough and funny.

“We went to church and all those things, but Grandma Connor always instilled in us never to be raised with hate,” said Connor.

His cousin Jean Schlag Nebbia of Naples, Fla., also clung to her faith shortly after her older brother Steven, who was 41, died in the attack.

“I never blamed God for 9/11. I felt that you’re given the gift of life, and then you’re given the gift of choice. And sometimes there’s bad people and they make bad choices, and other people are hurt through bad choices,” Nebbia, a former special needs teacher’s aide, told OSV News.

Three months after the attacks, she came to a realization.

Nebbia, 63, described watching news footage of the burning towers obsessively, trying to find her brother among those jumping out of the buildings. On the third month of non-stop viewing, her husband gave her some

See CONNOR, page 10

A family’s heartbreak and hope pour out from heroics of United Flight 93

By Mike Krokos

Lauren Catuzzi Grandcolas and unborn child.

That inscription on the Wall of Names at the Flight 93 National Memorial in Shanksville, Pa., has been a strong memory since I visited there four years ago.

The Pennsylvania memorial is a powerful reminder of what passengers aboard United Flight 93 from Newark, N.J., to San Francisco did on Sept. 11, 2001, to prevent al Qaeda terrorists from flying a hijacked plane into the U.S. Capitol or White House in Washington, sacrificing their lives for a greater good, saving countless others.

Twenty-five years later, their heroism still stands as a poignant, selfless act because the 40 passengers and crew made the ultimate sacrifice, a decision many of us, please God, will never face. Tragically, nearly 3,000 lives were lost that day at the World Trade Center in New York, the Pentagon in Arlington County, Va., and in that Pennsylvania field on what many consider the darkest day to occur on American soil.

The Pennsylvania memorial, operated by the U.S. National Park Service, offers a somber reminder of all those aboard the flight who fought back against the hijackers, resulting in Flight 93 crashing into that open field.

Every year since my family’s visit, I’ve thought about learning more about Lauren, then-38, and her unborn child’s story. I recently decided it was time.

Upon researching her life story, I learned Lauren was returning home to California from her grandmother’s funeral in New Jersey, and was three months pregnant with her and her husband Jack Grandcolas’ child. She had suffered a miscarriage a few years earlier, and the couple wondered if they would ever have any children. They believed that uncertainty was answered in 2001.

Lauren was among the passengers aboard the flight who called a family member to let them know there was a problem. She left messages for Jack on their answering machine, conveyed her love for him and asked him to tell her family that she loved them, too.

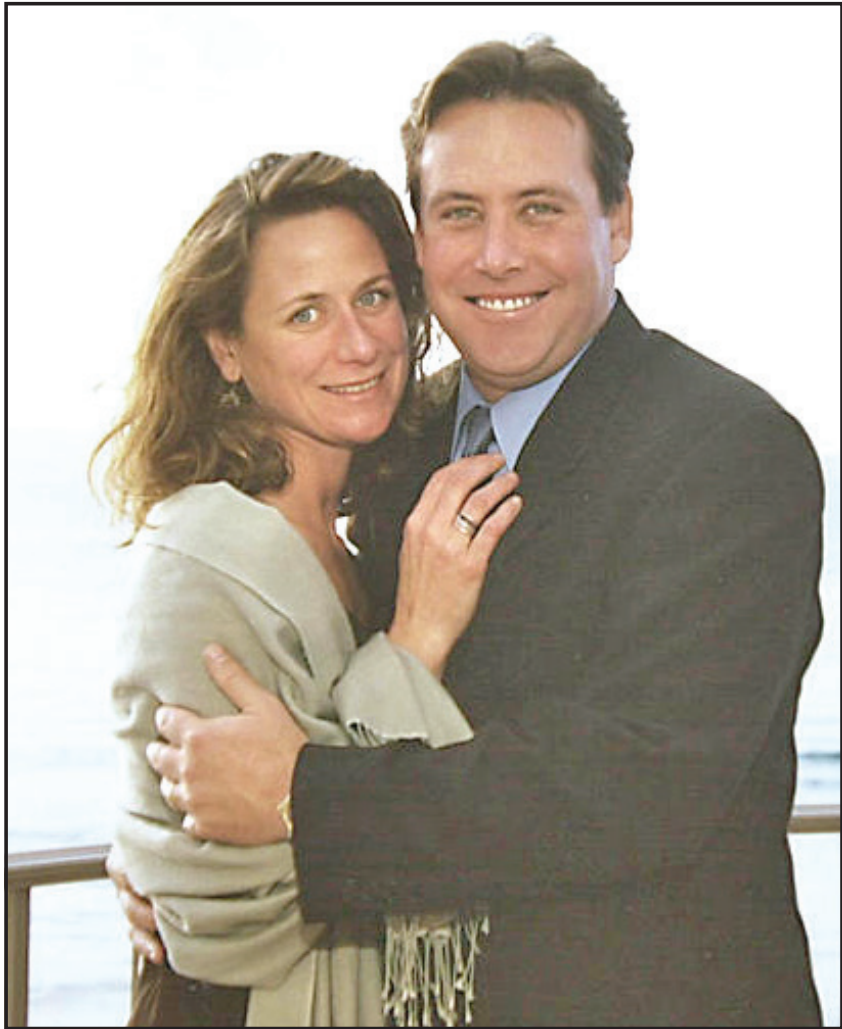
Not long after, she and the others on the flight were gone.

‘Forgiveness. It’s his most powerful gift’

Lauren and Jack’s first date included a U2 concert, her favorite group. Both Lauren and Jack were brought up Catholic, but neither of them was practicing the faith, including after they married. Little did Jack know an unplanned meeting with Bono, U2’s lead singer—who was brought up by a Catholic father and a Protestant mother and who later developed a deep faith in God and Christ—would profoundly impact him after Lauren’s death.

In the months before her death, Lauren began attending a weekly Bible study. It had a powerful effect on her, her husband said.

In his book *Like A River To The Sea: Heartbreak and*



Lauren and Jack Grandcolas are shown in this undated photo. Lauren was three months pregnant when United Flight 93 was hijacked by al Qaeda terrorists on Sept. 11, 2001. She was among the 40 passengers and crew who made the ultimate sacrifice by fighting back against the hijackers, resulting in Flight 93 crashing into an open field near Shanksville, Pa. (Courtesy of the National Park Service, Flight 93 National Memorial / Jack Grandcolas)



Lauren Grandcolas was three months pregnant when United Flight 93 crashed near Shanksville, Pa., on September 11, 2001. She and her unborn child are among those memorialized on the Wall of Names at the Flight 93 National Memorial in Shanksville, Pa. (Photo courtesy of WITF, Harrisburg, Pa.)

Hope in the Wake of United 93 (from a lyric in U2’s song “One Tree Hill”), Jack and his co-author Alan Shipnuck described how Lauren became immersed in the weekly Scripture gathering.

“One evening she came home and said, ‘I finally get it,’ ” Jack wrote. When he asked her, “Get what?” she responded, “The meaning of it all.”

“I wanted to hear more but she said, ‘It’s too deep to explain, but I wanted you to know I get it.’ I wish I had pushed her to tell me more, but I didn’t. And then she was gone.”

Jack, meanwhile, especially struggled with the thought of a loving Creator after 9/11.

“What kind of merciful God would take my sweet Lauren and our child?” he asked in his book.

His conversation with Bono a few years later helped change his perspective.

Jack attended a U2 concert in Oakland in 2005, and he unexpectedly met the singer after the show and had a heart-to-heart conversation with him about his struggles.

“Being brought up Catholic, you’re given all this guilt about things that you didn’t do right,” Jack told Bono. “I worry that I may have screwed up in this life and mortgaged my opportunity to see Lauren again.”

Bono’s response moved Jack.

“You’ll see her again. I know it. We all screw up in life,” Bono told him. “That’s why God grants us forgiveness. It’s his most powerful gift.”

Bono’s words changed him and his faith, Jack noted.

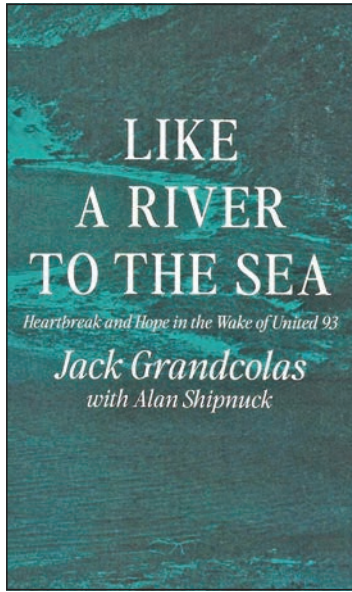
“Ever since 9/11, I had questioned God and his plan for me,” he wrote. “The night was a tribute to her, but in a very important way it set me free, allowing me to be more forgiving of myself and rekindle my belief in God’s mercy.”

‘Dear Son ... or Daughter’

The grief that anyone who lost a loved one on 9/11 continues to feel is understandable. Many Americans old enough to have a lived memory of that day can still be moved to tears when recalling what happened. I am.

In 2021, Jack reflected on the tragedy in a story written by Tim Lambert, then-*Morning Edition* regional radio host and multimedia news director at WITF radio in Harrisburg, Pa.

Jack admitted that, years later, although he had come to terms with the



loss of Lauren, he had not fully processed the loss of their unborn child, who would have been born in April 2002. The child’s name would have been Grace if a girl, and Gavin, if a boy.

“All I could think about year in and year out was, ‘This child would have been 12 this year. What would they have been doing? This child would have been 16 this year. What would they have been doing?’ ” he told Lambert.

Thanks to the advice of a therapist, Jack began writing down his thoughts and working through them. It eventually led him to write his book and dedicate it to their unborn child.

The foreword begins, “Dear Son ... or Daughter, I am writing this story at the advice of my therapist. She felt it would be helpful to share a little bit about your mom and dad, and why you will always have your place in history.

This story may also help others who have suffered a traumatic loss.”

The book delves into Jack’s years of depression and post-traumatic stress, then the therapy that later enabled him to move forward.

“I’ll never have full closure,” Grandcolas said in a 2022 interview. “I’ll always have a scar on my heart, but it’s certainly a way for me to do something to memorialize the unborn child.”

He also hopes his book helps others deal with sudden loss, including a generation lost because of an unexpected death.

“So it is a generational book in a way because it’s a love letter to the generation that would have been in their 20s now,” Grandcolas said.

May we forever hold those words close to our heart

The story of Lauren, Jack and Grace or Gavin is one of thousands that can be told as we remember Sept. 11, 2001.

As the 25th anniversary of that day again offers a chance to remember the ultimate sacrifice made by many, it’s also an opportunity for us to write our own love letter.

I pray learning more about Lauren, Jack and their unborn child will strengthen my resolve as I move forward in my vocation as a husband, father and disciple of Christ.

It should also be a time for us to put aside our differences, to come together as one nation under God, to see and love our brothers and sisters as they are—no matter their race, color, creed or political affiliation.

And it’s an opportune time to remember our loved ones who have gone to their eternal reward.

Jack may have said it best at the end of his book: “*We all suffer loss. We all endure heartbreak. It’s how you respond to these cataclysms that define you. Sometimes the most beautiful things grow out of our hardest moments ...*.”

For all of us who have lost loved ones—including those impacted by 9/11—may we forever hold those words close to our heart.

(Mike Krokos is editor of The Criterion, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.) †

Reflection/Sean Gallagher

Fear turns to triumph in the heart of a newly expectant father on 9/11

The late spring and early summer of 2001 filled my heart and mind with beautiful memories to last a lifetime.

My wife Cindy and I exchanged our wedding vows on June 9, 2001. After a wonderful honeymoon trip in Florida, we returned to our home in Bartholomew County and began our wedded life that, while it had its inevitable hiccups, overall exceeded in happiness what I had imagined it could be in the time leading up to our wedding day.

By Sept.10, the blessings of our early married life reached even higher as we became convinced that we were expecting our first child.

I took all of this to the prayers of thanks that I offered to God when I went to 8:30 Mass on the morning of September 11 at St. Joseph Church in Shelbyville.

At the time, I was serving as the director of religious education at St. Joseph Parish, the faith community in which I had grown up.

After Mass, I spent some time in prayer and talked with some parishioners who attended the liturgy with me before walking to the parish’s office around 9:15. In shock, the parish secretary immediately told me about two passenger jets that had been flown into the World Trade Center towers in New York, which had happened respectively at 8:46 and 9:03.

That was when the wonderful flow of my early married life was brought to a sudden halt.

The secretary, the parish’s pastor Father John Fink (who died in 2023), and I watched news coverage of this shocking event.

I later went back to the church to tell the parishioners who were still there what had happened and asked them to pray for our country.

I then went to the building on the parish’s campus where my office was located and turned on a TV. It was a little before 9:45. The first thing I saw was the view of a stationary camera attached to what appeared to me to be an office building I knew was adjacent to the White House. A large plume of smoke could be seen rising along the horizon.

I was confused. This wasn’t New York City. This was Washington, D.C. What was happening? Then I quickly learned that the Pentagon had just been the target of an attack like the one on the World Trade Center.

My confusion was turning to anxiety and fear. That increased exponentially when I saw right before my eyes on the TV in my office the South Tower of the World Trade Center collapse shortly before 10:00.

What kind of world were Cindy and I bringing our first child into? That question was very clearly in my heart and

mind for the rest of that day.

Without even thinking about it, I got up and went to the person whom I knew could provide stability and reassurance: Mom. Thankfully, I only had to walk across the parish parking lot to St. Joseph School where my mom Debbi Gallagher (who died in 2015), worked as the school’s secretary.

And she gave stability and reassurance to me on that occasion as we both talked about the dreadful events of the morning.

But the unease and anxiety naturally aroused by watching what was happening, especially in light of the knowledge of the tiny child growing in Cindy’s womb led me—without even thinking about it—to give hints in my conversation with Mom about our news, which Cindy and I had agreed not to share for a few more months.

With her good maternal senses, Mom could read between the lines. And when she did, she turned to me in some surprise and said, “Oh! You and Cindy are expecting—but you’re not supposed to tell me.”

That was a reminder that it’s hard to hide things from Mom, something that many children have learned about their mothers at one time or another.

But while the horror of 9/11 still makes my heart tremble 25 years later, I began to learn later that same day that faith, hope and love were still alive even in the face of the tremendous disbelief, despair and hatred at the heart of the destruction on that day. Indeed, they weren’t just alive. They were triumphant.

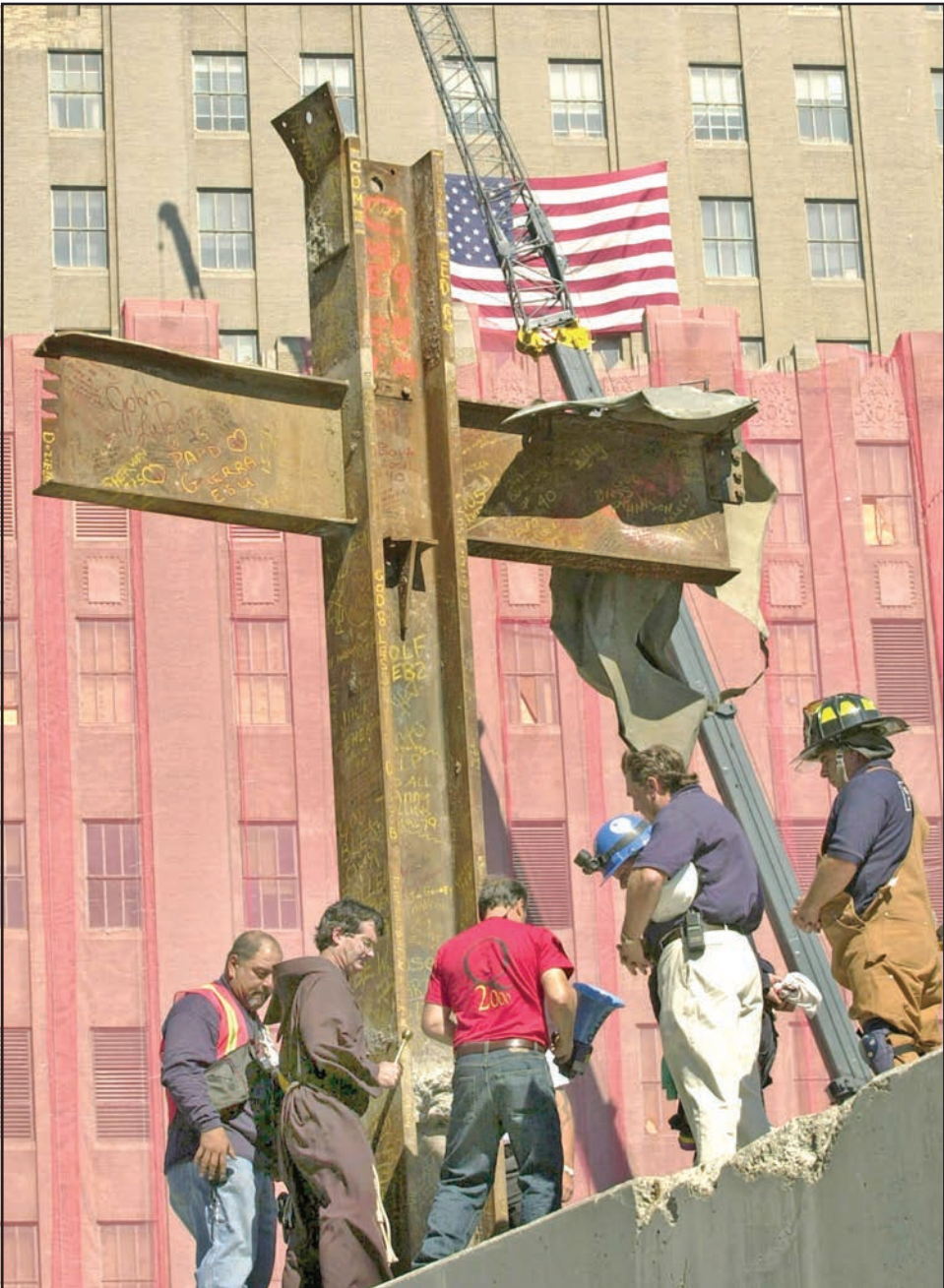
That learning began with an unscheduled Mass that Father Fink celebrated early in the afternoon for the students of St. Joseph School and some parishioners. That liturgy was much like the Mass I had attended earlier that day before I knew of the attacks. But returning to the celebration of the Lord’s infinite self-sacrificial love for me and all humanity in the Eucharist meant so much at that difficult time.

Then, on the evening of 9/11, Benedictine Sister Mildred Wannemuehler, a member of Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove who later died in 2012, came to St. Joseph to give an adult faith formation presentation. I had scheduled the event months before with the plan that she would reflect on the spirituality of hospitality.

But the agenda for the evening quickly changed in light of the day’s events. Sister Mildred was well-known in the archdiocese in 2001 as a real source of spiritual wisdom.

After the people who gathered to hear her speak prayed Evening Prayer of the Office of the Dead from the Church’s Liturgy of the Hours, Sister Mildred helped all of them, including myself, to begin to spiritually process what had happened and what it meant for the life of faith of all of us.

As a newly married husband and a very newly expectant father, what Sister Mildred



Franciscan Father Brian Jordan, standing with laborers and emergency workers on Oct. 5, 2001, blesses a 17-foot-tall cross formed by steel beams and recovered from the rubble of the World Trade Center in New York, brought down nearly a month earlier in the 9/11 terrorist attacks. (OSV News photo/ Kathy Willens, Reuters)

offered that evening was a godsend.

I came away that night with a renewed trust that God would help Cindy and me with his grace to create, at least in our small corner of the world, an atmosphere of faith, hope and love in which our son Michael, who would be born on May 1, 2002, and his four brothers who came later, could grow up and thrive. They would have no lived memory of 9/11 but would grow up in a world shaped by it.

I trusted that God would shower that grace upon us through each other, our parents and siblings, our extended family and friends and so many other brothers and sisters in Christ whom we have been blessed to come to know in the intervening 25 years.

That trust only grew as I learned in the coming days of the heroism of so many people who had in a selflessly Christ-like way given of themselves, in many cases

all the way to death, in service of those in need on 9/11.

My son Michael, who was growing in Cindy’s womb on 9/11, turned 24 earlier this year. My next two oldest sons, Raphael and Victor, are both starting to live their adult lives.

While the shock of the evil of 9/11 will always be seared into my memory, I hold fast to the triumph of faith, hope and love revealed to the world in Christ’s death and resurrection.

This victory has empowered Cindy and me and so many other parents and grandparents to help those children born since 9/11 to grow up in the light of hope in Christ rather than in the darkness of despair.

(Sean Gallagher is a reporter and columnist for The Criterion, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.) †

CONNOR

continued from page 8

advice a Christian co-worker had given him: “to say ‘I’m going to put this in God’s hands.’”

“The moment he said that to me is the moment I started to live ... giving up my worries and giving up the unknown,” Nebbia told OSV News. “You know, ‘God, I need a good night’s sleep. I’m going to put this in your hands.’ That, to me, was a turning point. And I don’t know if I could have done that if I didn’t have my Catholic base.”

Nebbia said her 12 years of Catholic education and growing up as a regular Massgoer gave her a solid grounding in faith in God’s providence. She said she goes to God in prayer for almost every aspect of her life because “he has my back” just like her older brother, whom she was very close to, “always did.”

Vera Murphy Trayner also leaned heavily on her faith after losing her husband, Patrick Murphy.

On the morning of the attack, Trayner prayed the rosary fervently as she rushed home from her son’s nursery school while pushing him in his stroller. Murphy, 36 and the vice president for technology at the resource and

management consulting firm Marsh McLennan, was on the 97th floor of the first tower that was hit three floors below. His department had moved there just months prior.

Trayner’s go-to devotion “always” came through for her with prayers answered.

“I prayed and prayed and prayed that Patrick would find a way out. He was so smart ... and athletic and young ... and it was the first prayer that I made that was not answered,” Trayner told OSV News.

She said she “was disappointed” but also held firm to the belief that her husband’s death “happened for a reason” and she “had to accept it.”

“Well, it’s free will. The terrorists, obviously they’re guided by evil and they were able to do such an evil act,” Trayner said. “I don’t want to feel sorry for myself because all through history, there have been traumas, wars. There’s death. There’s fires.”

Now 60, Trayner said her studies at Jesuit-run Boston College opened her up further to the faith during difficulties.

“I was able to ask questions and being a woman in the Catholic faith, being a widow in the Catholic faith, being a mother, I read quite a bit of different books ... answering my own questions and talking with people,” she said.

Trayner, a Tampa-based college counselor who remarried in 2006, has relied on the Holy Spirit “to give me the right words,” the Blessed Mother to intercede in raising her children, and the saints, especially Joan of Arc, to guide her through every major challenge.

Still, she said, as she described breaking into a sweat while speaking to OSV News, she remains haunted by the thought of how her first husband must have suffered as the north tower became engulfed in an inferno and collapsed.

Nebbia admitted that as a Catholic, in recent weeks she has begun to struggle with forgiving the terrorists.

“I just feel like I don’t need to forgive them. That’s not my job. So now I’m questioning myself, like, ‘Alright, how do I go about forgiving these people? How?’ That was their goal. They achieved their goal. Now, I question that part of me,” she said.

Connor said he has come to accept his family’s tragic losses.

“Maybe I didn’t understand the reason, and maybe I don’t understand the reason why Steve was killed and the other 3,000 people, but I do feel that God does have a reason for it,” he said. †

SIMPLY CATHOLIC

September feasts embrace the spectrum of triumph and sorrow

By Stephanie Mann

(OSV News)—Each September the Church celebrates the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross on Sept. 14, which is followed fittingly by the memorial of Our Lady of Sorrows on Sept. 15.

The pairing of these celebrations, even in their different levels on the liturgical calendar, properly guides us in our levels of devotion and love of our Savior and the Blessed Mother. He is our divine Redeemer, to be worshiped and adored. She is his first disciple and our example.

Both of these celebrations have a long history and are worthy of meditation.

The feast of the Triumph of the Cross was observed in Rome in the late seventh century to commemorate the recovery of the holy Cross by the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius in 629.

St. Helena, mother of the Emperor Constantine, had found the true cross in Jerusalem in the fourth century, but the Persians had captured it and only returned it after Heraclius defeated the Persian king Khosrau II. The emperor returned it to Jerusalem, and this feast recalls that event.

As he approached the holy city, dressed in fine robes and festooned with jewels, Heraclius found himself unable to process further until Zacharias, patriarch of Jerusalem, told Heraclius to humble himself by removing his imperial regalia and proceeding as a barefoot pilgrim.

On a deeper level, of course, the feast recalls Jesus’ triumph over death and the fulfillment of his great statement, “When I am lifted up from the Earth, I will draw everyone to myself” (Jn 12:32, which serves as the Communion antiphon on this feast). The liturgy of the Mass for this feast includes both triumph and sorrow in the readings and prayers, since Jesus both suffers his passion and is victorious over sin and death.

From the Book of Numbers (Nm 21:4b-9), the first reading recalls the story of Moses and the bronze Seraph, which the Lord told him to raise on a pole. The people of Israel had grumbled against God for their sufferings. God thus sent serpents to afflict them. When Moses cried in need to the Lord, he instructed Moses to create the bronze serpent and raise it on a pole. Then, when Israelites who were bitten by one of the serpents looked at the bronze serpent, they would be healed.

The responsorial psalm is a poetic reminder of how God has forgiven his people for their betrayal: “But they flattered him with their mouths, and lied to him with their tongues. ... Yet he, being merciful, forgave their sin and destroyed them not” (Ps 78:36, 38).

The second reading is the great hymn of Jesus’ humility and exaltation from St. Paul’s Letter to



An Italian woman reaches out to touch a large crucifix as it is carried in a procession in the city of Monreale in Sicily. The Church celebrates the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross on Sept. 14. (CNS photo from Reuters)

Philippians (Phil 2:6-11): “Though he was in the form of God ... he emptied himself ... he humbled himself ... becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.” After this falling movement in the reading, Jesus rises: “Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend.”

And, finally, in the Gospel from St. John (Jn 3:13-17), Jesus makes the connection between Moses and the bronze serpent and himself, as he tells Nicodemus that he must be lifted up so that those who believe in him will have eternal life. From that passage comes the great John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.”

Like the commemoration of Good Friday during Holy Week, the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross reminds us of the wondrous paradox at the heart of our faith. Eternal lift is won for us by the suffering and sacrificial death of Jesus Christ.

On Sept. 15, the Church recalls the sorrow of the Blessed Mother at the foot of the cross as the fulfillment of Simeon’s prophecy at the presentation of Jesus in the Temple: “... and you yourself a sword shall pierce so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed” (Lk 2:35).

The Gospel for Mass that day may be either the retelling of Mary and the beloved disciple standing by the cross of Jesus (Jn 19:25-27), or the presentation of the Christ Child in the Temple (Lk 2:33-35).

The sequence “*Stabat Mater*”—often sung while praying the Stations of the Cross—may be chanted after the responsorial psalm and before the proclamation of the Gospel.

The Second Vatican Council’s “Dogmatic

Constitution on the Church,” known by its Latin title as “*Lumen Gentium*,” offers a wonderful reflection on the sorrows experienced by the Blessed Virgin Mary at the foot of her Son’s cross.

“The Blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and faithfully persevered in her union with her Son unto the cross, where she stood, in keeping with the divine plan, grieving exceedingly with her only begotten Son, uniting herself with a maternal heart with his sacrifice, and lovingly consenting to the immolation of this Victim which she herself had brought forth” (#58).

The readings and prayers of the Mass focus on Mary’s special sorrows, but also on her glory, as the Alleluia verse proclaims: “Blessed are you, O Blessed Virgin Mary; without dying you won the martyr’s crown beside the cross of the Lord.”

Devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows became popular in the 13th century among Cistercian monks and Servite friars. The memorial was first celebrated by the Servites; then Pope Pius VII added it to the Church’s universal liturgical calendar in 1814. Pope St. Pius X moved the memorial to Sept. 15 in 1913.

The Servites gave us the Chaplet of Our Lady of Sorrows encouraging meditation on seven sorrowful events in the life of Mary: the prophecy of Simeon (Lk 2:34-35); the flight into Egypt (Mt 2:13-15); the loss of the Child Jesus in the temple (Lk 2:43-45); Mary meeting Jesus on the way to Calvary (from the Stations of the Cross); Jesus dying on the cross (Jn 19:25-30); Mary receiving the body of Jesus in her arms (Mt 27:57-59); and the placing of the body of Jesus in the tomb (Jn 19:40-42).

In religious art, Our Lady of Sorrows is traditionally depicted in three ways: as the *Stabat Mater*, the sorrowful mother standing by the cross; in Mary holding the body of her dead son, portrayed most famously in Michelangelo’s sculpture, but also movingly in Mel Gibson’s 2004 movie *The Passion of the Christ*; and as the *Mater Dolorosa*, the Mother of Sorrows, often with seven swords (symbolic of Mary’s seven sorrows) piercing her Immaculate Heart.

The “*Stabat Mater*” sequence has been set to music by the classical composers Domenico Scarlatti and Joseph Haydn, the romantic composer Antonin Dvorak and the contemporary Estonian composer Arvo Pärt.

As the entrance antiphon for the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross proclaims, “We should glory in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom is our salvation, life and resurrection, through whom we are saved and delivered” (based on Galatians 6:14), even as we mourn with Our Lady: “At the Cross her station keeping / Stood the mournful Mother weeping / Close to Jesus to the last.”

(Stephanie A. Mann writes from Kansas.) †



A sculpture depicting Our Lady of Sorrows is displayed in a garden outside a Maryland church. The memorial of Our Lady of Sorrows is celebrated on Sept. 15, the day after the Church marks the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. (CNS photo/Bob Roller)

Twenty Something/Christina Capecchi

Like Amelia Bedelia, take the time to bake the lemon meringue pie

Amelia Bedelia should have been fired. She botched every single task on her housekeeping list. When instructed to dust the furniture, Amelia Bedelia put dusting powder on the furniture. When told to dress the chicken, she put clothes on it. And her take on “change the towels” involved scissors and a drastic change of appearance.

This series of mistakes in Peggy Parish’s 1963 picture book *Amelia Bedelia* has amused generations of readers. They’re brought to life by Fritz Siebel’s illustrations—line art accented with just one spot color, a minty green that lends the book its distinctive charm.

Mrs. Rogers, the enraged boss, is about to fire the housekeeper—until she tastes the lemon meringue pie Amelia Bedelia baked.

“It was so good,” writes Parish, “Mrs. Rogers forgot about being angry.”

Then comes the reveal: “So right then and there Mr. and Mrs. Rogers decided that Amelia Bedelia must stay.”

It’s a delightful ending because it flips the story. Amelia Bedelia’s gift as a baker counts for more than the chaos she has caused. It feels a bit like a fairy tale:



redemption in the form of lemon meringue pie.

Grace has a curious way of outweighing failure. Our culture forgets this. We catalog mistakes. Screenshots, social media posts turned into permanent records, public shaming. We assume a person’s worst moment tells us who they are.

Scripture insists otherwise. St. Peter writes: “Above all, let your love for one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Pt 4:8).

I’ve always been struck by that image. St. Peter doesn’t say love erases a multitude of sins. It doesn’t pretend they never happened. Amelia still ruined the towels. The chicken is still wearing clothes. Love simply refuses to let failure have the last word.

We’ve all known people whose generosity overshadows their absent-mindedness, whose devotion runs deeper than their temper, whose loyalty matters more than their social awkwardness. We don’t ignore their flaws. We simply remember something truer.

When we take the time to do this—to look for the good in others and to see it—they flower before our eyes. And something changes in us, too. Our hearts soften, and our landscape shifts. We inhabit a more tender world—one of mercy over judgment, humor over irritation, connection over correction.

This wisdom from St. Peter feels so timely as we settle into the new school year. We strive for a perfect record: to arrive early, to remember each task, to earn all A’s.

September is the month when sharp pencils dull and crisp folders bend. The gap between ideals and reality begins to show.

It’s a time to be gentle with each other—and ourselves. The pressure to perform is very different from the call to love. When we stop keeping score, we can rest in grace. We can trust that a good teacher, like a good friend, will see our special gifts—even when we misinterpret the instructions.

Back to school isn’t a mandate to get it all right. It’s an invitation to build relationships, to take the extra time to see the whole person, to learn and laugh together, to mess up and try again.

A person’s worst moment doesn’t define them. It tells us they are human, which makes them a perfect match for the rest of us.

So let us rise each day with hope—to try again, to trust. God will take it from there. Bake the lemon meringue pie. Let love cover the rest.

(Christina Capecchi is a freelance writer from Grey Cloud Island, Minn.) †

Our Works of Charity/David Bethuram

Catholic Charities helps a young mother turn hardship into hope

Natasha grew up in the projects with divorced parents. The lights were cut off almost every month, there was often no food in the house, and she wore shoes with holes in them. She made herself a promise that once she got out of the projects, she would never go back.

She started working at 15. At 18, she got married, but her husband became sick, and she found herself supporting him, her mom and her little brother while attending college full-time and working a full-time job. Unfortunately, Natasha and her husband separated by the time she was 19. She took on two more jobs, moved in with her aunt, finished her associate degree and transferred to a university.

Natasha met her soulmate, and within six months they were engaged. Nine months later, she was pregnant, still attending school and still working. Things were difficult, but they were making it work.

Then her husband’s alcohol addiction became impossible to ignore. She gave him an ultimatum: stop drinking or he could not be around their baby. Instead, he chose a third option. He took his own life in what would have been their nursery.

From that point on, Natasha went into survival mode. She worked 12 to 13 hours a day as a waitress while preparing to become a single mother. When her son was born, she made him a promise: he would never know the kind of struggle she experienced as a child.

Keeping that promise was not easy. They were evicted from their apartment and moved from one sublease to another. At one point, they lived in a hotel. Her son thought it was an adventure. He did not realize they were homeless.

During some of her hardest moments, Catholic Charities provided support, encouragement and resources that helped Natasha keep moving forward. Catholic Charities case workers and other staff assistance gave her hope when she felt defeated

and reminded her that she did not have to face every challenge alone.

Three years ago, Natasha decided she was no longer going to simply survive. She was going to build a better future for herself and her son. With determination and support from Catholic Charities, she developed a plan for long-term stability. She began following financial education groups, learned how to improve her credit, secured stable housing, purchased a reliable vehicle and found work that provided greater flexibility and increased income opportunities.

Just when things seemed to be falling into place, her lease was not renewed with only three weeks’ notice. She later learned the property was being remodeled, and rents were increasing by \$500 per month. Once again, she felt discouraged, but she refused to give up. Catholic Charities helped her find an apartment in the neighboring complex, allowing her son to stay in the only school he had ever known and maintain the stability he deserved.

Natasha knew she needed to increase her income if she wanted to achieve her dream of home ownership. All of her life challenges have caused her to live with severe obsessive-compulsive disorder, which can be challenging. But she decided to turn it into a strength. So, she launched a professional organizing business. Within the first nine months, she had already exceeded her goals.

Natasha says that some days self-doubt still creeps in and getting out of bed feels difficult. But then she remembers the promises she made to herself and to her son. She is determined to not go back to where she started, and that her son will not know the struggles she endured.

With determination, faith and support from Catholic Charities, Natasha has transformed a life defined by hardship into one filled with opportunity, resilience and hope for the future.

(David Bethuram is executive director of the archdiocesan Secretariat for Catholic Charities. You can contact him at dbethuram@archindy.org.) †

‘During some of her hardest moments, Catholic Charities provided support, encouragement and resources that helped Natasha keep moving forward. Catholic Charities case workers and other staff assistance gave her hope when she felt defeated and reminded her that she did not have to face every challenge alone.’

Theophilus Paths/Ely Segura

Archbishop Sheen affirmed that life is worth living and cherishing

I wonder where I’ve been all this time, as I didn’t know Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen until relatively recently. It wasn’t until I arrived in Chicago in 2019 that his name began to ring a bell.

One evening, while browsing YouTube for material for my parish ministry, I came across a video from the 1950s in which an eloquent and lively bishop shared words of wisdom on the meaning of our existence. It was the now Venerable Fulton John Sheen in one of the episodes of his well-known TV show “Life Is Worth Living.” I was immediately captivated.

Hearing him for the first time, I felt a sense of nostalgia that wasn’t my own; nostalgia for something great that I hadn’t experienced at the time, but which I realized had been a watershed moment for the American Church in the last century.

A man of substance, filled with God, spoke with courage and enthusiasm about the triune God on national television, wearing the vestments of a consecrated Catholic bishop with pride and joy. Brilliant! I got goosebumps right away!

His work, like all of God’s work, endures to this day, spreading throughout the world. For example, I was certainly familiar with the missionary rosary and had indeed prayed it with the very same intention with which Archbishop Sheen had conceived it in 1951.



I came across words attributed to the Chilean writer Isabel Allende that really struck a chord with me: I am not afraid of death; I am afraid of a lack of passion, of not having lived with sufficient intensity. St. Irenaeus of Lyon had already alluded to this in the second century of Christianity when he stated: “The glory of God is man fully alive, and true life for man is the vision of God.”

For me, Archbishop Sheen is the epitome of a human being who embodies these statements. He was a man overflowing with divine grace and wisdom, capable of affirming through his testimony—despite his many trials and tribulations—that life is worth living, cherishing and sharing in every second that is granted to us.

In May 2024, I fulfilled a goal I had set myself before leaving Chicago: to visit the Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen Museum, located at the Diocese of Peoria’s Spalding Pastoral Center in Illinois. After all, it couldn’t be true that, living in the same state where my dear Archbishop Sheen was born and lived, I wouldn’t go to see it.

I prepared briefly for my visit there by reading a heartwarming memoir written by Joan Sheen Cunningham (one of the bishop’s nieces) titled *My Uncle Fulton Sheen*. I booked a room in a hotel near the museum for a couple of days and, filled with the Pentecostal enthusiasm of those days, set off on a train journey to Peoria.

The museum is just a short walk from the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, where the young Fulton Sheen was ordained a priest in 1919 and where his

mortal remains now rest. Although it is, in reality, a small and simple space, I felt an overwhelming emotion there that I had to contain, as I had made this pilgrimage on my own and had no one there with whom to share it.

During my stay in Peoria, I visited the museum and the cathedral twice. I tried to take in as much as possible of all the exquisitely selected information and all the objects so harmoniously displayed. I watched at my leisure a film shown in a room in the museum decorated to look like the set of the show “Life Is Worth Living.” I loved it. I bought a copy of the film so that I could share its content with my community later.

It is easy to imagine the joy I felt when the Vatican announced the official date of Archbishop Sheen’s beatification, Sept. 24. To celebrate, I proposed *Treasure in Clay*, his spiritual autobiography, as the title for my Catholic book club last April.

I rejoice with the whole Church. I rejoice because another of our own is being raised to the altars. I am eager to share this admiration for him, his fidelity to Christ and the way in which he taught us to live. I constantly present my pastoral and professional intentions (which are one and the same) to Archbishop Sheen, and I pray that others may not go through this life—as I did for so long—without having the joy of knowing of the existence of this remarkable human being.

(Ely Segura is a laywoman and creator of the *Teófilo* project, an initiative for the faith formation of Hispanic adults in the United States.) †

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

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, September 13, 2026

- Sirach 27:30-28:7
- Romans 14:7-9
- Matthew 18:21-35

The Book of Sirach is the source of the first reading for Mass this weekend. Sirach’s author was Joshua, the son of Sirach. (He should not be confused with Joshua, active centuries earlier as a disciple of Moses and leader of the Hebrews as they passed into the Promised Land.)

Some versions of the Bible omit Sirach, since it was not written in Jerusalem or in in Hebrew, considered by some biblical scholars as requirements for authentic Sacred Scripture. However, the Church early in its history declared that Sirach was genuinely inspired by God, setting aside the arguments that site and language are vital in judging the status of a holy writing.

Sirach wished to teach values to his students, drawn from Jewish tradition and belief. The need is easy to imagine. Bright lights and easy living lured the young even then.

Likely composed less than 200 years before Christ, Sirach very much had the bright lights and easy living of his day in mind. The intellectual environment all around him was powerful, affecting even pious Jews. It was filled with elevating human logic, an attitude taken from the Greeks whose military exploits had overwhelmed much of Asia Minor and the Middle East, including the Holy Land.

The reading frankly calls upon its audience to forgive the faults of others and to trust in the merciful God, come what may, a position not exactly consistent with the way many people thought. Wrath and anger are hateful things, the reading insists. No one surrendering to these faults is true to God.

St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans provides the second reading.

The great majority of the Christians in Rome to whom Paul wrote this epistle were probably poor. They were tempted to look longingly at the rich and aristocratic, assuming that because of these advantages the fortunate controlled their own destinies.

Instead, Paul demanded, God controls the lives of all. He protects the just.

In the last reading, from St. Matthew’s

Gospel, Jesus answers the question of how often, and to what extent, must disciples forgive wrongs done to them. People then hurt each other as much as today. They, as we, owe debts, material or otherwise, to others. They, and we, yearn. They, as we, suffer when injured. They, and we, despair.

How should we react to hurts? The Lord answers that disciples must forgive, not “seven” times, but “seventy times seven” (Mt 18:22). The number meant completely, absolutely and totally.

True Christian forgiveness must in all things resemble God. Anyone insincere or pragmatic, stingy with forgiveness, is not of God.

Christian forgiveness reflects the essence of the redemption. In Christ, we sinners are forgiven. This divine mercy displays the reality revealed by St. John that “God is love,” and that in living by God’s standards, we should live eternally (1 Jn 4:8).

Reflection

The assumption, always present in this country, and alive today, is that the United States was established to be a society founded on the Christian Gospels, with the purpose of promoting these Gospels.

Some of the founders were devout Christians. John Witherspoon was a Presbyterian minister. Charles Carroll was a Jesuit-educated Catholic. Others were active believers. Others were not, and for them—and they were more than a few—state support of any religion was an unfair burden upon citizens.

Among the founders professing no organized religion was Benjamin Franklin. He had little regard for institutional religion as he saw it. He once wrote, “Lighthouses are more valuable than churches.”

Churches are supposed to be lighthouses, beacons that guide people across the tossing seas of life to a port of security, righteousness and peace.

People, not buildings, form the Church, although beautiful church buildings can heighten our awareness of the good offered to us by God in the Church.

The Scriptures call people to be lighthouses in their communities and within their families by loving all as disciples with a love that gleams with the divine love and commitment of Christ Jesus. †

Daily Readings

Monday, September 14
The Exaltation of the Holy Cross
Numbers 21:4b-9
Psalms 78:1b-2, 34-38
Philippians 2:6-11
John 3:13-17

Tuesday, September 15
Our Lady of Sorrows
1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 27-31a
Psalms 100:1b-5
John 19:25-27
or Luke 2:33-35

Wednesday, September 16
St. Cornelius, pope and martyr
St. Cyprian, bishop and martyr
1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13
Psalms 33:2-5, 12, 22
Luke 7:31-35

Thursday, September 17
St. Robert Bellarmine, bishop and doctor of the Church

St. Hildegard of Bingen, virgin and doctor of the Church
1 Corinthians 15:1-11
Psalms 118:1b-2, 16-17, 28
Luke 7:36-50

Friday, September 18
1 Corinthians 15:12-20
Psalms 17:1b-d, 6-7, 8b, 15
Luke 8:1-3

Saturday, September 19
St. Januarius, bishop and martyr
1 Corinthians 15:35-37, 42-49
Psalms 56:10c-12, 13-14
Luke 8:4-15

Sunday, September 20
Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Isaiah 55:6-9
Psalms 145:2-3, 8-9, 17-18
Philippians 1:20c-24, 27a
Matthew 20:1-16a

Question Corner/Jenna Marie Cooper

Christ often spoke in metaphors to point to the deeper meaning of the Gospel

Q In the Gospel’s account of St. Peter’s confession of Christ, Jesus responded with: “You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church” (Mt 16:18).



I sometimes wonder if it wouldn’t have been better if Jesus would have skipped the wordplay and simply said: “Peter, I’m making you the first head of my Church.” The verse as it seems subject to a lot of interpretation.

When I was Protestant, we all said that the verse implied that the Church would be built on a general confession of Christ, and Peter’s was but one example. Could you comment? (Indiana)

A I have to admit that my first thought upon reading your question was that if Jesus, the Incarnate Word of God, appreciates a good pun, then who are we to complain?

But more seriously, of course I don’t know exactly why Jesus decided to describe St. Peter’s vocation as the first pope in exactly the way that he did. I will note, however, that in the Gospels Jesus does seem to be rather fond of using poetic imagery—even when he must have known that some would misunderstand him.

For example, after Jesus angrily cleanses the temple in Chapter 2 of St. John’s Gospel, he tells the offended Jewish leaders: “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up” (Jn 2:19). This apparently went completely over the leaders’ heads, as they responded with: “This temple has been under construction for 46 years, and you will raise it up in three days?” (Jn 2:20).

The evangelist himself has to explain to the readers that Jesus “was speaking about the temple of his body” as a way of foretelling his future death and resurrection (Jn 2:21-22).

Similarly, in Chapter 16 of St. Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus’ “wordplay” confuses even the Apostles who were right there with him. As we read: “In coming to the other side of the sea, the disciples had forgotten to bring bread. Jesus said to them, ‘Look out, and

beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.’ They concluded among themselves, saying, ‘It is because we have brought no bread’ ” (Mt 16:5-7).

In the following verses, Jesus seems to be a bit exasperated with his Apostles’ lack of insight and reminds them that he is perfectly capable of creating all the bread they might need, as was evident in his recent miraculous multiplication of the loaves and fishes. It is only after Jesus patiently walks them through all this that the disciples “understood that he was not telling them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees” (Mt 16:12).

My own personal guess about why Jesus would often communicate through metaphors rather than explicit statements is that metaphors tend to carry a deeper emotional resonance that can “stick with us” longer and help us appreciate the truth on a deeper level.

If Jesus had merely said something like: “Simon son of John, I’m making you the first head of my Church; now let’s talk about the scope of your governing responsibilities” in a very technical and cut-and-dried way, I’m sure that still would have been very interesting to people like biblical scholars.

But the fact that Jesus calls Peter the rock on which he will build his Church—changing his name to actually mean “rock”—communicates a much more profound sense of leadership and firm foundation. St. Peter and his ministry as the “rock” that supports the structure of the Church is a much more meaningful and beautiful image that the average praying Catholic can meditate on fruitfully.

But even beyond this, since we as Catholics understand the truths of our faith to be revealed not only through Scripture alone, but also through sacred tradition, Jesus must have known that he didn’t need to spell out his message for the benefit of future Christians. That is, the authoritative interpretation of his words would have been handed down across the generations of faithful Catholics.

(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.) †

‘Since we as Catholics understand the truths of our faith to be revealed not only through Scripture alone, but also through sacred tradition, Jesus must have known that he didn’t need to spell out his message for the benefit of future Christians.’

My Journey to God

God as a Companion

By Mike Haigerty

He doesn’t talk much not at all really so He doesn’t get on your nerves but you miss the conversation sometimes

He’s not a slob or a neat freak so you can be how you want without bothering him but you miss the give and take sometimes

He’s always there for you but He’s not there at all in the ways you sometimes want or even feel you need

He knows you better than anyone and loves you more than anyone but rarely says it in ways you’d like and sometimes you wonder if it wouldn’t be better to have someone limited who says it than “The Great Infinite One” who doesn’t

So sometimes you trade Him for a sound, a touch, an image or feeling

but then you see how they can never be or even come close to who He is to you and you miss Him

So you return to the not seeing and the not hearing and the not touching and the not feeling and you sigh and say “Hello God, I’m sorry. I missed You.”

and you hear ... silence and you see ... nothing and your arms are empty and you feel sad but glad that God is your companion.

(Mike Haigerty is a member of St. Therese of the Infant Jesus [Little Flower] Parish in Indianapolis.)

Immigration is complex.

What does the Catholic Church teach about immigration?



Catholic teaching calls us to a both/and

- Regulate borders and ensure dignified treatment.
- Just laws and compassion
- Public safety and care for families.

Above all, we are called to see each person as a brother or sister in Christ.



Our Catholic faith calls us to approach it with truth, justice, compassion and respect for every person.

Every person has God-given dignity.

Human dignity is where we begin.

Before any label or legal status, each person is created in the image and likeness of God.

- People have a right to seek safety and livelihood.
- Nations have a right to regulate their borders.
- Enforcement must respond with dignified treatment.
- Families deserve special care.
- Our words matter, too.

Dispensation from the Obligation to Participate in Mass On Sundays

GENERAL DECREE

Whereas recent days have seen an increase in immigration enforcement in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, causing a significant rise in fear and anxiety amongst our immigrant communities, and

Whereas the Christian faithful have an obligation to participate in Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation (c. 1246 §1, 1247), and the fear and anxiety caused by the recent immigration enforcement activity may deter some of the Christian faithful from fulfilling their obligation to attend Mass, which would be detrimental to their spiritual welfare, and

Whereas the diocesan bishop is able to dispense the faithful from disciplinary laws, both universal and

particular, when it contributes to their spiritual welfare (c. 87 §1).

I hereby dispense from the obligation to participate in Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation all those persons living within the Archdiocese of Indianapolis who reasonably fear being detained, separated from their families, or experiencing intimidation due to the increased immigration enforcement. This applies even to those with proper legal documentation.

This dispensation will last through September 30th, 2026, unless further extended by decree.

The Christian faithful who discern they must make use of this dispensation are encouraged to supplement spiritual practices on Sunday and Holy Days of

Obligation with practices such as praying with the Sunday readings of the Lectionary, praying the rosary or other sacramentals, and/or watching a livestreamed Mass on television or the internet.

Pastors and all those who minister to the faithful within the Archdiocese of Indianapolis are encouraged to attend to the spiritual care of those who must make use of this dispensation to the best of their ability, especially regarding the Sacraments of Penance and Anointing of the Sick, or the distribution of Holy Communion to the homebound.

This decree is to be promulgated on the website of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis and shared with all pastors and parish leaders. It enters into effect on 4 September 2026.

+ Charles C. Thompson

Most Rev. Charles C. Thompson, D.D., J.C.L.
Archbishop of Indianapolis

Henry Justin Reyes

Chancellor †

Dispensa de la obligación de participaren la Misa los domingos y días de precepto

Considerando que en los últimos días se ha observado un aumento en las medidas de control de inmigración en la Arquidiócesis de Indianápolis, causando un aumento significativo del miedo y la ansiedad entre nuestras comunidades inmigrantes, y

Considerando que los fieles cristianos tienen la obligación de participar en la misa los domingos y días de precepto (C. 1246 § 1, 1247), y que el temor y la ansiedad causados por la reciente actividad de control migratorio pueden disuadir a algunos fieles cristianos de cumplir con su obligación de asistir a misa, lo cual sería perjudicial para su bienestar espiritual, y

Considerando que el obispo arquidiocesano puede dispensar a los fieles de las leyes disciplinarias, tanto universales como particulares, cuando ello contribuya a su bienestar espiritual (c. 87 § 1).

Por la presente, dispense de la

obligación de asistir a misa los domingos y días de precepto a todas aquellas personas que residan en la Arquidiócesis de Indianápolis que tengan motivos razonables para temer ser detenidas, separadas de sus familias, o sufrir intimidación debido al endurecimiento de las medidas de control de inmigración. Esto se aplica incluso a aquellas personas que cuenten con la documentación legal pertinente.

Esta dispensa estará vigente hasta el 30 de septiembre de 2026, a menos que se prorrogue mediante decreto.

Se anima a los fieles cristianos que consideren necesario acogerse a esta dispensa a que complementen las prácticas espirituales del domingo y de los días de precepto con actividades como rezar con las lecturas dominicales del Leccionario, rezar el rosario u otros sacramentales, y/o ver una misa retransmitida en directo por televisión o por internet.

Se exhorta a los párrocos y a todos aquellos que atienden a los fieles dentro de la Arquidiócesis de Indianápolis a que se ocupen, en la medida de sus posibilidades, de la atención espiritual de quienes deban acogerse a esta dispensa, especialmente en lo que concierne a los sacramentos de la Penitencia y la Unción de los Enfermos, o a la distribución de la Sagrada Comunión a las personas que no pueden salir de casa.

El presente decreto será publicado en la página web de la Arquidiócesis de Indianápolis y se comunicará a todos los párrocos y líderes parroquiales. Entrando en vigor el 4 de septiembre de 2026.

+ Charles C. Thompson

Reverendísimo. Charles C. Thompson, D.D., J.C.L.
Arzobispo de Indianápolis

Henry Justin Reyes

Canciller †

ARZOBISPO

continúa de la página 1

las fuerzas del orden protejan y defiendan, es gravemente preocupante ser testigos de cómo se desgreden las familias. La familia, el tejido de la estabilidad en nuestra sociedad, debe ser valorada y defendida. La dignidad inherente de haber sido creados a imagen de Dios exige que cada persona sea tratada con dignidad, compasión y respeto.” †



Scan the QR code to learn more about the Catholic principles that guide our response to immigration and care for our immigrant brothers and sisters.

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Dan Shea & Jeni Wilson

LAUNDRY

continued from page 1

“I believe that when you help build stronger families, you help build a stronger community,” says Elkins. “That’s the big mission behind” Loads of JOY.

“Loads” obviously refers to laundry, and “JOY” is an acronym for Jesus, Others, You.

“When we put Jesus first and serve others with his love, we experience true joy in our own lives,” explains Elkins, a member of St. Mary Parish in North Vernon.

The word also honors “the joy Elliot brings to our lives,” she explains. “He would get so excited when we folded clothes—he even makes doing laundry fun!”

While the business is based on a wellspring of altruism, the idea for it sprang from a well running dry.

‘A village for moms’

Staying home to care for Elliot, Elkins considered taking in laundry to add to the family’s income.

Then the Elkins’ well started running low on water, making laundry difficult for a family with five of six children still living at home, let alone doing laundry for others.

Finding an alternative to doing laundry at home was difficult. Digging a new well was cost prohibitive, and the laundromat “isn’t a great place for a baby to crawl around,” Elkins says.

The solution came as an answer to a prayer about something entirely different.

“I’d been praying for a way to help even more mothers,” says Elkins, whose 20 years of involvement in pro-life causes include Gabriel Project of Jennings County, which helps women facing unplanned pregnancies or crises.

That prayer, plus the idea of doing others’ laundry, began to merge.

“I thought it’d be cool to have a place where people could drop off their laundry, and I could contract moms to come in, do the laundry and bring their kids so they could watch them at the same time,” says Elkins. “And then the ideas just kind of flowed.

“I wanted to create more of a village for moms. I could have classes for them there. I could store Gabriel Project donations there.”



Kelly Elkins prepares to wash a load of clothes dropped off by a customer of her Loads of JOY business, which helps mothers in need, benefits Gabriel Project of Jennings County and offers support and resources to parents of unborn or newborn children diagnosed with Down syndrome. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

But without a “there,” it was all just a vision—until an optometrist turned the vision into reality.

Next to Dr. Kirk Hearne’s practice in North Vernon is a bungalow house he had rented to businesses in the past but was considering demolishing. Then he heard about Elkins’ idea.

Hearne contacted her, told her he “really liked the mission” and offered the home for a reasonable rental rate if she wanted to start the business there.

“It’s been a huge blessing I thank God for,” says Elkins, who accepted the offer. In answering her prayer to help moms, God also “found a way for me to do our family’s laundry and keep Elliot with me where it’s clean for him to roam.”

And the home’s basement proved ideal for storing items donated to Gabriel Project of Jennings County to help pregnant mothers.

She, her husband Matt and her friends Amber Bowers and Paula Hornback readied the space. Her pastor Father Christopher Craig blessed the house on opening day in April, and Loads of JOY was ready for business.

‘God can lead you ... to find joy’

Loads of JOY is a for-profit business, but primarily because Elkins wants “to avoid all the red tape of a non-profit” and “keep my life as simple as possible.”

Besides, she says, the venture is not about “making a ton of money—it’s about helping families.”

That’s why Elkins keeps prices affordable—\$25 per 15-gallon bag of laundry.

The moms she contracts benefit from flexible hours “and the ability to watch their kids and be with other moms” as they earn a percentage of money for each load they sort, wash, dry and fold.

Part of the income goes toward bills to run the business. A portion also pays for snacks offered to the moms during free, monthly educational programs presented by specialists.

“We’ve had sessions on cloth diapers, sleep safety and shaken-baby syndrome, and one coming up on breastfeeding,” says Elkins.

With the current customer level, she does laundry with Bowers and occasionally Hornback, hired on contract. But her hope is for more customers—“even if it’s just sheets or towels or dropping off laundry on the way home from vacation”—so she can contract more moms.

More customers would also enable Loads of JOY’s mission to help parents whose unborn or newly born child is diagnosed with Down syndrome.

Elkins hopes to offer them educational programs and resources. She knows firsthand that the number of resources can be overwhelming, so “hearing from another person who has been through it can help them make decisions.”

And she wants to offer them emotional support.

“Sometimes [the parents] need to be reminded that God is still present and can provide a way through the fears and uncertainties, and that the joy, the love breaks through everything,” says Elkins. “God can lead you through the struggles and fears to find joy.”

Or even Loads of JOY.

‘It gives us all a nice break’

“Looking back, God used our well running low to help make [Loads of JOY] happen,” says Elkins. “He’s been part of this way longer than I have.”

Trying “to be intentional in letting God lead” the effort, she prays the rosary in the house each day and invites the Holy Spirit to settle there and help her “guide the people who



Kelly Elkins holds her son Elliot on the porch of the home where she operates Loads of JOY laundry service in North Vernon. As part of the venture's effort to offer support and resources to parents of unborn or newborn children diagnosed with Down syndrome, it uses blue and yellow, the colors for Down syndrome awareness. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

come here to Christ and help them see his will for them.”

She also asks God “every day to just bring to me the people that he wants to be a part of this mission, whether it’s through their talent or as a customer, or a mom who just needs a village for support.”

Moms like Michelle O’Dell, who met Elkins when seeking help from Gabriel Project. With two toddlers and a 3-month-old, breastfeeding infant, life can get “pretty crazy” for the single mom suffering through a “rough” divorce.

She finds respite at Loads of JOY.

“It’s a nice place to go and be with other moms that understand what it’s like raising little ones,” says O’Dell, who has enjoyed the company of as many as four women there at a time.

“It helps mentally, knowing that there are other parents that I can talk to. And my kids can play with the other moms’ kids and with Elliot, so it gives us all a nice break.”

O’Dell says she appreciates the educational programs. But it’s the “homey, supportive, comforting” environment that especially draw her.

Recently O’Dell went to Loads of JOY “feeling overwhelmed and just needing an outlet. The kids played. I got to talk to Kelly, and she prayed with me. When I left, I felt better than when I went in.”

As she speaks with *The Criterion*, she notes her plans to visit Loads of JOY in the afternoon to speak with a Catholic spiritual director, a friend of Elkins who comes to the home for a few hours on Thursdays.

“What Kelly does for me and other moms is a great thing,” says O’Dell. “It just helps knowing that someone is there and they care and are willing to help.”

Her words describe the village Elkins hoped to create at Loads of JOY, a vision captured by a photo she found online.

“I love this picture here,” she says, pointing to a framed, sepia-toned image. It shows women in simple attire washing clothes in a small river near a village, a few children at hand.

Elkins found the image on the internet while researching the history of laundry.

“One of the things I read that I really appreciated is [that] moms with their kids would go to a local creek or river, and they would together wash their clothes,” she says. “Everybody would hang out, and it was a village. It was the village that they probably all needed more than they realized.

“When I saw that picture, I saw this house being that environment, like a village with moms coming together, working, having meaningful conversations, a place of community to build each other up and encourage each other.”

The ultimate goal of Loads of JOY “is to bring glory to God,” says Elkins.

“I just want to show these moms that God does truly care. He is truly there, and sometimes it takes more courage for us just to let him love us.” †

40 Days for Life fall campaign is on Sept. 23-Nov. 1 in Indy, North Vernon

Criterion staff report

While Indiana and several other states have strengthened pro-life laws, there is still a great need for prayer to end all abortion and to change the hearts of those associated with the industry.

40 Days for Life is a campaign of prayer, fasting and peaceful activism held in the spring and fall with the purpose of turning hearts and minds from a culture of death to a culture of life and bringing an end to abortion.

The fall campaign runs from Sept. 23-Nov. 1. Two locations in the archdiocese are participating: Indianapolis

and North Vernon.

Following is information on the two campaigns.

North Vernon: The campaign will take place at North Vernon City Park, 604 N. Street.

To sign up for one or more hours, go to 40daysforlife.com/en/northvernon.

For more information, contact Tim O’Donnell at 317-372-0040 or idiptionsapere@att.net.

Indianapolis: The campaign will take place in front of the Planned Parenthood facility at 8590 Georgetown Road. Parking



is available along Georgetown Road; do not park in the Women’s Care Center parking lot or at the industrial complex across from the Planned Parenthood facility.

To sign up for one or more hours during the Indianapolis campaign, go to 40daysforlife.com/en/indianapolis.

The Knights of Columbus will hold an overnight prayer vigil at this location from

6 p.m. on Oct. 2 through 6 a.m. on Oct. 3. All are invited to join for any amount of time.

For additional information on the Indianapolis campaign, contact Robert Burton at 40daysforlife.indy@gmail.com.

To find other 40 Days for Life campaigns outside of the archdiocese, go to 40daysforlife.com and select “Locations.” †