



The

Criterion

Serving the Church in Central and Southern Indiana Since 1960



Life and Hope

Abortion is never normal because it harms both mother and child, page 12.

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Larry and Andrea Fleck, fourth and third from right, celebrating their 50th anniversary this year, pose with Archbishop Charles C. Thompson and other members of their family at a reception in the Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center in Indianapolis on Aug. 30 following the annual archdiocesan Wedding Anniversary Mass across the street in SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral. Second from left is the couple's granddaughter, Jacqueline Hughey, who is engaged to Patrick Sauers, left. To her right are her parents David and Dora Hughey—the Flecks' daughter—marking their 25th year of marriage. To Andrea's right are Mandy and Nathan Fleck—the couple's son—who have been married 15 years. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

Couples wed for combined 210 years share wisdom after Wedding Anniversary Mass

By Natalie Hoefer

Bill and Sharon Johnson were high school sweethearts, as were Andrea and Larry Fleck. Robert and Marilyn Hasty also met in high school, but as teachers.

David Serrato and Yrma Sanchez didn't meet in high school, but they still share something in common with the three other couples: each provides what Archbishop Charles C. Thompson called "incredible witness and hope for the Church and the world" in his homily for the archdiocese's annual Wedding Anniversary Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis on Aug. 30, sponsored by the archdiocesan Office of Marriage and Family Life.

Added together, the four couples boast an impressive 210 years of marriage.

That figure is small compared to the more than 3,530 combined years of marriage (plus 283 children and 278 grandchildren) among the couples who came from 10 of the archdiocese's 11 deaneries to worship at the Mass.

In his homily, Archbishop Thompson stressed the need for couples to stay "focused on Christ. That is our calling in marriage, holy orders, whatever our vocation."

With such a focus, marriages can sustain the inevitable crosses "of challenges and hardship," he continued.

"Marriage as a sacrament is not meant as a means of avoiding the cross but involving the divine grace necessary to respond to the challenges and hardships in a Christ-like manner of discipleship and taking up the cross daily.

See ANNIVERSARY, page 8

New chancellor brings 'experience, passion' and 'witness of faith'

By Natalie Hoefer

In college, Justin Reyes envisioned a career in marketing and advertising, "doing sales pitches to companies one day," he says.

God had a different vision.

"I would say a theme throughout my journey has been God always had a different and much better plan than my own," Reyes says with a smile.

Despite his bachelor's degree in

business administration and marketing, he felt led by God down a career path primarily focused on serving the Church at the parish and diocesan levels.

Yet there was still "a stirring of my heart of, 'Alright, Lord, where do you want me one day? What might be next?'"

So, when the Archdiocese of Indianapolis began searching for a new chancellor earlier this year when former chancellor Christopher Walsh announced he would retire in June after six years serving in the role, Reyes applied for the position.

It turned out to be the answer to what was next. Reyes was hired and began serving as chancellor in July, settling with his wife Laura and their six children near Indianapolis.

As chancellor, Reyes will help implement Archbishop Charles C. Thompson's vision for the Church in central and southern Indiana through the archdiocesan pastoral plan and in other ways.

"Justin comes to the archdiocese with high marks from those who have served with him in previous dioceses," says Archbishop Thompson. "In fact, one bishop described him as 'a rock star.' He brings a great deal of energy, experience, passion and, especially, witness of faith."

Those traits developed through a faith-based career path with stops in four states.

See REYES, page 9

Scholar says Pope Leo's 'priorities and Americanism' foster a more positive view of U.S. Catholics

(OSV News)—As the first U.S.-born pope marked his birthday, a Catholic scholar told OSV News he sees a potential shift toward more positive views of Catholicism in the

U.S. compared to the past two decades.



Pope Leo XIV

Pope Leo XIV celebrated his 71st birthday on Sept. 14, drawing tributes and good wishes from around the world—including his native Chicago, where at least one television station took to social media to salute the Windy City's beloved son.

And whether he's inspiring White Sox fans, savoring an Aurelio's pizza, playing daily games of Wordle or—as then-Father Robert Prevost—wearing Nikes with his cassock, Pope Leo has given greater "access" to Catholicism in U.S. culture, said Anthony Smith, associate professor of religious studies at the University of Dayton in Ohio.

"I think [Pope] Leo's priorities and his Americanism [are] a

way of fostering other more hopeful perceptions and associations of Catholicism than where it was 20 years ago," Smith told OSV News.

Pope Leo's "Americanism, and his comfort with popular culture, mass culture and sports make him a likable figure for many people," said Smith.

Musing on a photo of the future pope's footwear—which appeared in the Vatican News documentary "Leone a Roma," released in July—*Esquire Magazine* concluded that "it sort of makes perfect sense that Pope Leo is a Nike guy," since his hometown Chicago Bulls' star Michael Jordan sported custom Nike sneakers.

The magazine also described Pope Leo as "a modern-age pope" who brings "Midwestern English to global papal addresses," with an affable pre-papal name of "Bob."

Esquire also compared the Nike photo to a 2023 viral, AI-generated image of Pope Francis in a white Balenciaga puffer coat, saying that the archival Father Prevost photo wasn't an AI

See POPE, page 9



With members of the Indianapolis Fire Department (IFD), their families and civic leaders looking on, Deacon Gary Blackwell, left, and Father John McCaslin elevate the Eucharist during a Mass celebrated on Sept. 11 outside the Indianapolis Firefighters Museum in Indianapolis as part of IFD’s observance of the 25th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. (Photos by Sean Gallagher)



Deputy Chief Courtney Rice of the Wayne Township Fire Department in Marion County, left, Private Davy McDonald of the Bloomington Township Fire Department in Monroe County, Isaiah Hart of Eli Lilly Fire Rescue in Indianapolis and Captain Billy McCleod of the Indianapolis Fire Department (IFD) play bagpipes and a drum at the head of an IFD march on Sept. 11 through downtown Indianapolis to the Indiana 9/11 Memorial, where a service took place on the 25th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Service, sacrifice of first responders on 9/11 honored on anniversary

Criterion staff report

The Indianapolis Fire Department (IFD) observed the 25th anniversary of the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, with a series of events on Sept. 11 in downtown Indianapolis. A bell tolled at the hall of the Professional Firefighters Local 416 at 8:46 a.m., 9:03 a.m., 9:37 a.m. and 10:03 a.m., the times at which the four hijacked airliners crashed on Sept. 11, 2001. After the last bell, a Mass was celebrated outside the hall. Father John McCaslin, an IFD chaplain, was the liturgy’s celebrant. He was assisted by Deacon Gary Blackwell, a retired IFD firefighter. A march followed from the hall through downtown to the Indiana 9/11 Memorial adjacent to the IFD Station 13. The

memorial includes two beams from the twin towers and a stone from the Pentagon. A memorial service there honored the members of Indiana Task Force 1, an elite urban search and rescue unit, who were deployed to the World Trade Center in New York City soon after the attacks, arriving there on Sept. 12, 2001. Ron Parker, a retired member of the Fire Department of New York (FDNY), who worked for months on the recovery efforts at the “ground zero” site, offered a reflection. He recalled the sacrifice of the 343 FDNY firefighters who died on 9/11. (For more photos of the Indianapolis Fire Department’s observance of the 25th anniversary of the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, go to CriterionOnline.com.) †



Public Schedule of

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

September 19—September 27, 2026

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

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

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

September 23 – 11 a.m.
 Mass with seniors at Cathedral High School, Indianapolis

September 23 – 5 p.m. CDT
 Vespers for the Beatification of Archbishop Fulton Sheen at The Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis, St. Louis

September 24 – 2 p.m. CDT
 Mass for the Beatification of Archbishop Fulton Sheen at The Dome at America’s Center, St. Louis

September 25 – 3 p.m.
 Communion Service at Clay County Correctional Facility, Brazil

September 26 – 5:30 p.m.
 Confirmation Mass for the youths of St. Joan of Arc Parish, Indianapolis, at St. Joan of Arc Church

September 27 – noon
 Mass and lunch for the 175th anniversary of the Founding of the Sisters of St. Francis at the order’s motherhouse, Oldenburg

Pope commemorates 9/11, praying for all who ‘bear wounds of that tragic day’

ROME (OSV News)—Pope Leo XIV commemorated the 25th anniversary of the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, in his Sunday *Angelus* address, praying for “those who continue to bear the wounds of that tragic day.” Speaking from the window of the Vatican’s Apostolic Palace on Sept. 13, the first U.S.-born pope said in English, “Two days ago



Pope Leo XIV

marked the 25th anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in the United States of America. “I renew my prayers for those who lost their lives and for those who continue to bear the wounds of that tragic day,” he said. “At a time when conflict and violence afflict so many of our brothers and sisters, I invite everyone to pray that the Lord will bestow his gift of peace upon the world.” Switching from English to Italian, the pope added that the memory of the tragic events of 9/11 “prompts us to renew our commitment to peace, first and foremost through prayer, which we entrust to the

intercession of the Virgin Mary.” Pope Leo, then-Father Robert Prevost, was 45 years old and in Rome taking part in the Augustinian Order’s ordinary general chapter on the date of the 9/11 attacks that left nearly 3,000 people dead, with thousands more dying of related illnesses in the aftermath. Just days later, on Sept. 14, 2001, his 46th birthday, he was elected prior general of the worldwide order. As the newly elected head of the Augustinian Order, Father Prevost reflected on “the tragic events that shook the United States on Sept. 11” in his homily for the closing Mass of the order’s meeting on Sept. 21, 2001. “The violence that the world witnessed last week in the United States is a tragic expression of a series of problems that are becoming increasingly acute everywhere. Hatred and violence will continue to grow as long as so many people are forced to live in extreme poverty and are oppressed by so many forms of injustice,” Father Prevost said in his homily in the Church of Santa Maria del Popolo, according to Vatican News. “While many seek revenge,” he said, “Augustinians must bear witness to the Gospel and to its values of unity,

‘At a time when conflict and violence afflict so many of our brothers and sisters, I invite everyone to pray that the Lord will bestow his gift of peace upon the world.’ —Pope Leo XIV



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Favorite songs inspire a priest and a mom in their call to serve God

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

One in an occasional series

By John Shaughnessy

As he talks about his favorite song, its marching rhythm suddenly fills Father Rick Ginther, leading him to start singing it with great joy.

When the impromptu concert ends, Father Ginther’s face still glows with delight as he shares what makes the song—“At the Name of Jesus”—so special to him.

Part of it is the music: “It is majestic music. It marches to the end of each verse.”

Part of it is its connection to Philippians 2:6-11 and its focus on Christ becoming human, humbling himself and dying on the cross—all leading to God the Father exalting him in heaven and on Earth.

Then there is this part, a universal one that connects people to their favorite song: “Every time I hear it, lots of memories come back,” says Father Ginther, director of the archdiocese’s Office of Ecumenism and Interreligious Affairs.

“I discovered it at Saint Meinrad Seminary when I was a student there back in the ’60s and early ’70s. It was in this green English hymnal. It was wonderful.

“And the song has followed me over the years. When I was at Mount Saint Mary’s Seminary in Cincinnati, the music director interviewed every new student and had us audition. He wanted to hear our voice and how he could help.

“I opened the hymnal to number 30, and there it was. I sang one verse, and he just stopped. He said, ‘Oh, my, you can sing. Well then, you’ll be the cantor tomorrow for Mass.’ I said, ‘No, I’m new to the seminary, and I don’t want to be known for my voice. I just want to complete seminary. I’m pursuing ordination.’ ”

Father Ginther recalls how the music director hesitated for a moment before saying, “Hmmm. You’re the cantor for Mass tomorrow.”

Father Ginther smiles and says, “The song holds a special memory.”

‘Do you want me to take on more?’

In the hymn, “Here I Am, Lord,” the lyric, “I will go, Lord, if you lead me,” resonates with Gabrielle Neal.

That lyric kept surfacing in her thoughts when she was approached

earlier this year about leading Catholic Charities Indianapolis by David Bethuram, who has served as executive director of both Catholic Charities in the archdiocese and Catholic Charities Indianapolis for more than 10 years.

“I was thinking about this song when this job opened,” says Neal, a 1999 graduate of Cathedral High School in Indianapolis and a 2003 graduate of Saint Mary’s College in northern Indiana. “I have five small kids. I was asking God, ‘Do you want me to take on more?’ And I was getting this resounding, ‘Go where I’m leading.’ ”

“My whole life actually has been kind of going by that—really trying to listen or let God lead me in a direction. So, I just have to keep trusting in that.”

Neal decided to take the position, one she has embraced.

“I feel this pull to keep saying ‘yes’ to God, even when I’m stretched thin and being pulled in every direction,” she says. “It’s not really about how much I can handle. It’s deeper than that. It’s about staying centered and listening to God. He has never failed me.”



Father Rick Ginther prepares to share his vocal gifts in singing “At the Name of Jesus” in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral Parish in Indianapolis (Photo by John Shaughnessy)

(To hear Father Ginther sing “At the Name of Jesus,” use the QR code or go to tinyurl.com/GintherSong)

Whether it’s a song from popular culture or from a church hymnal, you are invited to share your story of how that song has led you to a deeper level of faith, humanity or love. Send your story and song(s) to John Shaughnessy at jshaughnessy@archindy.org or by mail in care of The Criterion, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202. Please include your parish and a daytime phone number where you can be reached. †



Bishops urge Trump administration to end mass deportations of Haitians

WASHINGTON (OSV News)—A few weeks after Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Haiti was terminated, Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), urged the Trump administration to end mass deportations to Haiti.

In a letter to President Donald J. Trump dated Sept. 8, Archbishop Coakley wrote, “I implore you to avoid further endangering innocent human life by ceasing the deportation of large numbers of people to Haiti at this time, particularly while there is not an adequate system in place to provide for their safe and orderly reception and reintegration.

“The current approach will only contribute to the country’s already deepening crisis, undermining your own strategic objectives for the Western Hemisphere,” he

said. “Please exercise your authority under the U.S. Constitution to provide deferred enforced departure for Haitians peacefully residing in the United States.”

The termination of the TPS designation for Haiti was effective on July 27. TPS for El Salvador was scheduled to expire on Sept. 9. However, the Trump administration appeared to delay that expiration, saying it would make an announcement “at the appropriate time” and until then, “Salvadoran individuals present in the U.S. under TPS retain protection.”

However, that statement left legal status for 200,000 Salvadoran immigrants uncertain, and their attorneys have said work permits have still expired.

In August, hundreds of faith leaders and organizations urged the Trump administration to extend TPS for El Salvador. †



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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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OPINION



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, *Publisher* Sally Krause, *Associate Publisher*
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Editorial



Pope Leo XIV leads the weekly *Angelus* prayer from a window at the Vatican on Aug. 9. (OSV News photo/Mario Tomassetti, Vatican Media via Reuters)

Stewardship and the daily miracles of charity

Christ is the bread of life. With him, our needs are abundantly met. (Pope Leo XIV)

During his *Angelus* message on August 2, Pope Leo XIV reflected on the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fish (Mt 14:13-21).

This is a stewardship story because St. Matthew tells us that Jesus commanded his disciples to share their food with the hungry crowd. The disciples protested that all they had were five loaves and two fish—barely enough to feed themselves. Yet they discovered that God’s grace is a source of abundance, not scarcity, and that by sharing the little they had, they produced an excess of “twelve wicker baskets” (Mt 14:20) left over.

This story shows how small acts of charity can result in great miracles.

“When we listen to the Gospel, we frequently hear that Jesus performed signs, which are acts that reveal his special dedication to us and the salvation that he brings to the world,” said the pope. “The Lord is presented as the one who gives meaning to our lives, freeing us from evil and sin.”

To feed the hungry, even when we think that we lack the necessary resources to make a difference, is an act of Christian charity that can produce miracles.

Stewardship is a sign that we recognize that everything we possess has been freely given to us by a generous and loving God, whose only request is that we develop and share what he has given to us. The resulting miracle begins in us, in the change of heart we experience when we embrace the stewardship virtues of gratitude, responsibility, generosity and the willingness to give back to God with increase.

“Jesus gives food to those who are hungry. The account of the multiplication of the loaves shows us that the encounter with the Lord is a nourishing experience,” said Pope Leo. “In the desert, that is, when we are in need, Christ is the bread of life. With him, our needs are abundantly met: ‘All ate and were filled,’ [Mt 14:20] and there were ‘twelve baskets full’ [Mt 14:20] left over.”

Good stewards encounter Jesus in the act of generous sharing. St. John Paul II taught that it is not possible to fully appreciate the gifts that we receive from God unless we

give them away, sharing them generously with others. As long as we cling to our possessions (time, talent and treasure), we can never experience their true meaning or significance in our lives.

That’s why the stewardship virtues of gratitude, responsibility and generosity are inseparably linked. Generous people thank God for what they have to share. That’s why St. Matthew tells us that Jesus performed a eucharistic action—a prayer of thanksgiving to God—before he fed the people: “Taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, who in turn gave them to the crowds” (Mt 14:19).

Jesus was not indifferent to the needs of the people. He refused to let his disciples deny any personal responsibility for feeding the crowd of more than 5,000 men, women and children. He told them to do the impossible, saying: “There is no need for them to go away; give them some food yourselves” (Mt 14:16).

Pope Leo recognizes the relationship between stewardship, understood as generous sharing of all God’s gifts, and the miracles that can happen in our daily lives.

“In this miracle of charity, we recognize the characteristic actions of Jesus, which find their culmination in the Last Supper, for it was then that the Son of God gave us his very life as our brother in humanity,” he said. “As we savor the grace of the Eucharist, let us commit ourselves to bearing witness to its beauty in our daily actions, beginning with blessing meals at the table with family and friends.”

We pray: “Bless us, O Lord, and these thy gifts,” which we have received from God’s bounty and are commanded to share generously with others. “Faced with the deserts of war and arrogance,” the Holy Father says, “let us consider with what kindness the Lord looked up to heaven, and blessed, broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples, so that they might distribute them to the crowd.” And let us never refuse to take responsibility for the needs of our sisters and brothers. Rather, may we always be thankful, responsible, and generous stewards of all God’s gifts.

—Daniel Conway

Be Our Guest/Sr. Jude Andrew Link, O.P.

Fulton Sheen: A teacher of virtue

“What virtues do you think [Archbishop Fulton J.] Sheen is an example of?”



That question was put to me by a fellow sister who was preparing her classroom for the beginning of the school year. Here in Peoria, Ill., we are already several weeks into the school year. But in other parts of the country, students and teachers just had their first days of class this week. This sister was preparing a bulletin board about saints and virtues.

I haven’t stopped thinking about that question. The fact of his beatification tells us the Church believes Sheen to be a man of heroic virtue. Soon-to-be Blessed Fulton Sheen was certainly a man of faith. He had had a deep and personal adherence to Jesus Christ revealed in his famous commitment to the daily Holy Hour.

“If you want to know about God,” he said, “get down on your knees.” On his ordination day, Archbishop Sheen promised to make a Holy Hour every day, and his fidelity to that promise disposed him to receive the fruits of theological faith.

The light of faith illumined his mind and gave him insights into the mysteries of Christ that then informed his teaching, preaching and writing, giving them a power born of the Spirit.

He knew about Christ from study, but he knew Christ from prayer.

That fidelity was sometimes costly. In his autobiography *Treasure in Clay*, he writes of the lengths he would go to keep his daily appointment with our blessed Lord, through periods of dryness and distraction or the time he was accidentally locked in a Chicago church, climbed out a window and landed in a coal bin.

The blessed Lord rewarded his fidelity in the most touching way, coming to meet Sheen definitively during his Holy Hour on Dec. 9, 1979, to lead his faithful disciple to the Father’s house.

The Holy Hour was the rock of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen’s life, the place where he found his identity, gained insights for his teaching, gathered strength for the task ahead of him. It was the source of his remarkable integrity. He was the same person regardless of his situation and audience, at home among the rich and famous as well as the charwoman and street sweeper.

His stories, however, reveal that he was more at home among the poor and simple. He told the story of the street sweeper in Rome who was unimpressed by the cardinals and bishops gathered for the Second Vatican Council, and who reminded him that the simple man doing his work for the love of God was doing a more profitable thing than any “important” tasks accomplished for other reasons.

This spiritual vision fostered a deep respect for each individual and for the wisdom and honor of the common man. This respect was born of his love of God, which allowed him to see each person as a brother or a sister with a deep and practical love for his neighbor, a love that

animated his zeal for souls that sustained his preaching and missionary activity.

Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen was famously hardworking. As a university professor, he tore up his lecture notes at the end of each term. He rewrote them each semester so that he would be coming to the material fresh.

He spent more than 30 hours preparing for each television episode, practicing its delivery in several languages. It would be easy to dismiss him as a workaholic, but perhaps it was an embrace of asceticism, a sort of spiritual discipline and devotion to one’s duty, refusing to give into the complacency that can accompany success and the presumption that excuses one from work because “I know how to do this already.”

All of his activities—the preaching, teaching, writing, radio and television appearances, missionary work—was at the service of the Church, an expression of his undying obedience to Christ and the Church as manifested by his hierarchical superiors.

He was clear-eyed in this obedience, going toe-to-toe with Cardinal Francis J. Spellman of New York City when he judged it right. This obedience was, as all obedience is at some point, a crucible in his final years, one he accepted and embraced out of love for Christ and his body, the Church.

In the heady and confusing times of the 1960s and 1970s, Archbishop Sheen—who had a platform and an audience at his fingertips—chose the path of discretion, intentionally not displaying the ecclesiastical falling outs for all to see. They get only a vague reference in his autobiography.

His faith in Christ, present in his Church and his obedience even in the face of the fallenness of her members and leaders, gave his love that character of endurance and sacrifice that is the hallmark of the old-fashioned-sounding virtue of long-suffering. His trials and physical sufferings in the last decade of his life conformed him to Christ the victim, making him a witness to the enduring reality of Christian hope.

It is no wonder then, that St. John Paul II told Archbishop Sheen, just two months before his death in 1979, “You are a loyal son of the Church.” The Polish pontiff saw in the frail bishop a man whose whole life and identity had been handed over to Christ and placed at the service of the Church.

On Sept. 24, Pope Leo XIV will, through his representative Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, declare Fulton Sheen blessed. By this action, the Church our Mother is giving us the gift of a teacher and guide, telling us that Sheen’s teaching and writing can form us in faith, and that his life is a model of holiness through his practice of heroic virtue.

As students fill classrooms across America this September and beyond, Catholics are being invited to meet a new teacher in the school of holiness, Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen.

(Dominican Sister Jude Andrew Link is a member of the Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist. She teaches high school theology at Peoria Notre Dame High School and is the programming director for Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen’s beatification in St. Louis.) †

Letters Policy

Letters from readers are published in *The Criterion* as part of the newspaper’s commitment to “the responsible exchange of freely-held and expressed opinion among the People of God” (*Communio et Progressio*, 116).

Letters from readers are welcome and every effort will be made to include letters from as many people and representing as many viewpoints as possible. Letters should be informed, relevant, well-expressed and temperate in tone. They must reflect a basic sense of courtesy and respect.

The editors reserve the right to select the letters that will be published and to edit

letters from readers as necessary based on space limitations, pastoral sensitivity and content (including spelling and grammar). In order to encourage opinions from a variety of readers, frequent writers will ordinarily be limited to one letter every three months. Concise letters (usually less than 300 words) are more likely to be printed.

Letters must be signed, but, for serious reasons, names may be withheld.

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ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO CHARLES C. THOMPSON



Christ the Cornerstone

As in love, we only possess what we are able to give away

Let the scoundrel forsake his way, and the wicked his thoughts; let him turn to the Lord for mercy; to our God, who is generous in forgiving. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts. (Is 55:7-9)

The Gospel for the Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Mt 20:1-16a) seems grossly unfair. Jesus tells a parable about a landowner who hires workers at an agreed upon wage. Some spend the whole day laboring for their pay. Others are brought in toward the end of the workday and, so, spend just a few hours working.

We know the outcome of this parable. At the end of the day, the landowner pays every worker the same amount, which means that those who worked significantly less than a full day receive the same compensation as those who worked all day.

Understandably, the daylong workers feel cheated. Their sense of basic fairness is offended, and they complain: “These last ones worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us, who bore the day’s

burden and the heat” (Mt 20:12). The landowner doesn’t deny that there is a contradiction here, but he reminds them that there is something more powerful and important than simple fairness. According to Jesus, the landowner replies:

My friend, I am not cheating you. Did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what is yours and go. What if I wish to give this last one the same as you? Or am I not free to do as I wish with my own money? Are you envious because I am generous? (Mt 20:13-15)

And then Jesus adds: “Thus, the last will be first, and the first will be last” (Mt 20:16).

Jesus is telling us that God’s ways are not our ways. He is teaching us that the virtue of generosity overrides ordinary fairness, and that those who give freely without measuring the cost receive far more than they give away.

St. John Paul II frequently taught that we only truly possess the things (both spiritual and material) that we are able to give away. Love is the prime example. We can’t cling to love or hoard it. Love must be given away, and the more we can share our love unselfishly, the more fully it becomes our own.

Pope Benedict XVI underscored this teaching when he emphasized that God’s inner nature (the Blessed Trinity) demonstrates the principle that true love cannot be contained but must be shared generously.

All spiritual gifts—including hope, joy, and peace—are meant to be given away. But so are our material possessions, which do not belong to us in any exclusive or permanent sense because we cannot take them with us when we die. One way or another, we must let go of the things we have and allow them to benefit others. Why not follow the example of the landowner in this parable and be generous as well as just?

Generosity is one of the four characteristics of Christian stewardship. With gratitude, accountability and the willingness to give back to God with increase, generosity confirms our understanding that everything we have, and everything we are, comes to us from a generous and loving God. We do not deserve what we have been given, and we do not “own” anything absolutely.

We are stewards (guardians or caretakers) of spiritual and material blessings that belong ultimately to God

alone. All God asks of us—his faithful stewards—is that we nurture and develop our gifts (instead of burying or neglecting them) and that we share them generously with others (who are equally undeserving).

Next week (September 20–23), representatives from our archdiocese will join with participants from other parishes and dioceses in the United States and many other countries for the 64th annual International Catholic Stewardship Conference, which this year will be held in New Orleans. Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, Archbishop of Newark, N.J., will present the keynote address on “Stewardship, Synodality, and Transformational Giving.”

Please join me in praying that the teaching about generosity reflected in this Sunday’s Gospel will be reinforced by all the parish and diocesan leaders who “carry this message” to their fellow Catholics so that when it comes to sharing all God’s gifts, we may all conduct ourselves in ways that are worthy of the Gospel of Christ (cf. Phil 1:27a).

If we truly are generous—sharing God’s gifts gratefully, responsibly and with increase—the last truly will be first and the first will be last. †



Cristo, la piedra angular

Al igual que en el amor, solo nos pertenece aquello que somos capaces de dar

Que el malvado abandone su conducta, el hombre inicuo sus pensamientos, y se vuelva a Yahvé, el compasivo, a nuestro Dios, generoso en perdón. Porque mis pensamientos no son vuestros pensamientos, ni vuestros proyectos son mis proyectos—oráculo de Yahvé—. Pues cuanto se elevan los cielos sobre la tierra, del mismo modo se elevan mis proyectos sobre los vuestros y mis pensamientos sobre los vuestros. (Is 55:7-9)

El Evangelio del vigésimo quinto domingo del tiempo ordinario (Mt 20:1-16) pareciera tremendamente injusto. Jesús cuenta una parábola sobre el propietario de una viña que contrata a trabajadores por un salario acordado. Algunos pasan todo el día trabajando para ganarse su paga. A otros los traen hacia el final de la jornada y, por eso, solo trabajan unas pocas horas.

Ya sabemos cómo termina esta parábola. Al final del día, el propietario les paga a todos lo mismo, lo que significa que los que trabajaron mucho menos de un día completo reciben la misma paga que los que trabajaron todo el día.

Como es lógico, los que trabajaron todo el día se sienten estafados y ofendidos en su sentido básico de la justicia y se quejan: “Estos últimos no han trabajado más que una hora, y resulta que les pagas como a nosotros, que hemos aguantado el peso del día y

el calor” (Mt 20:12). El propietario no niega que haya una contradicción aquí, pero les recuerda que hay algo más poderoso e importante que la simple justicia. Según Jesús, el propietario les responde:

Amigo, no te hago ninguna injusticia. ¿No te ajustaste conmigo en un denario? Pues toma lo tuyo y vete. Por mi parte, quiero dar a este último lo mismo que a ti. ¿Es que no puedo hacer con lo mío lo que quiero? ¿O va a ser tu ojo malo porque yo soy bueno? (Mt 20:13-15)

Y luego Jesús añade: “Así, los últimos serán los primeros, y los primeros, últimos” (Mt 20:16).

Jesús nos dice que los caminos de Dios no son nuestros caminos. Nos enseña que la virtud de la generosidad está por encima de la justicia común, y que quienes dan libremente sin medir el costo reciben mucho más de lo que dan.

San Juan Pablo II solía decir que en realidad solo nos pertenece aquello (tanto espiritual como material) que somos capaces de regalar. El amor es el mejor ejemplo. No podemos aferrarnos al amor ni acapararlo. El amor hay que regalarlo, y cuanto más podamos compartir nuestro amor desinteresadamente, más plenamente nos pertenece.

El papa Benedicto XVI subrayó esta enseñanza cuando destacó que la naturaleza misma de Dios (la Santísima

Trinidad) demuestra el principio de que el amor verdadero no puede contenerse, sino que debe compartirse generosamente.

Todos los dones espirituales—including la esperanza, la alegría y la paz—están destinados a ser compartidos. Pero también lo están nuestras posesiones materiales, que no nos pertenecen de manera exclusiva ni permanente, porque no podemos llevárnoslas cuando morimos. De una forma u otra, debemos desprendernos de lo que tenemos y permitir que beneficie a otros. ¿Por qué no seguir el ejemplo del propietario de esta parábola y ser generosos, además de justos?

La generosidad es una de las cuatro características de la corresponsabilidad cristiana. Junto con la gratitud, la responsabilidad y la voluntad de devolverle a Dios con creces, la generosidad confirma nuestra comprensión de que todo lo que tenemos, y todo lo que somos, nos viene de un Dios generoso y amoroso. No merecemos lo que se nos ha dado, y no «somos dueños» de nada de manera absoluta.

Somos corresponsables (guardianes o cuidadores) de las bendiciones espirituales y materiales que, en última instancia, le pertenecen solo a Dios. Todo lo que Dios nos pide—a nosotros, sus fieles administradores—es que

cultivemos y desarrollemos nuestros dones (en lugar de enterrarlos o descuidarlos) y que los compartamos generosamente con los demás (quienes tampoco lo merecen).

La próxima semana (del 20 al 23 de septiembre), representantes de nuestra Arquidiócesis se unirán a participantes de otras parroquias y diócesis de Estados Unidos y muchos otros países para la LXIV Conferencia Anual de Corresponsabilidad de la ICSC, que este año se llevará a cabo en Nueva Orleans. El cardenal Joseph W. Tobin, arzobispo de Newark, Nueva Jersey, dará la conferencia magistral sobre “Corresponsabilidad, sinodalidad y dones transformadores.”

Acompañenme en oración para que la enseñanza sobre la generosidad que se refleja en el Evangelio este domingo quede reforzada por todos los líderes parroquiales y diocesanos que “llevan este mensaje” a sus hermanos católicos, para que, a la hora de compartir todos los dones de Dios, todos podamos comportarnos de una manera digna del Evangelio de Cristo (cf. Fil 1:27).

Si de verdad somos generosos—compartiendo los dones de Dios con gratitud, responsabilidad y multiplicándolos—los últimos serán los primeros y los primeros serán los últimos. †

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 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 25

Our Lady of Perpetual Help School, 1752 Scheller Lane., New Albany. **Fish Fry**, 4-7 p.m., fried fish, shrimp, baked beans, green beans, mac and cheese, potatoes; coleslaw, fries, cheese pizza; dine-in, carry-out or drive through; fish dinner \$14, combo dinner \$15, proceeds support athletes and youth ministry. Information: 812-944-1184.

September 26

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.

St. Matthew the Apostle Parish, 4100 E. 56th St, Indianapolis. **Oktoberfest**, 6-10 p.m., live music, food, kid’s area, biergarten, free admission, food and drinks for purchase. Information: 317-257-4297, bulletin@saintmatt.org.

Sisters of Providence, 1 Providence Pl., Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Teen Volunteer Opportunity**, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., ages 12-18, visit with elder Sisters, help with activities such as bingo, exercise, baking and attending events, wear comfortable shoes and clothes that allow for mobility, lunch provided, free. Information, registration: teenvolunteer.sistersofprovidence.org, 812-535-2878, volunteer@spsmw.org.

Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. **San Lorenzo Ruiz Celebration**, noon-6 p.m., 10:30 a.m. Mass across the street at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Filipino food, food vendors, music, karaoke singing contest, suggested donation \$5 per individual or \$10 per family, benefiting Cathedral Kitchen ministry. Information: sherrylegaspi@gmail.com.

September 26-27

St. Gabriel Parish, 232 W. 9th St., Connerville. **Fall Festival**, Sat. 3-11 p.m., Sun. 11 a.m.-3 p.m., German food Sat., chicken dinners Sun.; both days wine bingo, kids’ games, live music, raffles, free admission. Information: 765-825-8578.

September 27

St. Mark Parish, 5377 Acom Road, Tell City. **Shooting Match and Festival**, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. CT, shooting match for beef and hams, splatter boards, raffles, country store, handmade quilts, bingo, games for all ages, chili, hamburgers, brats, free admission. Information: 812-836-2481.

St. Michael Parish, 11400 Farmer’s Lane NE, Greenville. **Picnic**, noon-3:30 p.m., beer and wine garden, raffles, silent auction, cake booth,

bingo, food stand, kid’s zone, free admission, \$15 boxed fried chicken dinner with homemade dumplings, green beans, slaw and dessert, indoor/outdoor seating, carry-out available. Information: 812-364-6646.

September 30

St. John the Evangelist Parish, 126 W. Georgia St., Indianapolis. **White Coat Mass**, 6:30 p.m. Mass honoring healthcare professionals, 7:30 p.m. Information: indy.cathmed.org/events.

October 3

Saint Meinrad Archabbey, St. Bede Theater, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Concert by Ian Hobson and Muen Wei**, 7:30 p.m. CT, performing works by Schubert, Liszt, Chopin and Rachmaninoff,

free admission. Information: saintmeinrad.org/visit-us/cultural-events, 812-357-6611.

St. Elizabeth Seton Parish, 10655 Haverstick Road, Carmel, Ind. (Lafayette Diocese). **Day of Reflection for the Divorced**, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., \$10. Information, registration: maryjogremling@gmail.com.

War Memorial Coliseum, 4000 Parnel Ave., Fort Wayne, Ind. (Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend). **Kingdom Builders Women’s Conference**, 8 a.m.-5 p.m., speakers, adoration with praise and worship, Mass, reconciliation, vendors, breakfast, lunch, \$95 individual or \$1,000 table for eight. Information, registration: buildingthroughhim.com, 260-222-9550, conference@buildingthroughhim.com. †

Retreats and Programs

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

October 3

Mother of the Redeemer Retreat Center, 8212 W. Hendricks Rd, Bloomington. **The Role of Judaism in Salvation History**, 9:30 a.m.-3:45 p.m., presented by Jewish convert to Catholicism Roy Schoeman, includes two talks with opportunities for confession, rosary procession, Mass, and Holy Hour, free admission, \$10 optional sack lunch, \$100 for overnight stay. Information: 812-825-4642, ext. 1, guesthouse@motheroftheredeemer.com.

October 9-11

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Running the Way of the Lord’s Commands (despite tripping over a few speed bumps) – A retreat on The Rule of St. Benedict**, guided five-part look at the Benedictine Rule, Benedictine

Archabbot Kurt Stasiak presenting, \$350 single, \$550 double. Registration: 812-357-6611, saintmeinrad.org/retreats.

October 12-16

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Faith Stories from the Gospel of Matthew**, priest retreat, Benedictine Father Eugene Hensell presenting, \$625 single. Registration: 812-357-6611, saintmeinrad.org/retreats.

October 13

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Day of Silence**, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., \$55, includes room, lunch, Mass and use of common areas and grounds, overnight stay available for additional \$42, dinner additional \$14.40. Registration: 317-545-7681, ftm.retreatportal.com/events, lcoons@archindy.org.

October 16

Mount Saint Francis Center for Spirituality, 101 Saint Anthony Dr., Mt. St. Francis. **Owl Prowl**, 6-9 p.m., dinner and door prizes 6 p.m., live owl presentation 7 p.m., guided night hike and bonfire 8 p.m., adults \$35, children \$20 accompanied by a registered adult. Information, registration: mountsaintfrancis.org/owl-prowl, 812-923-8817.

October 16-18

Mother of the Redeemer Retreat Center, 8220 W. State Road 48, Bloomington. **The Catholic Relationship to Christ**, 6 p.m. Fri.-10 a.m. Sun., EWTN’s Dr. David Anders presenting, \$290 for single, \$480 double, \$670 triple, \$860 quadruple, includes four meals and room for two nights, commuter \$90 includes lunches. Information, registration: 812-825-4642, ext. 1, motheroftheredeemer.com. †

Mass celebrating St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities leadership transition set for Sept. 30 in New Albany

A Mass celebrating St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities’ leadership transition will take place at Holy Trinity Park, 702 E. Market St., in New Albany, at 5:15 p.m. on Sept. 30. The Mass will celebrate the transition of St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities’ agency director from Mark Casper, who served in the role for more than 18 years, to Chris Haulter, who started in his new role in mid-August. Mass attendees are asked to bring a lawn chair and to arrive by 5 p.m. or earlier.

After the liturgy, there will be an unveiling of the park’s newest sculpture, “Homeless Jesus” by Timothy P. Schmalz. It will join two other pieces in the park by Schmalz, a world-renowned Catholic artist whose works can be found at the Vatican and around the globe. All are invited to worship at the Mass, meet Haulter and wish Casper well in his retirement. For more information, call 812-949-7305 or e-mail info@stcharities.org. †

Wedding Anniversaries

WILLIAM AND SHARON (KIEMEYER) JOHNSON, members of St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis, will celebrate their 65th wedding anniversary on Sept. 23. The couple was married in Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Indianapolis on Sept. 23, 1961. They have five children: Pamela Ernsting, Kenneth, Kevin and William Johnson and the late Theresa Sublette. The couple also has 14 grandchildren and 29 great-grandchildren.



CARL AND LUCILLE (SCHUBERT) LENTZ, members of St. Thomas More Parish in Mooresville, will celebrate their 65th wedding anniversary on Sept. 23. The couple was married in St. Susanna Church in Plainfield on Sept. 23, 1961. They have seven children: Diane Andretti, Suzanne Barnes, Kathryn Conway, Sharon Helms, Barbara Sharp, Patricia Summers and Anthony Lentz. The couple also has 12 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren.



LARRY AND MARGARET (MAY) SCHANK, members of St. Michael Parish in Cannelton, celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary on July 4. The couple was married in St. Michael Church in Cannelton on July 4, 1961. They have two children: Julia Kunkler and Brian Schank. The couple also has six grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.



DR. THOMAS AND MARIBETH (ZAY) FISCHER, members of St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on Aug. 7. The couple was married in St. Mary Church in Huntington, Ind. (Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend), on Aug. 7, 1976. They have four children: Sally Strus, Katie, Andrew and Dr. James Fischer. The couple also has five grandchildren.



DOUGLAS AND ELIZABETH (RADTKE) FLACK, members of St. Lawrence Parish in Indianapolis, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on Sept. 18. The couple was married in St. Lawrence Church in Indianapolis on Sept. 18, 1976. They have two children: Kristen Ellis and Andrew Flack. The couple also has three grandchildren.



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

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

One in Christ/Daniel Conway

The truth of Jesus must guide us in this time of AI

The recent encyclical of Pope Leo XIV, “*Magnifica Humanitas: On Safeguarding the Human Person in the Time of Artificial Intelligence*,” is a vigorous defense of the eighth commandment, which prohibits us from bearing false witness (lying) to ourselves, to those who are close to us or to strangers.

As the Holy Father writes:

The use of digital platforms and AI systems is driving profound changes in public and political communication. Tools that could foster dialogue and participation are often used to construct distorted narratives and blur the boundaries between truth and falsehood, mixing facts with opinions. (#132)

The encyclical acknowledges that “disinformation” is as old as humanity itself. In fact, it was first manifested in the Garden of Eden when the serpent (the Father of Lies) told our first parents that eating the forbidden fruit would make them like God.

While it is certainly true that “bearing false witness” is a sad part of our sinful human condition, our current situation raises the art of telling falsehoods to a new level.

Pope Leo notes:

Disinformation did not begin with AI, yet today it finds a powerful amplifier in AI. The ability to manipulate content, images and videos exposes people to biased or misleading perspectives. This problem has both cultural and moral dimensions, since the quality of public communication depends directly on social trust and, in turn, shapes it. (#132)

Lying is a grave offense against the truth. To lie is to speak or act against the truth in order to deceive. The gravity of the lie is measured against the nature of the truth which it deforms. Even a “little white lie” is wrong. “Big black lies” are destructive and seriously sinful.

Pope Benedict XVI frequently wrote about the relationship between truth and freedom. Without truth, freedom is an illusion or a false hope. For example, when a woman is told the big black lie that abortion is not the deliberate murder of an innocent human being, she becomes the victim of an ideology that is both anti-life and anti-woman. Her freedom as a human being, and as a mother, is diminished by the lies told by many in our society and reinforced by our laws.

As Pope Leo makes clear, the truth requires “verification, cross-checking of sources and responsible

argumentation” (#132). It is grounded in reality (facts) and is not simply whatever we want it to be. “Moreover,” the Holy Father says, “[truth] is deeply relational, built through bonds of trust and shared practices, as well as an honest exchange with others and with the world” (#132). The very nature of artificial intelligence makes it difficult, if not impossible, to develop the deeply human bonds of trust that are needed to communicate truths that we would rather not hear.

When our Lord was confronted by Pilate, he said that he came into the world to bear witness to the truth (Jn 18:37). Pilate responded with a skepticism that is common today. He asked: “What is truth?” (Jn 18:38). The answer then (and now) is: “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (Jn 14:6). To discern the truth about ourselves, and about the world we live in, we must look to Jesus. A personal encounter with him is what allows us to acknowledge and accept the truth.

Pope Leo writes:

The content that circulates within digital environments shapes how people perceive the world and introduces into the collective consciousness images and narratives that direct our desires and influence our daily choices. This is “not a parallel or purely virtual world,” since what originates online now becomes a part of people’s lives, especially of the youngest. (#135)

“For this reason,” Pope Leo writes, “those who control digital platforms and means of communication have a considerable ability to affect the collective imagination and to present a particular vision of reality as desirable” (#136). This ability to shape what people think is true comes with an enormous responsibility.

“Such power should be constantly guided by the pursuit of truth and respect for human dignity,” the pope teaches, “so that the culture fostered on the internet does not become an instrument of excessive distraction, homogenization or dominance, but rather a setting in which inner freedom and critical thought can mature” (#136).

We who acknowledge Jesus as the source of all truth have a duty to safeguard what is communicated in the name of truth. Regardless of how they are generated, lies distort the image of God at the heart of human dignity.

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

Uno en Cristo/Daniel Conway

La verdad de Jesús debe guiarnos en los tiempos de la inteligencia artificial

La reciente encíclica del papa León XIV, “*Magnifica Humanitas: sobre la custodia de la persona humana en el tiempo de la inteligencia artificial*,” es una enérgica defensa del octavo mandamiento, que nos prohíbe dar falso testimonio (mentir) sobre nosotros mismos, nuestros seres queridos o sobre desconocidos.

En palabras del Santo Padre:

El uso de las plataformas digitales y los sistemas de IA acelera los profundos cambios en la comunicación pública y política. Herramientas que podrían favorecer el debate y la participación se utilizan a menudo para construir narrativas sesgadas y difundir los límites entre lo verdadero y lo falso, mezclando datos y opiniones. (#132)

La encíclica reconoce que la “desinformación” es tan antigua como la propia humanidad. De hecho, se manifestó por primera vez en el Jardín del Edén cuando la serpiente (el Padre de la Mentira) les dijo a nuestros primeros padres que comer el fruto prohibido los haría semejantes a Dios.

Si bien es cierto que “dar falso testimonio” es parte triste de nuestra condición humana pecaminosa, nuestra situación actual eleva el arte de decir mentiras a un nuevo nivel.

El papa León señala que:

La desinformación no surge con la

IA, pero encuentra hoy en ella un potente multiplicador. La posibilidad de manipular contenidos, imágenes y vídeos expone a los ciudadanos a perspectivas parciales o engañosas. El problema afecta a la dimensión cultural y moral, ya que la calidad de la comunicación pública depende directamente de la confianza social y repercute en ella. (#132)

Mentir es una grave ofensa contra la verdad; es hablar o actuar de forma contraria a la verdad con el fin de engañar. La gravedad de la mentira se mide en función de la naturaleza de la verdad que distorsiona. Incluso decir una “mentira blanca” está mal, en tanto que las más flagrantes son destructivas y constituyen un pecado grave.

El papa Benedicto XVI escribió a menudo sobre la relación entre la verdad y la libertad. Sin la verdad, la libertad es una ilusión o una falsa esperanza. Por ejemplo, cuando a una mujer se le cuenta esa gran mentira de que el aborto no es el asesinato deliberado de un ser humano inocente, se convierte en víctima de una ideología que atenta contra la vida y contra la mujer. Su libertad como ser humano y como madre se ve mermada por las mentiras que difunde muchas en nuestra sociedad y que nuestras leyes refuerzan.

Como deja claro el papa León, la verdad exige “verificación, cotejo de fuentes y

responsabilidad argumentativa” (#132). Se basa en la realidad (los hechos) y no es simplemente lo que queramos que sea. Tal como afirma el Santo Padre: [la verdad] “es aún más relacional: se construye a través de vínculos de confianza y prácticas compartidas, en un diálogo honesto con los demás y con el mundo” (#132). La naturaleza misma de la inteligencia artificial hace que resulte difícil, si no imposible, establecer esos vínculos de confianza tan profundamente humanos que son necesarios para transmitir verdades que preferiríamos no oír.

Cuando Pilato interrogó a nuestro Señor, este dijo que había venido al mundo para dar testimonio de la verdad (Jn 18:37). A lo que Pilato respondió con un escepticismo muy propio de nuestros tiempos y formuló la siguiente pregunta: “¿Qué es la verdad?” (Jn 18:38). La respuesta entonces (y ahora) es: “Yo soy el camino, la verdad y la vida” (Jn 14:6). Para descubrir la verdad sobre nosotros mismos y sobre el mundo en el que vivimos, debemos fijarnos en Jesús. El encuentro personal con Él es lo que nos permite reconocer y aceptar la verdad.

En este sentido, el papa León escribe:

Los contenidos que circulan en los entornos digitales influyen en la forma en que las personas perciben el mundo e introducen en la conciencia colectiva imágenes y relatos que orientan los deseos

e influyen en las decisiones cotidianas. “No es un mundo paralelo o puramente virtual,” porque lo que surge en internet pasa a formar parte de la vida de las personas, sobre todo de los más jóvenes. (#135)

“Por eso, quienes controlan las plataformas digitales y los medios de comunicación tienen una notable capacidad para influir en el imaginario colectivo y presentar como deseable una determinada visión de la realidad” (#136). Esta capacidad de influir en lo que la gente considera verdad conlleva una enorme responsabilidad.

“Es un poder que debe ser continuamente iluminado por la búsqueda de la verdad y el respeto de la dignidad humana, para que la cultura que se genera en la red no se convierta en instrumento de distracción excesiva, de homogeneización y de dominio, sino en un espacio en el que puedan madurar la libertad interior y el pensamiento crítico” (#136).

Quienes reconocemos a Jesús como la fuente de toda verdad tenemos el deber de salvaguardar lo que se transmite en nombre de la verdad. Independientemente de cómo se generen, las mentiras distorsionan la imagen de Dios que constituye el fundamento de la dignidad humana.

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

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

ANNIVERSARY

continued from page 1

“Couples who lay down their lives for one another, for their children and their faith, provide incredible witness and hope for the Church and the world.”

Couples like the four mentioned above. Following are the stories and marriage advice of David Serrato and Yrma Sanchez of St. Patrick Parish in Indianapolis, Bill and Sharon Johnson of St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis, Robert and Marilyn Hasty of St. Agnes Parish in Nashville and Larry and Andrea Fleck of St. Roch Parish in Indianapolis.

‘After 45 years, I’m still in love’

David and Yrma went to different schools but met through friends when they were 10 years old. It wasn’t until several years later that the two reconnected.

“She was secretary to a dentist,” said David, with translation help from Aaron Garcia. “I saw her through a window, and I thought, ‘I know her.’ And she was beautiful!”

The two were 19 at the time. As they started to date, each saw qualities in the other they admired, and they began to see a future together.

“She is always pushing me to be better,” said David. “I sometimes think if she weren’t with me, I wouldn’t be here.”

Yrma “started falling in love” with David from the start, calling him “very smart and hard working.”

But when she told her parents she loved him and wanted to marry, “They said, ‘No. You’re too young,’ ” Garcia translated for Yrma.

So, the couple continued to date, and their love and admiration grew.

Finally, when they were 21, David asked Yrma’s father for her hand in marriage, “And he said, ‘OK, she’s all yours!’ ” David recalled with a laugh.

The couple married in 1981, raised four children and now have three grandchildren. They’ve worked with engaged couples in their parish for several years, offering advice and wisdom they’ve learned through their 45 years of marriage.

“We tell them they must always be close to God,” said Yrma.

“And to pray a lot to the Lord,” David added. “It’s very important to have that love that he gave us and to be able to share it with everybody.”

He then turned to Yrma with a look and smile that said as much as his words: “Still after 45 years, I’m still in love with her.”

‘... and the rest is history’

After the Wedding Anniversary Mass, the Johnsons crossed the street to the Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center for a reception with hors d’oeuvres, wedding cake and dancing.

The couple took time away from the celebration to share their story with *The Criterion*.

Sharon was one year ahead of Bill at Father Thomas Scecina Memorial High School in Indianapolis—but they didn’t meet at school. It was her brother Mike’s confusion—or cunning—that brought them together.

Bill had mentioned to Mike his interest in “a Sharon,” a different one than Mike’s sister. “He said, ‘You come to my house and play some basketball, and I’ll introduce you,’ ” Bill recalled. “I said, ‘I think we’re talking about two different people.’ But he said, ‘No, no, no—just come over.’

“So, I did—and the rest is history.”

That history started early—Bill was 18 and Sharon was 19 when they married 65 years ago.

The couple raised five children and now have 14 grandchildren and 28 great-grandchildren, with another due in January.

There were lots of good times, said the Johnsons, with many of those moments centered around Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) sports.

The Johnsons did more than watch their kids’ games. They headed the CYO activities at Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish in Greenwood for eight years, including coaching when there was a need—even if

they “knew nothing about the sport.”

But there were hardships, too—the couple lost a daughter to ovarian cancer. “That was very hard,” said Bill. “And there, you have to fall back on your faith—there just isn’t anything else.”

The two “really practiced the Catholic faith and tried to give [their children] a good example,” he said.

Sharon agreed, encouraging couples to “keep your faith, and be there for each other, and be kind.”

Bill added one more bit of advice: “Remember to always date and go out together. Because if you don’t do that, you’re not going to keep your marriage alive.”

With that, Bill and Sharon returned to the reception. They danced to a slow song, gazing at each other with love and smiles that turned the clock back 65 years.

‘A strong feeling ... from the start’

Several years after the Johnsons graduated from Scecina, Robert and Marilyn Hasty met there in 1974—as teachers serving as lunch moderators.

“We had some great conversations” despite Robert being “very quiet,” said Marilyn. While he may have been quiet, Robert said he “had a strong feeling about her right from the start.”

The sanctity of the Hasty’s marriage is solid—their first date was to a friend’s priestly ordination, and five priests presided at their nuptial Mass 50 years ago in 1976.

Robert was Methodist when the couple wed. But through a desire to “share in her faith,” he sought private catechesis to be welcomed into the full communion of the Church during the Easter Vigil in 1979. He did it in secret to surprise Marilyn—until she spotted his car at the parish one day.

Pregnant with their first child and thinking the worst, she asked when he came home what he’d been doing at the parish. He said he was taking piano lessons.

Marily grilled him with questions: “Where’s your book? Where’s your music? Who’s your teacher? Where are your lessons?”

When Robert finally admitted the truth, Marilyn was deeply touched—even though the Easter Vigil was also her due date.

The couple raised six children and have 16 grandchildren, with another due in December. They remained active in each parish they were members of, from parish council to capital campaigns, Order of Christian Initiation of Adults, marriage preparation, even cleaning.

“Start your relationship right—include the Lord,” Marilyn advises couples. “Get married in a Catholic church. Nurture your relationship with each other and with the Lord. Be forgiving as Christ was. Extend mercy and grace.”

Robert agreed.

“If you are close to your church and you trust in God and communicate with each other in a loving and forgiving way, things will work out,” he said.

He might also have added, “And don’t lie to your wife.”

‘Keep God in the middle’

When a mutual friend set up a date for extroverted Andrea and quiet Larry to see a movie, both were all in for different reasons—Larry found her “fun and outgoing and attractive,” he said, while Andrea “just really wanted to see the movie,” she admitted with a laugh.

But as they continued to date, she saw his fun side, too—and more.

“He was a hard worker and very loyal,” she said, and both valued family and their Catholic faith.

Andrea and Larry dated for three years. They wed during the summer of 1976 after their sophomore year at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Ind., and lived in the school’s married student housing through Larry obtaining his master’s degree.

“By the time he graduated, we had two kids and one on the way,” said Andrea. “It seemed normal back then, but now it seems crazy!”

The Flecks had four children and now have 12 grandchildren.

Two of their children and their spouses joined Larry and Andrea at the Wedding Anniversary Mass and reception—Nathan and Mandy Fleck celebrating 15 years



Yrma Sanchez and David Serrato of St. Patrick Parish in Indianapolis pose in SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral after the annual archdiocesan Wedding Anniversary Mass in Indianapolis on Aug. 30. The couple celebrated 45 years of marriage this year. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)



Sharon Johnson, front center, and her husband Bill, holding the baby in the pink dress, pose with some of their five children, 14 grandchildren and 28 great-grandchildren at a reception in the Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center in Indianapolis on Aug. 30 following the annual archdiocesan Wedding Anniversary Mass across the street in SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral. The Johnsons, members of St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis, are celebrating their 65th anniversary this year. (Submitted photo)



Robert and Marilyn Hasty of St. Agnes Parish in Nashville pose with Archbishop Charles C. Thompson at a reception in the Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center in Indianapolis on Aug. 30 following the annual archdiocesan Wedding Anniversary Mass across the street in SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral. The couple is celebrating 50 years of marriage this year. (Submitted photo)

of marriage and Dora and David Hughey marking their 25th year. Together the three couples represented 90 years of marriage.

“If our other sons had been able to be there, it would’ve been 134 years,” Andrea noted.

They were also joined by the Hughey’s daughter Jacqueline and her fiancé Patrick Sauers. They look forward to their nuptial Mass next April.

Jacqueline calls her parents’ and grandparents’ marriages “a great influence, growing up and seeing such pure love.”

Dora credits such love to “keeping God in the middle” of her marriage, a practice she learned from her parents—and a phrase she adopted from her mother.

“I write in every wedding card, ‘Keep God in middle, and you’ll never fall apart,’ ” said Andrea.

Larry agreed with the advice.

“We’ve both always been digging to deepen our faith,” he said. “That’s a joint effort.”

The Flecks have also long supported the sacrament of marriage, participating in the Catholic Worldwide Marriage Encounter movement on its council and as presenters and working with engaged couples at St. Roch for 45 years.

Larry emphasized the importance of communication in marriage and advised couples “to remember that marriage is a covenant.”

Andrea agreed.

“You may go through some rough times, but the covenant will last because God is part of it,” she said. “You lay down your life for your spouse. It’s not about you anymore, it’s about the entity that’s ‘us.’ ” †

REYES

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But before that journey began, the “rock star” took his first steps in Tampa, Fla.

‘God, what do you want me to do?’

Reyes lived his first five years in Tampa before a job opportunity for his father took the family to New York City. When Reyes was 11, the family moved to Orlando, Fla., “where I would say my roots really are,” he says.

He was raised in the Catholic faith, although he admits the family was “on again, off again” in going to Mass. It was a pattern he followed through his junior year at the University of Florida in Gainesville, Fla.

The death of a friend before Reyes’ senior year led to a “big reversion to the faith,” he says, moving him to change the question “What do I want to do?” to “God, what do you want me to do?”

The answer led him “to really want to work with young people.”

So, after graduating with a bachelor’s degree in business administration and marketing in 2009, Reyes worked in Jacksonville, Fla., for two years as an educator for Teach for America, a national network of leaders working to expand access to education and opportunities for children.

He then “felt called” to return to Orlando—and soon understood why. The pastor of the parish where Reyes grew up asked him to serve there as coordinator of youth ministry and expanded it to include young adults.

After three years, he noticed that he managed the ministry “with kind of a business mindset. ... So I thought, ‘Maybe I should go back to business school.’”

Reyes spent the next two years at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, N.C., earning a master’s degree in business administration, followed by two

years working for a consulting firm in Orlando.

Once again, God had other plans. “I’d say within six months of being in the business world, I felt a call back to ministry, taking what I had learned from business school and applying it for the sake of evangelization, because that’s our mission as a Church,” says Reyes.

He joined the staff at St. James Cathedral in Orlando, serving as its director of pastoral ministry for 15 months. Then “a door opened” in Texas to create and head a new Office of Family Evangelization for the Diocese of Victoria.

After about three years there, “another door opened that God led me to,” says Reyes. That door was in the Diocese of Joliet, Ill., where he became director of its Department of Catechesis and Evangelization.

As part of that role, Reyes was tasked with developing and leading the implementation effort of the diocese’s pastoral plan and “animating the bishop’s vision across the diocese”—experiences that set Reyes up for what was next in God’s plan for him one state to the east.

‘A great gift to the archdiocese’

“To be honest, I always thought, ‘Could [the role of] chancellor be a good fit for me?’ ” says Reyes.

When Pope Leo XIV called then-Bishop Robert A. Hicks of Joliet to lead the Archdiocese of New York in December 2025, “that was kind of a discernment time for me,” he says. “And then this door [as chancellor] started to open” in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

Reyes applied. As it turns out, the role of chancellor was “a good fit” for him—he was hired for the position, which he started in early July.

“Justin brings a tremendous amount of leadership experience and a deep understanding of the Catholic Church,” says archdiocesan vicar general Msgr. William F. Stumpf, who served on the hiring committee for the position. “That was certainly evident during his time in the Diocese of Joliet, where he played an important role in assisting with the drafting of their diocesan pastoral plan and later in developing their implementation strategy.”

Reyes also brings “a unique perspective from his studies in business administration,” he adds. “That combination of faith, leadership and practical business experience makes him a great gift to the archdiocese.”

Reyes in turn is excited by “a chance to serve and learn from Archbishop Thompson. He is so well regarded among the bishops of our country.”

As for his new role, “You could ask 10 different chancellors in our country what they do, and you’ll get a little different answer from each,” says Reyes.

According to the Church’s *Code of Canon Law*, he explains, a chancellor is defined as “the primary record keeper of the archdiocese. Thankfully, we have an awesome archivist here,” Julie Motyka, who fulfills that task.

Instead of record keeper, Reyes views his role as “a little bit like Moses and Aaron ... ” Just as Aaron served as the voice for Moses, Reyes sees



New archdiocesan chancellor Justin Reyes, right, and his wife Laura pose with their children on the Indianapolis Colts football field at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis on Aug. 22. Lily sits in front. Behind her are Giorgio, left, Joseph, Justin and Peter, and Laura holds 4-month-old Faustina. (Submitted photo)

the chancellor as “an Aaron for the archbishop in [sharing] his vision” laid out in the archdiocese’s recently released five-year pastoral plan.

“How do we bring this vision to life across our archdiocese in the different areas [of the plan]? ... How do we just immerse ourselves in it and be a part of it?”

As chancellor, he’s also “thinking a lot about how I can support our priests and our pastors and those that support them.”

In the meantime, Reyes looks forward to “getting around the archdiocese, meeting people, getting to know the archdiocese and its needs.”

He’s impressed by its size—the largest area he’s served in terms of deaneries and counties.

“And there’s such a history here,” Reyes adds. “We’re coming up on 200 years, so just understanding that breadth and depth, ... I look forward to driving around and getting the flavors of the different places.”

Reyes and his family have already started exploring Indianapolis—a city he considers “special.”

‘I’m humbled by the opportunity’

“Indianapolis has been a special place for me, like many Catholics in our country—even from out of our country,” he says.

That connection goes back to his time as a youth and young adult minister in Orlando, when he took high schoolers to the National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis in 2013.

He returned with his wife and children 11 years later for the National Eucharistic Congress in July 2024.

The Reyes family has grown since then. He and his wife Laura now have six children ranging in age from 11 years old to 4 months, so “life is a little busy right now,” Reyes admits.

The family settled about 30 minutes from Indianapolis to enjoy rural life—and the rosary.

When looking at houses, Reyes recalls, “I said, ‘What’s a car ride that’s between 20 to 30 minutes?’ I need to pray my daily rosary, and I actually do that on the car ride into work.”

And it’s still close enough to Indianapolis for the family to enjoy what it offers—especially if a referee is involved.

“The sports scene here is great, especially for families,” says Reyes, who has already enjoyed a few Indianapolis Indians baseball games and a Colts preseason game with Laura and their kids.

He also likes to play golf “whenever I can.” And he’s a big fan of “Florida Gator sports, even though I know the archbishop is a big Kentucky Wildcats fan,” he quips.

Despite the difference in team preference, Archbishop Thompson praises Reyes.

“Although [it’s] a new role for him, Justin has embraced the responsibilities of chancellor with much vigor and enthusiasm,” he says. “We are blessed to have him with us.”

Reyes feels blessed, too. “I’m excited, and I’m eager to get to work [and] seeing the archbishop’s vision in the pastoral plan become more fully alive in the coming years,” he says.

“I hope to see the Church [in central and southern Indiana] become even more vibrant, evangelizing and growing. I’m humbled by the opportunity, and hopeful as my service begins.”



(To learn more about Reyes, watch the ArchIndy Vox episode, “The Role of the Chancellor: Meet Justin Reyes” at tinyurl.com/ArchIndyVoxReyes, or scan the QR code.) †

Responsibilities of the chancellor

In his new role as archdiocesan chancellor, some of Justin Reyes’ main responsibilities include:

- Overseeing the implementation of the archdiocesan pastoral plan, a plan that seeks to develop missionary disciples in central and southern Indiana through parish life and worship; evangelizing catechesis; stewardship; vocations; and outreach and ministry.

- Collaborating with the deans of the 11 archdiocesan deaneries.

- Supporting archdiocesan priests and those who support them.

- Overseeing support provided to ministries by the Secretariat for Evangelizing Catechesis.

- Providing oversight of the archdiocese’s Catholic Charities and Secretariat for Catholic Schools.

- Overseeing the canonical and archival records of the archdiocese. †

POPE

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creation “designed to fool us.”

The magazine said the Vatican News documentary about Pope Leo is “not the sort of thing you’d expect a sneakerhead to tune into, but suddenly, it absolutely should be,” thanks to the sneaker photo.

U.S. pop culture’s embrace of Pope Leo builds on a similar dynamic enjoyed by his predecessor, Pope Francis, the first Latin American pontiff, according to Smith.

Smith—past president of the American Catholic Historical Association and author of *The Look of Catholics: Portrayals in Popular Culture*—described how Catholicism in the U.S. “began to help shape new understandings of America,” particularly between the Great Depression and the Cold War, the period explored by Smith in his book.

While Catholics were often viewed with suspicion

and prejudice, “popular culture became an arena where Catholics began to help shape new understandings of America that were a little more inclusive of religious minorities and ethnic Americans,” said Smith, recounting the central premise of his book.

That “played out in movies”—such as Leo McCarey’s Oscar-winning 1944 film *Going My Way*, which starred Bing Crosby as a priest—that “weren’t propaganda for Catholics,” but featured “a kind of a subtle Catholicism” and “a little larger, capacious vision of America,” said Smith.

Fast forwarding to the present—through the rapid changes of the postwar era, the Second Vatican Council, the clerical abuse crisis and the papacies of his recent predecessors—Pope Leo shepherds the Church as its U.S. presence contends with divisive views over immigration, culture wars, religious disaffiliation and, where Christianity is growing, ascendant evangelicalism, said Smith.

Immigration in particular is an issue in which Smith sees Pope Leo “drawing upon Catholic tradition” and

morality to be “a voice for immigrants and dispossessed refugees” in both the U.S. and globally, said Smith.

“The Catholic Church has long been concerned about immigration,” he explained. “I think it’s sometimes forgotten among some American Catholics, but the Church has always been an immigrant Church. It continues to be. It used to be the Irish, Italians, Poles, and now it’s Mexicans and people from Central America, Africans, Haitians.”

Smith clarified that Pope Leo is “not an American pope,” but one “who happens to be American,” forged not only by upbringing in the U.S. but by “his long experience in Peru” as a missionary and bishop.

“And I think that is really formative to understanding his priorities,” said Smith.

In a separate statement to OSV News, Smith said that Pope Leo “assumes a large presence in American culture, particularly given his Midwestern, Chicago roots.”

But, added Smith, “as leader of the Catholic Church with deep experience of the global Church, he may not be what some anticipate.” †

Rochester Diocese will receive first-class Archbishop Sheen relic

ROCHESTER, N.Y. (OSV News)—Catholics in the Diocese of Rochester will soon have a physical link to Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen.

A first-class relic of the famed cleric, who led the Rochester Diocese as its sixth bishop (1966-69), is being given to the diocese by Archbishop Sheen's native Diocese of Peoria. The relic will be transferred during a Sept. 29 Mass at Rochester's Sacred Heart Cathedral five days after Archbishop Sheen's beatification in St. Louis.



Ven. Fulton J. Sheen

The Sept. 29 Mass will be followed by a series of related liturgies at several diocesan parishes this fall. At these Masses, the faithful will have opportunities to view and venerate the relic—a small portion of Archbishop Sheen's remains—before it is placed on permanent display at the cathedral for further viewing and veneration.

Highlighting the Mass will be an appearance by Bishop Louis Tylka, leader of the Peoria Diocese, who will formally present the relic to Bishop John S. Bonnici.

According to Father Aaron Kelly, priest-secretary to Bishop Bonnici, the event arose from a letter Bishop Tylka sent to Bishop Bonnici shortly after the latter was installed as bishop of Rochester in

March 2026. In his letter, the Peoria bishop asked the new Rochester bishop if his diocese would like to have a relic of Archbishop Sheen, who is entombed at Peoria's Cathedral of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception.

The relic will be the focal point of the series of Masses taking place in each of the seven diocesan deaneries this fall, Father Kelly said. He noted that Bishop Bonnici also will take the relic with him as he visits colleges in the diocese, and that the relic will then be returned to the cathedral, where a permanent memorial to Archbishop Sheen is being planned.

“We are looking at options for how the relic will be displayed so that people can venerate it,” Father Kelly said.

These events were set into motion by a March 25 announcement from the Vatican Dicastery for the Causes of Saints that Archbishop Sheen's beatification would take place on Sept. 24.

Beatification is the next-to-last step in the Catholic Church's canonization process, by which the Church declares a person to be a saint and worthy of universal veneration. Father Kelly noted that public veneration of a relic may only occur once a person has been beatified—gaining the title of “Blessed”—or canonized as a saint. In 2012, Pope Benedict XVI declared Archbishop Sheen “Venerable,” which is the

step prior to beatification.

Beatification and sainthood are “really when we talk about relics,” Father Kelly said. “They can become places of pilgrimage, objects of devotion.”

The Church distinguishes among three classifications of relics: a part of a saint's or blessed's body (first class), something a saint or blessed owned (second class) and objects that have touched a first-class relic (third class). The three-inch relic of Archbishop Sheen is from a bone in his left hand, making it an authentic, first-class relic.

Public display of relics is in keeping with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: “The religious sense of the Christian people has always found expression in various forms of piety surrounding the Church’s sacramental life, such as the veneration of relics, visits to sanctuaries, pilgrimages, processions, the stations of the cross, religious dances, the rosary, medals, etc” (#1674).

Father Kelly noted that Bishop Tylka also is making a relic available to the Archdiocese of New York, where Archbishop Sheen served as auxiliary bishop from 1951-66 before coming to Rochester. The archdiocese also is where he recorded his famous radio and television shows, and served as national director of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith. †

Lanesville native elected 11th abbot of St. Bernard Abbey in Cullman, Ala.

Criterion staff report

In an election that took place on July 29, the Benedictine monks of St. Bernard Abbey in Cullman, Ala., selected Benedictine Brother Brendan Seipel as the 11th abbot in the 135-year history of the monastic community, which is located in the Diocese of Birmingham, Ala.

Brother Brendan grew up as a member of St. Mary Parish in Lanesville in the New Albany Deanery. He entered St. Bernard Abbey in 2002 and first professed vows in 2004.

The election process began on June 15 with a Mass of the Holy Spirit celebrated by Benedictine Abbot Jonathan

Licari, abbot president of the American Cassinese Congregation of Benedictine Monks. The monastic community temporarily recessed the election process until after the Holy See was consulted on matters related to canon law.

When the election resumed on July 29, Abbot Brendan was selected to lead the monastic community.

Prior to his election, Abbot Brendan, 64, previously served for periods as the monastery's guest master, director of its St. Boniface Retreat Center and director of the Abbey Farm. He also has served on the monastery's senior council and as its subprior and prior, respectively the third and second person

in authority in the monastic community.

After the July election, the monastic community gathered in its Abbey Church for a thanksgiving service and were joined by Bishop Steven J. Raica of Birmingham, Ala., Bishop Robert J. Baker, bishop emeritus of the Birmingham Diocese, several priests of the diocese, Benedictine sisters of Sacred Heart Monastery in Cullman, and lay Catholics.

A formal blessing of Abbot Brendan will take place on Nov. 21. †



Abbott Brendan
Seipel

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SIMPLY CATHOLIC

St. Teresa of Calcutta modeled God’s gift of mercy to all

By David Werning

(OSV News)—If you read that one person in 1950 began an organization in a poverty-stricken developing country and that, 50 years later, it had more than 4,000 workers at 610 locations in 123 countries, you might think you were reading about an unusually successful multinational corporation.

These statistics, however, reflect the incredible work of St. Teresa of Calcutta at the time of her death in 1997 and the religious community she founded, the Missionaries of Charity.

The numbers are impressive—and hard to ignore—and they brought a lot of attention to Mother Teresa during her lifetime, both positive and negative.

Often, the reaction went hand in hand with the person’s attitude regarding faith. Those who identified as atheists tended to be hostile toward her, while believers tended to be sympathetic and see her as praiseworthy. The Church is unequivocal in its commendation of Mother Teresa, not for any human success but for her yielding to God’s will.

Earlier this month was the 10th anniversary of her canonization, which took place on Sept. 4, 2016, at the Vatican. At that time, the Church set her forth as a model disciple of Christ and, more pointedly, as a model of one who received and shared God’s mercy.

Her mother set the example. Despite the financial strain her husband’s death put on the family, Drana continued to share their food with the poor, even inviting them to dine in the family home. Mother Teresa would practice the same generous charity toward the poor years later.

Mother Teresa left home in 1928 in what is now Skopje, North Macedonia, at the age of 18 for a convent of the Sisters of Loreto in Ireland. Less than a year later, she entered the order’s novitiate in Darjeeling, India, the country that would become her home for the rest of her life. After completing her training, Mother Teresa taught school in Calcutta during the 1930s and 1940s. She made her final profession of vows on May 24, 1937.

Mother Teresa’s life took a significant turn in the midst of her ministry as a teacher. On Sept. 10, 1946, riding a train from Calcutta to Darjeeling for an annual retreat, she experienced what she would later describe as a “call within a call.”

Jesus made known to her that he wanted her to leave her teaching position and instead minister on the streets, where she would provide direct service to the poor. Mother Teresa said Christ wanted her to start an order of nuns that would be dedicated to bringing his mercy and love to those excluded from society. Jesus made these things known to her and added, she said, that he would work through her despite her weaknesses and sins.

Mother Teresa responded to Jesus’ requests immediately by petitioning Archbishop Ferdinand Perier of Calcutta for permission. His response was slow in coming, for



St. Teresa of Calcutta is seen in this 1995 file photo. With her Sept. 4, 2016, canonization, the Church recommended St. Teresa as a model disciple of Christ and, more pointedly, as a model of one who received and shared God’s mercy. (OSV News file photo/Joanne Keane)

he wanted to test its validity. Permission finally came in January 1948. With the news, Mother Teresa left the convent and went to the streets doing the work for which she became famous: picking up a dying person from the gutter, bathing a child, feeding the hungry.

The main goal was always to love Jesus in those who were forgotten by everyone else and to make known to them the love and mercy of God. Twelve women, former teachers and students from the school where Mother Teresa had previously served, joined her in her work.

On Oct. 7, 1950, the Missionaries of Charity was recognized as a religious community in the Archdiocese of Calcutta. Their work and their numbers have continued to grow ever since. And it is well known that Mother Teresa herself received numerous awards from around the world throughout her lifetime, the most famous being the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979. In 1996, Congress passed a resolution to name her an honorary U.S. citizen—a designation awarded to only seven other people.

What was behind all the success? Mother Teresa’s detractors would say ego and a particular political agenda. Readers can still find articles passing on the most negative views of Mother Teresa and the Missionaries of

Charity. The accusations include using the sick to make herself appear charitable, failing to provide adequate medical treatment, being preoccupied with abortion and contraceptives, and providing cover—by her good reputation—for unsavory politicians and businessmen who rubbed shoulders with her.

All of these accusations have been shown to have no merit, so why pay attention to them at all?

One reason is that no one, not even Mother Teresa, is above criticism. Indeed, she accepted criticism. And if it had merit, she would make the improvement, whether it dealt with herself or her religious community. Another reason is to take the opportunity to correct misinformation.

Whatever the reason, Mother Teresa’s proponents can state clearly and openly, as she did often, that any success she or the Missionaries of Charity had come from God.

Of course, Mother Teresa understood that one had to make the effort to accept God’s gifts, which meant yielding to his will and sometimes suffering the misunderstanding of others. Jesus came to save all people, yet throughout his ministry, he, too, was misunderstood. When he fed thousands with a few pieces of bread and some fish, they wanted to make him king.

They saw his power as a way to guarantee an easy life. Jesus had to correct them, making it clear that, while it was important to take care of each other’s needs, the deepest need to be satisfied was salvation. His miracles pointed to his power to save all people from sin and death, which he would reveal completely in his crucifixion.

Mother Teresa would say often, “Let us love one another as God loves each one of us,” which is to say unconditionally, extravagantly and always with the ultimate good in mind, which is to be with God forever. She sought to bring God’s mercy and love to everyone she met. That does not mean she was indifferent to people’s material needs. A good portion of the donations she received over the years was given to hospitals, for example.

But she never forgot Jesus’ call. She wanted to reach the people that society regarded as “untouchables” (a real class of people in India when she began her street ministry there, and one that still exists today). These people were left to die by society.

She wanted each person, no matter how low or despised, no matter how close to death, to experience God’s love unconditionally, extravagantly and forever. Just as Jesus’ love was incarnate, Mother Teresa shared his love with a bath, a touch, a smile.

Mother Teresa was not perfect. Her critics were right about that. But what they failed to see was the love and mercy that moved her. She never stopped praising God for his gifts. She knew that they were gratuitous and meant for all. May we never stop praising God for the gift he gave us in Mother Teresa, disciple of his mercy.

(David Werning writes from Virginia.) †



St. Teresa of Calcutta gives comfort to a sick man at the Missionaries of Charity home in Calcutta, India, in this undated photo. In founding the Missionaries of Charity in 1950, St. Teresa believed she was following Christ’s call to her to show his mercy to all people. (OSV News photo/KNA)

Joy and Hope for Today and Tomorrow/Ken Ogorek

Jesus is who he says he is, and we are called to be his witnesses of faith

Who is Jesus? And why should I care? An accurate answer to the first question helps us embrace the truth of the second.



Prove it to me!

Jesus isn’t the first person who claims to share divine teaching. And he won’t be the last. But Jesus takes this claim a quantum leap forward by essentially saying, “I am divine. I am God.” That’s the kind of talk that needs to be backed up with proof of some sort. Jesus performed dozens—maybe

hundreds—of miracles. Nature miracles. Healings. Raising folks from the dead! But a clever magician can appear to perform miracles. So even though his many miracles were witnessed by thousands of people, Jesus added this: He predicted his own suffering, death and resurrection after three days of being stone cold dead in a tomb. And then he did it!

Jesus keeps his promises

Jesus makes several promises. In between being seen by hundreds of people after rising gloriously and victoriously from the tomb, Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit, to keep his Church free from error in her

basic doctrinal and moral teaching. Note that Jesus clearly establishes a Church. And while it took a while for this acorn of a community to grow into the mighty oak of today’s holy Catholic Church, the Church is God’s gift to us, commissioned to continue the mission and ministry of Jesus until he returns victoriously and gloriously. Jesus has kept his promise—as he does all of his promises—of blessing the Church with divine guidance in teaching us all that he commands for peace on our earthly pilgrimage and eternal happiness in heaven.

Fullness of truth

God blesses his Church with the fullness of truth. Not because we’re better than other groups. Smarter. Always perfectly behaved. As God chose the ancient Israelites to help the whole world get to know him—to live in relationship with him—so the Church is commissioned to make disciples of all nations. To witness to the salvation from sin and death that only the risen Lord Jesus makes a reality for those who accept his invitation to discipleship.

We are his witnesses!

Our archdiocesan pastoral plan states, “[W]e seek first to introduce our sisters and brothers to the person of Jesus Christ and to embrace our identity as his missionary

disciples through ... a confident witness to our faith in him.” An objective within the plan is to “Strengthen evangelization ministry by holding activities that foster confidence among the faithful to witness to their faith in Jesus.” One great feature of witnessing is that no one can argue with you! Your Christian witness can be as simple as you sharing a brief story—simply—of what a difference living as a disciple of Jesus and a member of his Church makes in your life. The icing on the cake of every brief witness is an invitation. We invite and encourage folks to start or deepen a relationship with Jesus. Why? Because Jesus is who he says he is. Because Jesus keeps his promises. Our confident witness to our faith in Jesus flows from a vibrant personal faith. From vibrant personal faith flows vibrant parishes—faith communities fostering confidence among parishioners to make disciples throughout central and southern Indiana. May it be so by God’s grace and mercy!

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

It is Good/Elizabeth Scalia

Parents, please, please, stop tormenting your kids for clicks!

“Bad times, hard times, ... We are the times: Such as we are, such are the times” (Sermon 30, St Augustine). In my youth, I knew a mother who played cruel “jokes” on babies. With a little one seated on her lap, she would temptingly show a biscuit or a candy, and—just as the excited infant leaned forward, arms and legs churning, mouth open—she would devour it, with a laugh. The babies, even very small ones, seemed to understand the cheat. Their subsequent outrage seemed to contain a note of true indignation, as though they instinctively understood that, more than being denied a cookie, they and their dignity had been disrespected. Treated poorly, even babes can learn early lessons against trust. Lately my social media feeds have highlighted creepy videos of parents purposely “spilling” (more like, “tossing”) water onto their small babies, all for the reactions of their startled, often harassed and confused looking littles. One woman, smiling moronically at the camera while repeatedly tossing water on a not-yet-walking baby was particularly upsetting to see, both for the weird thrill she seemed to be getting from her horrid little game and the helplessness of the tormented child, who finally cried just in time for the last cup-emptying dousing. “Cut,” calls the director, “post it!” And, voila! Another TikTok masterpiece is brought forth, delivering in its afterbirth literally millions of life-giving dopamine hits to the posters, whose craving for them, click by click, seems to outweigh the desire to help kids feel safe, secure and prioritized. Children learn what they live. If they are dandled on a lap only to be splashed with water, or given attention only to have an egg unexpectedly smashed onto their forehead, or if their milk bottle has been dangled before them but bewilderingly delayed for the camera and the social media post, they learn several crucial lessons: —The familial lap is not always safe; it is not a trustworthy place. —At any moment, parents may shock, scare or egg you for laughs, just like bullies. —Getting fed is conditional. —The zeitgeist rules! The train of the trends must be caught! —The valuable life is lived in front of cameras.

—You’re only as good as your most-liked performance. These are destructive messages for any child to absorb, and it’s distressing to realize that so many parents—either enthralled by attention or afflicted with severe fears of “missing out” on something—are looking at their kids as useful content fodder and happily sacrificing their innocent sense of safety to what Flip Wilson used to call “The Church of What’s Happening Now.” Will these kids someday find these videos and call them reassuring and funny? Somehow, I doubt it. Also, to the parents who think throwing ice at the bathtub with enraged grunts, howls and moans for the camera is a good thing? If your kids are hearing you, they’re plenty scared and confused and—because they are kids—they are instinctively wondering what they’ve done wrong and why they are bad. Think about that before you perform and post. Look, I get it, I do. Parenting is not easy; it’s wearying and patience-sapping, and it loads us up with self-doubt and guilt, even (or perhaps especially) if we’re trying to do everything right but missing the mark every day. As a young mom whose husband traveled for work, I often single-parented for weeks at a time. I know that sometimes our kids, at any age, can throw us into panicked helplessness or prolonged annoyance. Parenting is rough. The recent, sensational trial of a mom who, possibly experiencing a post-partum psychosis, strangled her three children has brought a lot of attention to the real and serious needs of overwhelmed parents. Perhaps the subsequent discussions should note that even stressed-out moms and dads who are not suffering from hormonal imbalances can certainly feel isolated, helpless, trapped and out of ideas. I’m just hoping that in those dialogues we’ll also acknowledge that parenting tender, trusting and developing psyches sometimes means putting down the camera and ignoring the latest stupid thing “everyone is doing,” or even swallowing back the need to howl out loud, so as not to burden their precious childhoods with what too often stings into adulthood.

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

Life and Hope/Katie Yoder

Abortion is never normal because it harms both mother and child

At the end of every March for Life, I see them: Dozens of women in front of the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington holding up signs that read, “I Regret My Abortion.” They share their stories each year with tens of thousands of pro-life marchers—and writers like me. They talk about the pain abortion inflicts on women. They give faces and names to an issue. I thought of their witness when I read a recent story from *People* magazine listing more than 60 celebrities “who have shared their abortion stories to help women feel less alone.” As I scrolled through, I spotted familiar names like Christina Applegate, Whoopi Goldberg, Britney Spears, Kerry Washington, Gloria Steinem and so many others. National pro-life leaders noticed the story, too. “The propaganda campaign to make the intentional killing of a preborn baby seem normal is impossible to miss,” Kristan Hawkins, president of Students for Life of America and Students for Life Action, responded in a social media post. “Abortion should never be celebrated. It should be mourned. Let us pray for healing for every woman impacted by abortion, and keep working until abortion is both illegal and unthinkable.” As Hawkins said, the piece seems to frame abortion as something normal. But when I looked into celebrities’ stories—and read their direct quotes—I saw a painful reality poking through. Many of these stars described



abortion as something that tore them apart. The piece opens with actress Christina Applegate, who found out she was pregnant in 1991. She sought an abortion after things took a “brutal turn” in an abusive relationship. “I’m [expletive] pregnant and I’m killing my child on Thursday. I’m thinking where the [expletive] can I go to recuperate from murder,” Applegate wrote in her diary, according to another, linked *People* story. “His family will hate me when they find out that I killed their family member because they don’t believe in [abortion]. But I can’t have this baby because I have work to do to entertain this [expletive] world. Besides, I can’t ... now.” The second woman listed, actress Danielle Brooks, discovered she was pregnant while on Accutane to treat her acne. “You actually have to sign something saying that you will have an abortion if you get pregnant,” she said about Accutane on a podcast, *People* reported. “I broke down because I realized I wanted to be a mom ... it was really hard, very, very difficult to actually have an abortion. It was not what I wanted.” Further down, Britney Spears obtained an abortion after the father, Justin Timberlake, said they were not ready for a baby. “If it had been left up to me alone, I never would have done it,” the singer writes in her memoir, *People* reported. “To this day, it’s one of the most agonizing things I have ever experienced in my life.” Yes, some celebrities said they had no regrets. But others described abortion as something they felt like they had to

do because of their career or a toxic relationship. Many described it as a terrible choice that continues to haunt them. Their stories hint at the destruction abortion poses not only for the baby, but also for the mother. Just as every pregnancy involves two bodies, every abortion involves two bodies, too. While the Church condemns abortion, it sees the women harmed by it. This is why Catholic and Christian ministries exist to offer hope and healing to women after abortion, including Silent No More Awareness Campaign, Project Rachel, Rachel’s Vineyard and the Sisters for Life ministry. This is why, in his 1995 encyclical, “*Evangelium Vitae*,” St. John Paul II addresses women who have had abortions. “The Church is aware of the many factors which may have influenced your decision, and she does not doubt that in many cases it was a painful and even shattering decision,” he begins. “The wound in your heart may not yet have healed. Certainly what happened was and remains terribly wrong. But do not give in to discouragement and do not lose hope” (#99). He goes on to speak about God’s forgiveness and mercy before encouraging women that, “With the friendly and expert help and advice of other people, and as a result of your own painful experience, you can be among the most eloquent defenders of everyone’s right to life” (#99). We should never think of abortion as normal because it ends the life of a baby in the womb. And we should never think of it as normal—because it harms women, too.

(Katie Yoder writes for OSV News from Maryland.) †

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

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, September 20, 2026

- Isaiah 55:6-9
- Philippians 1:20c-24, 27a
- Matthew 20:1-16a

The last section of the Book of Isaiah provides the first reading for Mass this weekend. Virtually none of the prophets of ancient Israel wrote when times were good, or at least when the prophets perceived the times to be good. Certainly, the author of the section of the Book of Isaiah which supplies this weekend’s reading hardly regarded the times to be good.

An added dimension to the story of the unhappy plight then being endured by God’s people is that they found want and not relief when they returned from Babylon, where they and their ancestors had lived in exile for four generations.

At first they had rejoiced when their exile was over, convinced that God had provided for them and rescued them. But when they arrived back at the promised land and saw its terrible condition, they felt betrayed and abandoned.

It is easy to imagine their dismay and anger. For generations, constantly urged by other prophets, they had trusted that God would provide for them when all was said and done. Now they were desperate, God nowhere in sight.

This prophet had to restore their trust in God. He asked the people to maintain their trust in God and to call upon him, the source of true strength, regardless of fleeting problems of the moment.

For this weekend’s second reading, the Church offers a passage from St. Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians.

The Apostle Paul, in this epistle’s soaring language, proclaims the divinity of Christ, the Savior, the Son of God. Paul explains the intimate, inseparable link between the Lord and true disciples.

Come what may on Earth, disciples will never die if they, with the help of God’s grace, remain constant in loving God and obediently following Christ.

St. Matthew’s Gospel provides a parable for the last reading. The agricultural setting of the story would have been well understood within the context

of everyday life in Palestine at the time of Jesus. It was the pursuit of most people. Life was hard. Poverty was everywhere.

Gainful employment was at a premium. Men looking for work and income came to village centers each morning seeking work. People with projects came to these places and hired these men.

It was a buyer’s market. No legal requirements for any minimum wage or contracts restrained employers in their pursuit of profit. Still, at least for Jews, certain expectations of fairness prevailed. (A denarius was a typical day’s wage.)

Jesus used the term “vineyard” (Mt 20:1). It immediately recalled Old Testament references to the promised land as God’s vineyard. So, the story from the beginning had a theological and moral quality. God owned and operated the vineyard. He set the rules. God hired the workers and therefore provided them with survival itself.

Three powerful lessons emerge. God is almighty. He is enormously generous, not stingy or hard-hearted. Finally, God’s ways are not necessarily our ways, a reality we often forget.

Reflection

The long, tiring months of the coronavirus pandemic several years ago showed what the ancient Jews, described in the first reading, felt in their hearts as they looked upon their plight. Will it ever end?

The temptation is to be disappointed by God or even to reject him.

Emphatically, in these readings, the Church insists that God is our only hope, salvation and solid rock of security.

Hold onto God. If we repent, even late in the day, God’s loving forgiveness will reward us lavishly. All perils will pass. A future awaits us. It is eternal.

We await God today in our weariness and fear, just as men waited to be hired in the parable heard in the passage from Matthew’s Gospel proclaimed at Mass this weekend. God is looking for us, eager to bring us into his vineyard and to pay us with the greatest of wages, peace now and forever. But we must go to the public square to offer our hearts truly and totally to God. †

Daily Readings

Monday, September 21
St. Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist
Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-13
Psalm 19:2-5
Matthew 9:9-13

Tuesday, September 22
Proverbs 21:1-6, 10-13
Psalm 119:1, 27, 30, 34-35, 44
Luke 8:19-21

Wednesday, September 23
St. Pius of Pietrelcina, priest
Proverbs 30:5-9
Psalm 119:29, 72, 89, 101, 104, 163
Luke 9:1-6

Thursday, September 24
Ecclesiastes 1:2-11
Psalm 90:3-6, 12-14, 17bc
Luke 9:7-9

Friday, September 25
Ecclesiastes 3:1-11
Psalm 144:1b, 2abc, 3-4
Luke 9:18-22

Saturday, September 26
St. Cosmas, martyr
St. Damian, martyr
Ecclesiastes 11:9-12:8
Psalm 90:3-6, 12-14, 17
Luke 9:43b-45

Sunday, September 27
Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Ezekiel 18:25-28
Psalm 25:4-9
Philippians 2:1-11
or *Philippians 2:1-5*
Matthew 21:28-32

Question Corner/Jenna Marie Cooper

Full attendance at Mass not required under certain conditions to receive Communion

QI’m a Catholic who works at a funeral home and assists at many Catholic funerals. I’m not always in the church for the entirety of Mass.



I’m sometimes out during the Gospel and homily or after Communion since I’m helping with funeral arrangements. Since it’s not fulfilling my Sunday obligation, is it still OK for me to receive Communion to offer up for the deceased if I’m not there for the entire Mass? (Illinois)

AYes, the short answer is that, in general, it is a beautiful spiritual work of mercy to offer our holy Communion for the dead, and it would be fine to receive Communion at a funeral even if you aren’t present for all of the Mass.

The connection we tend to have in our minds between attending Mass and receiving holy Communion is natural and fitting, since, as the Second Vatican Council’s “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy” (known by its Latin title as “*Sacrosanctum Concilium*”) tells us, the reception of Communion by the faithful is the “more perfect form of participation in the Mass” (#55). The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* goes on to elaborate: “It is in keeping with the very meaning of the Eucharist that the faithful, if they have the required dispositions, receive Communion each time they participate in the Mass” (#1388).

However, if we break it down further, the question of fulfilling an obligation to attend Mass and whether one can receive holy Communion at a given time are actually two separate things.

Regarding the obligation to attend Mass, canon 1247 of the *Code of Canon Law* states that “on Sundays and other holy days of obligation, the faithful are obliged to participate in the Mass.”

But while Catholics are obliged to attend Mass every week, canon 920 states that, as a bare minimum, Catholics are only strictly required to receive holy Communion once a year, preferably during the Easter season.

So, Catholics in a state of grace can

and arguably should receive Communion at a Mass by which they fulfill an obligation. But it is entirely possible to fulfill the obligation even without receiving Communion. Indeed, this is the situation for Catholics who are not properly disposed or prepared to receive Communion. And that can be for whatever reason, whether this is because they have not kept the required one-hour pre-eucharistic fast, or because they have a serious unconfessed sin on their conscience, or because they are laboring under an ecclesiastical penalty like excommunication.

On the flip side, it is also possible to receive holy Communion outside of Mass.

The most obvious example of this is when holy Communion is brought to the sick who are unable to leave their homes, a hospital or nursing home.

But the general principle, as spelled out in canon 843, is that “sacred ministers cannot deny the sacraments to those who seek them at appropriate times, are properly disposed and are not prohibited by law from receiving them.” Canon 918 further specifies that holy Communion “is to be administered outside the Mass to those who request it for a just cause.”

In your case in particular, even if you don’t feel that you were not present at enough of the liturgy for it to count as “attending the Mass,” respectfully presenting yourself in the Communion line would be seeking the sacrament at an appropriate time; and desiring to spiritually assist the departed amidst your practical duties is certainly a “just cause.”

However, the caveat is that if you are receiving Communion twice in one day, the second time needs to be in the context of a Mass, as per canon 917.

That is, it’s fine to receive holy Communion at a funeral Mass in which you didn’t take part completely, as long as that is the first time you were receiving that day. If you had already received Communion at an earlier Mass you fully participated in as part of the congregation, that would prevent you from “popping in” just to receive Communion at the later funeral.

(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.) †

‘It’s fine to receive holy Communion at a funeral Mass in which you didn’t take part completely, as long as that is the first time you were receiving that day.’

My Journey to God

Prayer Partner —By Linda Abner

Is it any less hallowed
Dear Mary, my Mother,
If we’re joined by a bold
And irreverent Other?

She sees that we’re quietly
Trying to talk
But still saunters in
With a swaggering walk

And looks at me with
Expectant stare
As if I should surrender
The only chair

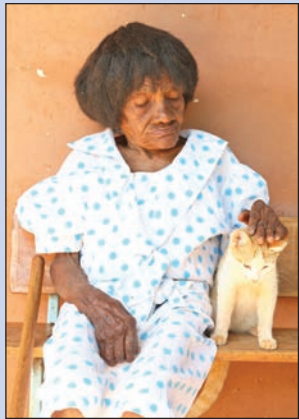
But when I refuse, she
Approaches with ease
And crowds in beside me
With deft little squeeze

And settles down there
With a satisfied sigh
And joins in the prayer
As the Mysteries go by

I find that her presence
Enhances my peace
Despite her so rudely
Gaining her lease

Her rhythmic breath and
Occasional nudge
Make me far less inclined
To harbor a grudge

O sweet Mother Mary
Is it any less fit
If a kitty cat wants
To join where we sit?



(Linda Abner is a member of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Indianapolis. Photo: Penina Munini pets a cat at St. Mary’s Village for aged and incapacitated women in Sagana, Kenya, in June 2018.) (CNS photo/Lilian Muendo, courtesy Global Sisters Report)

Centennial celebration



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson was the principal celebrant on Sept. 1 at a Mass at St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) Church in Indianapolis celebrating the 100th anniversary of Little Flower School. Above, left, Archbishop Thompson asks students questions during his homily. Above, right, eighth-graders William Motley and Abigail Estrada, offer prayer intentions during the liturgy. (Submitted photos)

Rest in peace

Please submit in writing to our office by 10 a.m. Thursday before the week of publication; be sure to state date of death. Obituaries of archdiocesan priests serving our archdiocese are listed elsewhere in *The Criterion*. Order priests and religious sisters and brothers are included here, unless they are natives of the archdiocese or have other connections to it; those are separate obituaries on this page.

BROCK, John, 26, St. John Paul II, Sellersburg, Aug. 30. Son of Todd and Sarah Brock. Brother of Eliza Bowlds, Henry, Louis and William Brock. Grandson of Joan Knight and Steve and Patricia Brock.

CHANCE, Rosemary, 88, St. Mary, Rushville, Sept. 7. Wife of Joe Chance. Mother of Cindy Powers and David Chance. Grandmother of four. Great-grandmother of four.

CLERC, Janet R., 97, St. Bartholomew, Columbus, July 25. Mother of Joanne Cleerman, Janette Swank, Jill West, Jeanne and James Clerc. Grandmother of 11. Great-grandmother of 12.

CONDON, Charlotte J., 90, St. Bartholomew, Columbus, Aug. 16. Wife of Robert Condon. Mother of Debbie Drysdale, Cindy House, Donna and Doug Condon. Sister of Nancy Hoffar. Grandmother of six. Great-grandmother of nine.

DEAN, David, 83, St. Malachy, Brownsburg, Sept. 2. Husband of Ruth Dean. Father of Angela Cullin and Jennifer Dean. Brother of Kathy and Robert Dean. Grandfather of two.

DUNLAP, Sr., Robert D., 90, St. Christopher, Indianapolis, July 12. Father of Lisa Heisler, Mark and Robert Dunlap, Jr. Brother of Marie DeWitt. Grandfather of seven. Great-grandfather of one.

ENDRES, Kathryn J., 87, St. Christopher, Indianapolis, Aug. 24. Mother of Sally Burnell, Suzy Evans and David Endres. Grandmother of 10. Great-grandmother of five. Great-great-grandmother of one.

EPLER III, Frank R., 76, St. Bartholomew, Columbus, June 20. Husband of Patricia Epler. Father of Christopher and Nicholas Epler. Brother of Sheila Lang, Fran Zierlein and Larry Epler. Grandfather of two.

GARRETT, Mary A., 82, St. Joseph, Crawford County, Aug. 27. Mother of Michael Garrett. Sister of Joseph Hagen. Grandmother of two. Great-grandmother of four.

GREEN, Nancy J., 81, St. Bartholomew, Columbus, July 9. Mother of Kelly Fascia, Beth Sauber, Dudley and Michael Green. Sister of Carroll. Grandmother of nine. Great-grandmother of one.

HAHN, Beverly, 84, St. Mary, Greensburg, Aug. 25. Mother of Karla Billieu, Robin and Michael Hahn. Sister of Kenneth Cross and Carol Hahn. Grandmother of seven. Great-grandmother of nine.

HAIR, Anne, 84, Christ the King, Indianapolis, July 29. Mother of Katy Sahn. Sister of Harriet Majors and John Brink. Grandmother of three.

HUTT, Ruth A., 98, St. Bartholomew, Columbus, Sept. 2. Mother of Charles,

Edward, John, Joseph, Michael and Paul Hutt. Grandmother of 12. Great-grandmother of 33. Great-great-grandmother of 21.

IRWIN, Naomi, 8, St. Bartholomew, Columbus, Sept. 5. Daughter of Erin Rose and Kyle Irwin. Sister of Lola and Noah Rose and Kamden Irwin. Granddaughter of William and Sandra Aimers and John and Barbara Irwin.

KRIEG, Robert L., 89, St. Catherine of Siena, Decatur County, Sept. 5. Father of Angel Grunkemeyer, Connie Gunter, Gary and Mark Krieg. Brother of Kenneth Krieg. Grandfather of five. Great-grandfather of eight.

MEDINA MARQUEZ, Jonathan G., 13, St. Bartholomew, Columbus, Aug. 20. Son of Jonathan Medina and Maritza Marquez. Brother of Carolina, Loren, Vanessa and Aaron. Grandson of Nelly Manrique and Luis Marquez, and Sila Mena and Laurentino Medina.

MONTGOMERY, William S., 84, St. Charles Borromeo, Bloomington, Aug. 27. Husband of Dolores Montgomery. Uncle of several

NDUNGO, Rusia M., 52, St. Michael the Archangel, Indianapolis, Sept. 6. Sister of Mwalibora Bushiri.

PICKETT, Robert W., 85, St. Christopher, Indianapolis, Aug. 18. Husband of Sandra Pickett. Father of Brian, Robert and Thomas Pickett. Brother of Don Pickett. Grandfather of six.

RENIE, Thomas A., 83, St. Christopher, Indianapolis, Aug. 1. Father of Tricia Diagostino and Stacey Renie. Grandfather of four.

SCHOETTMER, Francis, 87, St. Mary, Greensburg, Sept. 5. Father of Jeffery and Lawrence Schoettmer. Grandfather of one. Great-grandfather of four.

SCHUMAN, Joseph C., 94, All Saints, Dearborn County, Sept. 7. Father of Sharon Bischoff, Mary Cull, Sue Hartman, Terri Norman, Donna Smith, Dale and Larry Schuman. Grandfather of 14. Great-grandfather of 20.

SUTTON, Bliss M., 55, St. Mary, North Vernon, Sept. 8. Wife of Brent Sutton. Mother of Brechelle Landwehr and Brendan Sutton. Daughter of Norma Daugherty. Sister

of Amie Smith and Rob Daugherty. Grandmother of two.

WEICHMAN, Carl E., 76, St. Bartholomew, Columbus, Sept. 6. Husband of Teresa Weichman. Father of Kylie Weichman. Brother of Rebekah Williams, Mark and Phillip Weichman. Grandfather of one.

WENDOWSKI, Paul A., 83, St. Bartholomew, Columbus, July 4. Husband of Cathy Wendowski. Father of Jill Meyers and Mike Wendowski. Grandfather of six.

WHITAKER, James, 83, St. Lawrence, Lawrenceburg, Sept. 1. Father of Kimberly Adams, Kristina Meyer, David Meyer, Greg and Jim Whitaker. Brother of Linda Day, Cena Graves, Mary Halcomb, Wilma Holden, Wendell and Wood Whitaker. Grandfather of eight. Great-grandfather of seven.

WHITSETT, Thomas, 80, St. Christopher, Indianapolis, Sept. 2. Husband of Brenda Whitsett. Father of Lori Beebe, Stacey Nahlen and Kelly Weaver. Brother of Martha Kremer, Christine Stewart, Providence Sister Therese and Tim Whitsett. Grandfather of seven. †

Online Lay Ministry Formation

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis has partnered with the University of Notre Dame and Catholic International University (CIU) to offer not-for-credit online theology classes:

- Earn certificate in Lay Ministry
- Complete 12 courses online with ND STEP program
- CIU offers classes on Catechism of the Catholic Church
- 20% discount for all employees, volunteers, and parishioners

For more information, please log on to

www.archindy.org/layministry



REPORT SEXUAL MISCONDUCT NOW

If you are a victim of sexual misconduct by a person ministering on behalf of the Church, or if you know of anyone who has been a victim of such misconduct, please contact the archdiocesan victim assistance coordinator. There are *two* ways to make a report:

1 Ethics Point
Confidential, Online Reporting
www.archdioceseofindianapolis.ethicspoint.com or 888-393-6810

2 Victim Assistance Coordinator, Archdiocese of Indianapolis
P.O. Box 1410, Indianapolis, IN 46206-1410

317-236-1548 or 800-382-9836, ext. 1548
victimassistance@archindy.org

Holy Cross Father Emmanuel Kallarackal was chaplain at Cathedral High School in Indianapolis during 2021-2022 academic year

Holy Cross Father Emmanuel Kallarackal, a member of the Congregation of Holy Cross, died unexpectedly on Aug. 29 while traveling in Waterford, Ireland. He was 69.

Father Kallarackal was a chaplain at Cathedral High School in Indianapolis from 2021-22. A memorial Mass was celebrated for him on Sept. 3 at the Joe O'Malia Performing Arts Center on Cathedral's campus.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Sept. 7 in Agartala, India. Burial followed at Holy Cross Cemetery in Agartala.

Father Kallarackal was born on Nov. 29, 1956, in the southern India state of Kerala. He entered the Congregation of Holy Cross in 1972 in India, professed first vows on May 27, 1978, and perpetual vows on July 29, 1983. He was ordained a priest on May 8, 1984.

Father Kallarackal earned graduate degrees, including a doctorate in religious education, at Fordham University in New York.

A member of the North East India Province of the Congregation of Holy Cross, Father Kallarackal dedicated much of his ministry to education in the city of Agartala in northeastern India. He founded Holy Cross College there in 2009 and served as its first principal.

In addition to serving as chaplain at Cathedral High School, Father Kallarackal also provided sacramental assistance at St. Joan of Arc Parish in Indianapolis.

In 2022, Father Kallarackal was elected to serve on his religious community's general council and as its vicar general and first assistant, thus ending his ministry at Cathedral High School and leading him to serve in Rome.

In serving in his religious community's leadership, Father Kallarackal oversaw preparation for a new Holy Cross missionary ministry in Bougainville in Papua New Guinea.

Memorial contributions may be sent to the Congregation of Holy Cross United States Province, P.O. Box 765, Notre Dame, IN 46556-0765. †

Listening session gathers reflections on family life in the Church

By Sean Gallagher

On March 19, 2016, Pope Francis issued his apostolic exhortation, “*Amoris Laetitia*” (“The Joy of Love”) that was the result of a meeting of the Synod of Bishops on married life in the Church.

In it, he explored contemporary challenges facing families, the pastoral care that families need from the Church and how families can contribute to the Church carrying out its mission of evangelization.

A meeting at the Vatican will be held on Oct. 7-14 to mark the 10th anniversary of the issuing of “*Amoris Laetitia*.” Heads of bishops’ conferences from around the world, as well as leaders of Eastern Catholic Churches, will discuss ministries to families taking place in dioceses that seek to carry out the message of the apostolic exhortation and what further steps are needed to continue to implement it.

In advance of the meeting, Pope Leo XIV asked Church leaders from around the world to gather members of the faithful to discuss family life in the Church and to then send to the Vatican a summary of those meetings.

To that end, more than 80 Catholics from dozens of parishes across central and southern Indiana took part in a “Listening Session for Parents” on Aug. 31, which was open to both English- and Spanish-speaking parishioners. Most participated in person at the Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center in Indianapolis. Others joined in the meeting online. Input was also received from the Myanmar, Korean and Haitian communities.

The discussions, held largely among four people sitting at tables, were structured according to the “conversations in the Spirit” model that was used in the meetings at the Vatican on synodality of the Synod of Bishops in 2023 and 2024. It begins with prayer, allows all present to share their views on important questions and topics and fosters a faith-filled discussion among participants.

After the table discussions were completed, summaries of some of them were shared with all in attendance at the meeting.

Felix Navarette, director of the archdiocesan Office of Intercultural Ministry, spoke about the discussion among Hispanic and Latino Catholics at the listening session.

“They emphasized the importance and power of prayer among different communities,” he said. “It’s been an important part of living in community and uniting people as the body of Christ.”

Navarette also noted in his summary that many had highlighted the “importance of catechesis and evangelization in different stages of life,” and the need

for parishes “to provide formation for marriages, youths and young adults” so as “to attract young adults to fall in love with God.”

Gabriela Ross, director of the archdiocesan Office of Marriage and Family Life, reported a summary of the discussion that took place among online participants.

“They talked about the witness of their lives and the impact that it has on those around them, both as individuals within a family and collectively as a family,” she said.

“Collectively as a group, they shared a statement that ‘We have hope and are encouraged that, by living our faith daily, we will be able to spread the light of Christ. We have hope that we are making an impact on others and are enabling parishioners to reach others in our community, in the parish, our families and at all ages and seasons of life.’ ”

Anita Bardo, archdiocesan coordinator of evangelization and discipleship, summarized the discussions of other in-person participants, noting that they recognized the importance of having “more formation for couples prior to marriage” in order for them “to know that God is the center of their lives.”

Bardo added that the participants noted the power of families living out their faith together.

“When families see others going to Mass together as a family, they are motivated to want to do the same thing,” she said. “When they see that, it opens up a whole new idea that they can do the same thing when they see positivity in families.”

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson spoke at the end of the listening session, praising the participants for their “passion for your faith, for family and for all that we’re about as Church.

“The family is the domestic Church,” he said. “It’s where we live, where the Church is to be lived. The first school of learning is the family. It’s the fabric of society,



Participants take time for prayer and discussion on family life in the Church during a “Listening Session for Parents” held on Aug. 31 at the Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center in Indianapolis. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

and marriage is the foundation of family. That’s why all of this is so very, very important. If we can’t dialogue, communicate and listen and [show] respect in families, then how are we going to do that in the world?”

“In a very polarized world today, we need that witness of families. No person, no family, is an island. We need each other.”

Matt and Julie Miller took part in the listening session. The parents of five children and members of St. Luke the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis, they celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary in June.

“We really found people who were passionate about family life and encouraging families to be models for others and to follow the example of the Holy Family,” said Matt of the listening session. “I found it to be really encouraging overall.”

Julie appreciated how others at the meeting recognized “the importance of family, prayer and sticking with it to pass on the faith.

“It’s encouraging to see other people come and take a Monday evening to speak about this and to say it’s important,” she added. “We need this and to be held accountable. We want to grow as a family.” †

School’s stunning surge in student literacy reflects archdiocese’s overall success

By John Shaughnessy

When Madalyn Schepers recently learned the great news from the Indiana Board of Education, the principal of



Madalyn Schepers

St. Anthony School in Indianapolis was thrilled—because she knew the reading results reflect the incredible difference that could be made in the lives of the school’s students.

“Literacy changes what is possible for a child,” Schepers said.

“That is the achievement we are most proud of.”

In just one year, the school made a dramatic improvement in student literacy, with a 45.8 percentage point increase in its Indiana Reading Evaluation and Determination (IREAD) testing.

St. Anthony’s pass rate among its third-grade students improved from 54.2% in the 2024-25 school year to 100% in 2025-26.

“Reaching 100% proficiency is an incredible accomplishment,” Schepers noted about the school, where the

student population is 98% Hispanic. “For many of our students, learning to read proficiently in English is happening alongside learning English itself.”

The success of St. Anthony School reflects the overall success of the 54 Catholic elementary schools in the archdiocese regarding IREAD.

Combined, archdiocesan elementary schools achieved a 97.1% total pass rate compared to the state average of 88.7%, according to Brian Disney, superintendent of Catholic schools in the archdiocese.

Disney also noted that 32 of the 54 schools had a pass rate of 100% while 11 more schools had a pass rate of 95% or higher.

“Our Catholic school students, educators and families worked together to ensure our students are readers before the end of third grade,” Disney said. “Our outstanding IREAD test results demonstrate the academic achievement and growth of our Catholic school students.”

The superintendent also praised the St. Anthony School community for the dramatic improvement.

“Through child-centered and data-informed practices, the St. Anthony staff, students and families achieved

outstanding results,” Disney noted.

The school’s principal saluted that combined effort, too.

“Our students have benefited from intentional, evidence-based literacy instruction and educators who made a 100% commitment to believing in what every child could achieve,” Schepers said.

“Through consistent instruction and in partnership with our families, students have shown us what is possible when high expectations are matched with the right supports.”

As great as the improvement is, the way the children responded to the news of their success may have delighted the St. Anthony School community even more.

“Our literacy team called each student down individually to tell them the results, and I truly wish we could have recorded the excitement in our offices when our students learned they had passed,” Schepers says.

“The pride and energy were contagious. The kids were crying. The adults were crying. We shared hugs and congratulations and called parents, who were so proud of their children. You could tell they were beaming through the phone. That was the best celebration we could have.”

The principal shared some of the



When last year’s third-grade students at St. Anthony School in Indianapolis finished their Indiana Reading Evaluation and Determination (IREAD) testing, they were rewarded for their preparation with an ice cream party. Then-third-grade student Erick Ochoa Ochoa flashes the peace sign after getting his ice cream. (Submitted photo)

children’s reactions to their achievement.

Nathalie said, “When I found out I passed, it felt good. I was happy! I feel like I can read anything now!”

Erick noted, “I felt happy because it took me three tries. My family was really proud of me, and we went out to dinner to celebrate.”

Their reactions brought to life Schepers’ belief that “literacy changes what is possible for a child.” †

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—Brian Disney, superintendent of Catholic schools in the archdiocese





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