



The

Criterion

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St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities

New director Christopher Haulter has 'heart' for people it serves, page 7.

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As the boys' cross-country coach at Roncalli High School in Indianapolis, Jeff Buckley (fifth from the left) encourages his seniors to take the lead in prayer sessions at the end of practices. Here he poses with this year's seniors, Joey McCoy, left, Trent Lamarca, Cliff Lamarca, Evan Wright, Zeke Littell, Will Lewis and Thomas Mallers. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)

More than wins, high school coaches strive to make an impact on players' lives

By John Shaughnessy

The moment has stayed with Jeff Buckley for years now, one of those defining moments for a high school coach that gets to the heart of why a person dedicates so much of his or her life to young people.

It was a moment far beyond the focus of winning and losing for Buckley, the boys' cross-country coach at Roncalli High School in Indianapolis.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Buckley's mother-in-law Carol Cunningham died of a heart attack—a time of heartbreak for her family, including Buckley's wife, Linda.

As the calls and sympathy cards poured in for Linda—a middle school teacher at the time at St. Jude School in

Indianapolis—there also came a touching visit.

"Two days later, five of my runners showed up on our front porch with flowers for their former middle school teacher," Buckley recalls. "Once we were able to meet as a team again, they often prayed for Linda during our team's student-led prayers."

The team-focused prayers are the favorite part of coaching for Buckley, who is in his 15th year at Roncalli, including the past 12 as the head coach of the boys' team.

"Many years ago, we began assigning each senior one week to lead our prayer at the conclusion of practice," Buckley says. "Standard prayers are not allowed. To witness the effort and depth of the thinking that these kids put into this is so

See COACHES, page 8

'We all have a voice' on AI, says head of U.S. bishops' new task force

(OSV News)—Moments after the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) announced the creation of its task force on artificial intelligence, OSV



Bishop Oscar Cantú

News spoke with the AI group's chair, Bishop Oscar Cantú of San Jose, Calif.

During a phone call with OSV News, Bishop Cantú discussed the vision for the task force—especially in light of Pope Leo XIV's encyclical on AI, "Magnifica Humanitas: On Safeguarding the Human Person in the Time of Artificial Intelligence"—as well as his concerns regarding the rapid development of AI and its impact upon humanity.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

OSV News: What is the vision for this task force?

Bishop Cantú: "Basically, to carry out the vision of Pope Leo in his encyclical. He has given us—not just the Church, but particularly the Church—marching orders to convoke, listen, teach and remind people that technology is something good when it's able to assist humanity in the work that we do, in living a human life, in supporting our dignity as individuals and as families, and in helping us to build healthy societies.

See related story, page 7.

"There are lots of conversations we need to have, certainly with the technology people, but also with the general public to let them know that our parishioners, people in various industries, moms and dads at home, school children and teachers alike, have a voice because this technology affects everyone. And if it doesn't now, it will very, very soon,

"So we all have a voice to bring to

See AI, page 16

Sisters of Providence from Indy called to lead the congregation

By Sean Gallagher

Two women born and raised in Indianapolis a generation apart recently began working together to lead the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, a community of women religious who have served the Church and the broader society in the archdiocese and beyond since 1840.

Providence Sister Jeanne Hagelskamp and Providence Sister Tracey Horan took up the respective offices of general superior and one of three general officers of the congregation based in western Indiana on Sept. 5 after being elected at the order's

41st General Chapter in early July.

Sister Jeanne, who grew up in St. Andrew the Apostle Parish along East 38th Street in Indianapolis, entered the Sisters of Providence in 1975. Sister Tracey, who grew up in St. Jude Parish on

See SISTERS, page 9

Providence Sister Jeanne Hagelskamp, left, and Providence Sister Tracey Horan pose on Sept. 18 in front of a portrait of Mother Theodore Guérin, the foundress of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in St. Mary-of-the-Woods, at the congregation's motherhouse. Both natives of Indianapolis, they were installed as new members of the community's leadership team. (Photo courtesy of the Sisters of Providence)



An unlikely song recalls a bond with a dad and the start of a relationship with Christ

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

One in an occasional series

By John Shaughnessy

It’s not the kind of song that is usually associated with a deep bond between a teenager and his father.



Charles Ringle

Nor is it a song that’s usually connected to the start of someone’s personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Yet, Charles Ringle considers a popular song from the 1960s as the common thread to those two

important relationships for him.

The upbeat song is also tied to a heartbreaking time in Ringle’s life.

“When I was 15, my world changed forever with the passing of my dad, who was 57,” recalls Ringle, a member of St. John Paul II Parish in Sellersburg. “I found myself sitting in the back seat of my uncle’s car as he drove us about 20 minutes from Lanesville to the funeral home in Corydon for the visitation—a place where the heavy grief of pre-burial routines felt overwhelming for a young teenager.”

Lost in his grief, the teenaged Ringle thought of his life with his dad, including one of the reminders his father often gave him.

“Growing up in Lanesville, life revolved around a simple geography: the east end where we lived, the far west end, and the center of town that my family simply called ‘downtown,’” Ringle notes. “For us kids, downtown was the heart of the community. It had a couple of pinball machines and sodas, making it the main place to gather.

“My dad always cautioned me against playing pinball machines. Having grown up in an era when pinball was tied to gambling, he worried about the habit, even though our local machines only paid off in free games. As a teenager, I

was fascinated by the vibrant, flashing lights and the fast bounces of the game. Whenever friends were heading that way, I’d ask, ‘Dad, can I go downtown?’ He usually said yes, always adding his gentle reminder: ‘Just don’t play the pinball machines.’ ”

As those memories filled Ringle’s mind during the drive to the funeral home, the radio in his uncle’s car played the 1964 hit song “Downtown” by Petula Clark. The teenaged Ringle focused on two lyrics:

*“The lights are much brighter there
“You can forget all your troubles,
forget all your cares ...”*

“Those words became the biggest marker in my mind during that drive,” Ringle recalls. “Hearing about bright, flashing lights and forgetting your troubles struck a deep chord in my 15-year-old heart. In my grief and youth, I pondered the lyrics and wondered if losing my dad was somehow a punishment for chasing those flashing lights he had warned me about.

“Looking back now, I know that isn’t how God works. God does not use loss to punish a child’s innocent curiosity. Instead, I realize now that he was using that moment to speak to me in a language I could understand in the middle of immense heartbreak.”

For Ringle, it was all a part of saying goodbye to the father he loved.

Across the years, he also remembers it as “the beginning of a long walk toward a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.”

“‘What once felt like fear turned into an understanding of God’s presence, showing me that even in our darkest moments, he meets us right where we are and guides us toward his grace.

“Though much has happened in the years between then and now, reflecting on this memory has made me truly aware of how God used that moment to start me on my path of faith.”

(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. Please 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.) †

Pope Leo’s prayer intentions for October



- For mental health ministry**—Let us pray that the mental health ministry be established throughout the Church, helping to overcome the stigma and discrimination of persons with mental illnesses. †

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



Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

September 25—October 4, 2026

September 25 – 3 p.m.
Communion Service, Clay County Correction Facility, Brazil, Ind.

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
Lunch and Mass for the 175th Anniversary of the Founding of the Sisters of St. Francis at the order’s motherhouse, Oldenburg

September 28 – 2 p.m.
Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis and Subcommittee on Catechism Chair virtual meeting

September 29 – 10 a.m.
Priest Continuing Education Day at St. Mark the Evangelist Parish, Indianapolis

September 29 – 6 p.m.
United Catholic Appeal Advance Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, followed by dinner at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center, both in Indianapolis

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

September 30 – 6:30 p.m.
White Mass for Health Care Workers and Reception at St. John the Evangelist Church, Indianapolis

October 1 – 10 a.m.
Leadership Team meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center

October 1 – 6 p.m.
United Catholic Appeal Advance Mass and Dinner at St. Mary-of-the-Knobs Parish, Floyds Knobs

October 2 – 3 p.m. CST
Virtual Bishops Advisory Committee meeting with Catholic Prison Ministry Coalition

October 3 – 10:30 a.m.
Mass with Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary at Our Lady of the Greenwood Church, Greenwood

October 4 – 10 a.m.
100th Anniversary Mass for the Founding of the OFM Conventual Franciscan Province at Terre Haute Convention Center, Terre Haute



ARCHINDY VOX PODCAST

The Church in Our Time: The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy

Criterion staff report

Ever wonder why the Mass unfolds the way it does—the postures, the silence, the words repeated every week?

In this episode of ArchIndy Vox’s series on the Second Vatican Council, host Ken Ogorek, executive director of the archdiocesan Secretariat for Evangelizing Catechesis, talks with liturgist Tammy Becht and Father Patrick Beidelman, former executive director of the archdiocesan Secretariat for Worship and Evangelization, about “*Sacrosanctum Concilium*,” which is the Latin title of the council’s 1963 “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.”

They unpack a phrase many Catholics may have heard but few have stopped to define—“full, conscious and active participation”—and what it asks of people in the pew.

They also explore how the document explains Christ’s presence throughout the liturgy, in the priest, in the Eucharist, in Scripture and in the assembly’s prayer and song; why the liturgy has real rules rather than “whatever feels good”; and how the 60-year-old text still shapes ongoing changes in the Church, from new translations to the Order of Christian Initiation for Adults process.

It’s a good entry point for anyone curious about what the Vatican II document states and why it still matters in every liturgy.

Listen on any major podcast platform or watch on the Archdiocese of Indianapolis’ YouTube channel by searching @IndianaCatholic or by scanning the QR code with your smartphone camera. †



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NEWS FROM YOU!

Do you have something exciting or newsworthy you want to be considered to be printed in The Criterion?
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Marian University in Indianapolis announces presidential transition

Special to *The Criterion*

Marian University in Indianapolis recently announced that Daniel Elsener will step down as its president in 2027 after leading more than 25 years of “extraordinary growth” at the city’s only Catholic college.

While Elsener will transition into a role as president emeritus, Marian’s board of trustees chose Kenith Britt, chief operating officer and chancellor of the university, to become its next president.

Marian officials noted that Elsener will continue to serve as the school’s president through the 2026-27 school year, a time when Britt will work alongside Elsener and other university leaders before assuming the position of president on July 1, 2027.

“This is a moment of tremendous gratitude, but it is also a moment of tremendous optimism about where Marian University is headed,” said Toby McClamroch, chairman of Marian’s board of trustees, in a press release from the university.

“Twenty-five years ago, Marian was fighting for its future. Today, Marian

is building the future. Dan Elsener’s extraordinary leadership helped make that transformation possible, and the board has tremendous confidence that Ken Britt is the right leader to carry that momentum forward.”

The press release noted, “When Elsener became president in 2001, Marian was still Marian College, enrolling approximately 1,100 undergraduate students and facing significant financial and enrollment challenges. Today, Marian is a national doctoral research university serving approximately 5,000 students throughout the academic year.

“During Elsener’s tenure, Marian College became Marian University; launched a national championship-winning football program; opened what is now the Tom and Julie Wood College of Osteopathic Medicine, Indiana’s first new medical school in more than a century; established the Fred S. Klipsch Educators College and E. S. Witchger School of Engineering; expanded its Indianapolis campus and its footprint through the Marian University Plymouth, Ind., location and the nursing site in Nashville, Tenn.”



‘I have had the privilege of helping build Marian alongside Dan and some remarkable people for the past 13 years. I know where we have been. I know what makes this place special. And I could not be more excited about where we are going.’

—Kenith Britt, chief operating officer and chancellor of Marian University, who will become its president on July 1, 2027

Reflecting on that transition through the years, Elsener viewed the university’s growth with a sense of gratitude and pride for him and his wife, Beth.

“When Beth and I look back over these past 25 years, what we feel more than anything is gratitude,” he said. “God has blessed this university beyond anything we could have imagined. But I also believe with all my heart that Marian’s best days and greatest impact lie ahead.”

Elsener emphasized that the transition is not a retirement. Following the 2026-27 academic year and President’s Dinner, he plans to take a sabbatical before becoming the university’s president emeritus.

“I’m not retiring from Marian’s mission,” Elsener said. “My role is changing. I have complete faith in Ken’s leadership and that his service as president will take Marian University to heights beyond our imagination.”

Britt, who earned a doctorate in educational leadership at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., joined Marian in 2013 and has served in multiple senior leadership

roles.

“I am deeply humbled by the confidence the board has placed in me, and I am extraordinarily grateful to Dan for his leadership, friendship and example,” Britt said. “I have had the privilege of helping build Marian alongside Dan and some remarkable people for the past 13 years. I know where we have been. I know what makes this place special. And I could not be more excited about where we are going.”

Britt also noted that Marian’s future under his leadership will continue to reflect and embrace the university’s Catholic values and its founding by the Oldenburg Franciscan sisters.

“Our Catholic identity will remain at the center of who we are, and our Franciscan values will continue to guide us,” Britt said. “We will honor everything that has been built while continuing to dream boldly about what a great Catholic university can accomplish over the next 25 years.”

(For more information about Marian University in Indianapolis, visit marian.edu.) †



‘When Beth and I look back over these past 25 years, what we feel more than anything is gratitude. God has blessed this university beyond anything we could have imagined. But I also believe with all my heart that Marian’s best days and greatest impact lie ahead.’

—Daniel Elsener, president of Marian University in Indianapolis, who will transition into the position of president emeritus next July



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 **TO APPLY:** Please send a letter of interest and resume to Dr. Christopher Walsh, Interim President, Seccina Memorial High School, cwalsh@seccina.org



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



A World Mission Rosary, designed by Venerable Fulton J. Sheen, is identified by the color-coded decades that represent the five mission territories of Africa, Oceania, Europe, the Americas and Asia. (OSV News/Margaret Murray)

October nears, a time to focus on praying the rosary and standing up for life

We are about to begin October, when the Catholic Church in the U.S. marks Respect Life Month. October is also traditionally a month during which the faithful around the world are encouraged to pray the rosary, meditating on the lives of Jesus and his Blessed Mother.

For those unfamiliar with the history of the rosary, Pope Leo XIII in the late 19th century promoted the Marian prayer dating to the Middle Ages by issuing several encyclicals on the devotion, earning him the title “The Rosary Pope.”

In “*Supremi apostolatus officio*” (“On Devotion of the Rosary”), his first encyclical on the devotion published in 1883, Pope Leo encouraged the practice of praying the rosary. He called it “an effective spiritual weapon against the evils afflicting society,” and noted, “It has always been the habit of Catholics in danger and in troublesome times to fly for refuge to Mary, and to seek for peace in her maternal goodness; showing that the Catholic Church has always, and with justice, put all her hope and trust in the Mother of God” (#1, 2).

In his 1884 encyclical “*Superiore Anno*,” Pope Leo officially dedicated the entire month of October to the Queen of the Rosary, urging the faithful to pray it daily to counter societal troubles and spiritual indifference.

Through the centuries, shepherds of the universal Church have encouraged devotion to the rosary.

During a general audience on Oct. 1, 2025, Pope Leo XIV said, “As we begin October, the month dedicated to the Holy Rosary, I invite you to pray the rosary every day for peace in the world.” He had previously noted, “The rosary is one of the most powerful devotions entrusted to us by Our Lady, and in these turbulent times, it remains a sure path to peace, conversion, and deeper love of Christ.”

Our Blessed Mother, in her appearance to the children at Fatima, urged the daily recitation of the rosary for world peace.

As we begin Respect Life Month next week, we encourage Catholics to pray the rosary each day for the protection of all life from conception to natural death. Whether it is as a family, with friends or on our own, offering this devotion to our Blessed Mother offers a great witness of faith.

There are other opportunities in the coming weeks to stand up for life.

The archdiocese’s annual Respect Life Mass will be celebrated at 10 a.m. on Sunday, Oct. 4, at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, 1347. N. Meridian St., in

Indianapolis. All are invited.

Parishioners throughout central and southern Indiana are also invited to participate in the annual Life Chain, which will take place at various locations around the archdiocese on Oct. 4, including from 2:30-3:30 p.m. on N. Meridian Street between 12th and 16th streets in downtown Indianapolis. Check with your parish or see the Sept. 11 issue of *The Criterion* for other Life Chain locations.

Finally, the fall 40 Days for Life campaign began on Sept. 23 and runs through Nov. 1. A campaign of prayer, fasting and peaceful activism, 40 Days for Life is held in the spring and fall with the purpose of turning hearts and minds from a culture of death to a culture of life and bringing an end to abortion. Why not take part?

Two locations in the archdiocese are participating: Indianapolis and North Vernon. Following is information on the campaigns.

North Vernon: The campaign will take place at North Vernon City Park, 604 N. Street. To sign up for one or more hours, go to 40daysforlife.com/en/northvernon.

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

Indianapolis: The campaign will take place in front of the Planned Parenthood facility at 8590 Georgetown Road. Parking is available along Georgetown Road; do not park in the Women’s Care Center parking lot or at the industrial complex across from the Planned Parenthood facility. To sign up for one or more hours during the Indianapolis campaign, go to 40daysforlife.com/en/indianapolis.

The Knights of Columbus will again hold an overnight prayer vigil at this location from 6 p.m. on Oct. 2 through 6 a.m. on Oct. 3. All are invited to join for any amount of time.

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

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

Respect Life Month offers a reminder that God created all things and all humankind. Let us pray, through the intercession of our Blessed Mother, that our petitions during October and beyond help convert hardened and uninformed hearts in building a culture of life.

—Mike Krokos

Be Our Guest/Laura Kelly Fanucci

On parenting in impossible times

Today, I had planned to write about artificial intelligence and family life. I have a gripping story to start. I have



citations from Pope Leo’s encyclical “*Magnifica Humanitas*: On Safeguarding the Human Person in the Time of Artificial Intelligence.” I have perspectives from Scripture, prayerful

reflections and practical ways to engage the questions I’ll raise.

Suddenly a text flashes on my phone: “Please check your e-mail for an urgent update regarding the threat at school.”

Heart in my throat, I drop the phone and pull up my e-mail, pulse thrumming in my ears. Quick as a flash, I scan the words. Credible threat. Evacuating students. Police investigating. Continue to monitor.

I sit back, flooded with—what exactly? Relief that it’s the neighboring high school, not my child’s middle school? Fear that it will become more than a threat and someone will be hurt, or worse? Anxiety that the next target could be one of my kids’ schools? Numbness that such events are now commonplace in the country where we live?

All of it. All my words run dry. I stare out the window and pray.

God, save us from ourselves. God, keep all your children safe.

Artificial intelligence matters, sure; I’ll write about it soon. But today is not a day for anything artificial. Whenever your community is threatened—and sadly, we all know this experience—the scales fall from your eyes.

Suddenly only life’s basics matter. Safety. Peace. Protection. Health. The ones you love.

Every time I watch the heartbreaking footage of parents and children reuniting after a school shooting, no one is talking about homework or grades or practice that night. Everyone is running for the relief of each other’s arms.

How desperately I want safety and security for all families.

How deeply I believe that God desires it for us, too.

Some days, I cannot believe the majesty we make on God’s green earth: spaceships to explore the cosmos, medicines to save lives, skyscrapers that stretch to the heavens, lightning-fast technologies that our ancestors could

never have dared to dream, let alone carry in their pockets. Other days, I am filled with despair at the horrors we have perpetuated and manufactured here below.

My children know so many more dangers and threats than I did in my youth.

The Book of Ecclesiastes reminds us: “Nothing is new under the sun” (Eccl 1:9). From the beginning, humanity has dealt with violence, death and despair. We cannot fool ourselves that today’s generations are unique in what we face.

Yet the dizzying rate of change, the scope of existential threats and a growing sense of helplessness loom large. We were not made to live this way.

“You are receiving this e-mail because you are opted in to receive messages from your school,” reads the last line of the e-mail on my screen.

All of us have opted into this life by embracing the path of faith in a difficult world. I want to choose hope, compassion, goodness, justice, healing, peacemaking and love: all that Jesus came here to bring. This is the ultimate question asked by the trying times in which we find ourselves: How, then, shall we live?

The prophet Ezekiel responds, “Answer them: As I live—oracle of the Lord God—I swear I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways” (Ez 33:11). We will go on as we have always tried to go, turning toward hope, faith, truth and love.

If I cannot build the world I want for my children, I will do this for my grandchildren. I will do it for yours, too. For strangers across the globe. For generations yet to come. For every new human life born into this marvelous, mysterious world we were given to tend.

Tomorrow will dawn a new day. Threats (and thrills) we cannot yet imagine will await us. But we will never go alone, and we can always turn back toward the Prince of Peace, the Good Shepherd who has already gone off in search of us.

In impossible times, we build our hope on God alone, for whom nothing is impossible.

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

Letter to the Editor

‘Great job’ for article giving exposure to a special ministry, reader says

What a great article by reporter Natalie Hoefer about Loads of JOY in the Sept. 11 issue of *The Criterion*.

I found it very interesting and enlightening on such a special and unusual and creative way to be of service to God’s people.

The article also prompts me, a reader,

to think of different ways that one can serve in ministry.

Great job giving this special ministry public exposure.

Thomas Stader
Plainfield

Letters Policy

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

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

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

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

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

Send letters to “Letters to the Editor,” *The Criterion*, 1400 N. Meridian Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367. Readers with access to e-mail may send letters to criterion@archindy.org. †

ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO CHARLES C. THOMPSON



Christ the Cornerstone

Christ calls us, in our weakness, to lead others to him

Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you, says the Lord. (Mt 28:19-20)

The Italian artist Caravaggio is responsible for a famous painting, “The Calling of Saint Matthew” (1599-1601), that hangs in the Contarelli Chapel of the Church of San Luigi dei Francesi in Rome. This Baroque masterpiece portrays Jesus summoning Levi the tax collector (St. Matthew) to follow him, using dramatic light and shadow to bridge the divine and the everyday.

Jesus points his finger at the man who will become one of his greatest evangelists, but Levi/Matthew appears to wonder whether Jesus hasn’t confused him with someone else. “Who me?” his expression seems to say. And the Gospel tells us that the other people who were present shared the tax collector’s doubt. They asked the disciples: “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” (Mt 9:11) Jesus, overhearing them, responds: “Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do. Go and learn the meaning of the words, I

desire mercy, not sacrifice. I did not come to call the righteous but sinners” (Mt 9:12-13).

Jesus calls sinners like St. Matthew, whose feast day we celebrated on September 21. In fact, no one called by Jesus (except his Mother Mary) is free from sin or without the need for a divine physician.

Looking back over the past 2,000 years of Christian history, we can see beyond any doubt that the followers of Jesus—including the greatest saints and martyrs—were women and men in need of God’s merciful forgiveness and his saving grace.

“Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do” (Mt 9:12), Jesus says. He is talking about us, the people he has chosen to be his witnesses and to carry his Gospel message to the ends of the Earth.

Just two days ago, our Church honored the memory of St. Pius of Pietrelcina (Padre Pio). Born Francesco Forgione in Italy in 1887, he had a difficult childhood with much pain and suffering due to illnesses that appeared to be both physical and spiritual. At the age of 15, despite his numerous health problems, he joined the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin and took the

religious name “Pius” (Pio in Italian). Seven years later, in August 1910, although still in precarious health, he was ordained a priest and celebrated his first Mass.

The call of Padre Pio illustrates in a dramatic way the Lord’s statement that he calls the sick—those who need his physical and spiritual healing. Padre Pio suffered his whole life—even sharing in the wounds of Christ (the stigmata)—but he used his spiritual and physical disabilities as instruments of forgiveness and healing for others. At the time of his death in 1968, he was revered throughout Italy and beyond for his holiness and his ability to inspire others with God’s mercy and his healing grace.

The call to holiness is not restricted to those who are well—physically, morally or spiritually. It is extended to everyone. As Jesus says, he did not come to call the righteous but sinners. That means, of course, that he is inviting us here and now to respond to his call as Matthew did by letting go of our sinful preoccupations in order to follow Jesus. It also means that like Padre Pio, we are challenged to offer up our infirmities and weaknesses in order to allow the power of God’s

grace to transform us from people who are self-absorbed to followers of Christ who give ourselves in service to others.

Tomorrow, Saturday, September 26, the Church invites us to remember Saints Cosmas and Damian, brothers born in Arabia in the third century, who were also physicians. They are honored both because of their healing ministry—offered free of charge to anyone who needed medical care—and their witness to their Christian faith as martyrs who suffered brutal torture and death because of their love for Jesus Christ.

Four different saints (Matthew, Cosmas and Damian, and Pius of Pietrelcina) representing diverse cultures, backgrounds and eras of Church history, remind us that the call to holiness is universal. It is given to all of us with the invitation to use all the gifts God has given us, and even in the most challenging circumstances of our lives to follow Jesus Christ and to proclaim with our lives that God’s love can heal us from all our troubles.

Let’s ask Mary, Health of the Sick, and all the saints, to intercede for us with her Son, the Divine Physician, as we respond to his universal call to holiness. †



Cristo, la piedra angular

En nuestra debilidad, Cristo nos llama a guiar a otros hacia Él

Id, pues, y haced discípulos a todas las gentes, bautizándolas en el nombre del Padre y del Hijo y del Espíritu Santo, y enseñándoles a guardar todo lo que yo os he mandado. (Mt 28:19-20).

El artista italiano Caravaggio es el autor de un famoso cuadro, “La vocación de San Mateo” (1599-1601), que se encuentra en la Capilla Contarelli de la iglesia de San Luigi dei Francesi, en Roma. Esta obra maestra del Barroco retrata a Jesús llamando a Leví, el recaudador de impuestos (san Mateo), para que lo siga, utilizando una dramática combinación de luces y sombras para tender un puente entre lo divino y lo cotidiano.

Jesús señala con el dedo al hombre que se convertirá en uno de sus más grandes evangelistas, pero Leví/Mateo parece preguntarse si Jesús no lo habrá confundido con otra persona. “¿Quién, yo?” parece decir su expresión. Evangelio nos cuenta que el resto de los allí presentes compartían la duda del recaudador de impuestos y preguntaron a los discípulos: “¿Por qué come vuestro maestro con los publicanos y pecadores?” (Mt 9:11). Jesús, al oír lo que decían, respondió: “No necesitan médico los que están fuertes, sino los que están mal. Id, pues, a aprender

qué significa Misericordia quiero, que no sacrificio. Porque no he venido a llamar a justos, sino a pecadores” (Mt 9:12-13).

Jesús llama a pecadores como san Mateo, cuya fiesta celebramos el 21 de septiembre. De hecho, nadie a quien Jesús haya llamado (excepto su Madre María) está libre de pecado ni exento de la necesidad de un médico divino.

Al repasar los últimos 2,000 años de historia cristiana, podemos ver sin lugar a dudas que los seguidores de Jesús—incluidos los santos y mártires más famosos—eran mujeres y hombres que necesitaban el perdón misericordioso de Dios y su gracia salvadora.

“No necesitan médico los que están fuertes, sino los que están mal” (Mt 9:12), dice Jesús. Se refiere a nosotros, las personas a quienes ha elegido para ser sus testigos y llevar su mensaje de evangelización hasta los confines de la Tierra.

Hace apenas dos días, nuestra Iglesia honró la memoria de san Pío de Pietrelcina (Padre Pío). Nacido en Italia en 1887 con el nombre de Francesco Forgione, tuvo una infancia difícil, marcada por mucho dolor y sufrimiento debido a enfermedades que parecían ser tanto físicas como espirituales. A los 15 años, a pesar de sus numerosos problemas de salud, ingresó en la Orden

de los Frailes Menores Capuchinos y adoptó el nombre religioso “Pío.” Siete años más tarde, en agosto de 1910, aunque su salud seguía siendo precaria, fue ordenado sacerdote y celebró su primera misa.

La vocación del Padre Pío ilustra de manera impresionante la afirmación del Señor de que Él llama a los enfermos, a quienes necesitan su sanación física y espiritual. El Padre Pío sufrió toda su vida—llegando incluso a compartir las heridas de Cristo (los estigmas)—pero utilizó sus discapacidades espirituales y físicas como instrumentos de perdón y sanación para los demás. Al momento de su muerte, en 1968, era venerado en toda Italia y más allá por su santidad y su capacidad para inspirar a otros con la misericordia de Dios y su gracia sanadora.

El llamado a la santidad no se limita a quienes gozan de buena salud—física, moral o espiritual—sino que se extiende a todos. Como dice Jesús, él no vino a llamar a los justos, sino a los pecadores. Eso significa, por supuesto, que nos está invitando aquí y ahora a responder a su llamado, tal como lo hizo Mateo, y a despojarnos de nuestras preocupaciones pecaminosas para seguir a Jesús. También significa que, al igual que el Padre Pío, se nos

desafía a ofrecer nuestras dolencias y debilidades para permitir que el poder de la gracia de Dios nos transforme de personas ensimismadas en seguidores de Cristo que nos entregamos al servicio de los demás.

Mañana, sábado 26 de septiembre, la Iglesia nos invita a recordar a los santos Cosme y Damián, hermanos nacidos en Arabia en el siglo III, quienes también fueron médicos. Se les honra tanto por su ministerio de sanación—que ofrecían gratuitamente a cualquiera que necesitara atención médica—como por su testimonio de fe cristiana como mártires que sufrieron brutales torturas y la muerte a causa de su amor por Jesucristo.

Cuatro santos distintos (Mateo, Cosme y Damián, y Pío de Pietrelcina), que representan diversas culturas, orígenes y épocas de la historia de la Iglesia, nos recuerdan que el llamado a la santidad es universal. Se nos concede a todos con la invitación a utilizar todos los dones que Dios nos ha dado y, aun en las circunstancias más difíciles, a seguir a Jesucristo y a proclamar con nuestras vidas que el amor de Dios puede sanarnos de todas nuestras aflicciones.

Pidámosle a María, Salud de los Enfermos, y a todos los santos, que intercedan por nosotros ante su Hijo, el Médico Divino, mientras respondemos a su llamado universal a la santidad. †

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 30

Holy Trinity Park, 702 E. Market St., New Albany. **Mass Celebrating St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities Leadership Transition**, 5:15 p.m., arrive by 5 p.m. or earlier, bring lawn chair, unveiling of new Timothy Schmalz sculpture “Homeless Jesus” follows Mass. Information: 812-949-7305, info@stcharities.org.

St. John the Evangelist Parish, 126 W. Georgia St., Indianapolis. **White Coat Mass**, 6:30 p.m. Mass honoring health care 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.

Church of the Immaculate Conception, 1 Providence Pl., Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Mass for the Feast Day of Saint Mother Theodore Guérin**, 11 a.m.-noon., livestream available for viewing, free. Information: sistersofprovidence.org, 812-535-2952, pvctr@spsmw.org.

Downtown Square, 109 E. Beaver St., Corydon. **Rosary on the Square**, noon, join in prayer for peace in the world, our nation, and in our homes, bring a chair, free. Information: 812-738-2742, parish.office@catholic-community.org.

October 4

St. John Paul II Parish, 2605 West St. Joe Road, Sellersburg. **Fall Festival**, 11 a.m.-3p.m., chicken dinners, wheel games, raffles, kids’ area, free admission. Information: 812-246-2512.

SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, 1347 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. **Annual Respect Life Mass**, 10 a.m., respect life award presented at end of Mass, all are invited. Information: 317-236-1543, bvarick@archindy.org.

Holy Family Parish, 3027 Pearl St., Oldenburg. **Annual Festival**, 11 a.m.-3 p.m., fried chicken and roast beef dinners, turtle soup, silent auction craft booth; raffles for cash, quilts, baskets and more; free admission. Information: 812-934-3013, cheryl@holyfamilyoldenburg.org. †

‘In Their Shoes: A Poverty Simulation for the World Day of the Poor’ will be held at St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis on Nov. 7

“In Their Shoes: A Poverty Simulation for the World Day of the Poor” will be held at St. Barnabas Parish, 8300 Rahke Road, in Indianapolis, from 1-4 p.m. on Nov. 7. Led by a facilitator trained through the Missouri Association for Community Action, the event simulates the day-to-day realities of life with a shortage of money and an abundance of stress to promote a greater understanding of poverty. During the simulation, participants will role-play the lives of low-income families, from single parents trying to care for their children to senior citizens trying to maintain their self-sufficiency on Social Security. The task of each family is to provide food, shelter and other basic necessities during the simulation while interacting with

various community resources staffed by low-income volunteers. There will be an optional service opportunity at the parish following the simulation, and participants are invited to worship at the parish’s 5 p.m. Mass. The event is sponsored by the archdiocese’s Catholic Charities-Social Concerns and the Indianapolis Society of St. Vincent de Paul. It honors the Church’s World Day of the Poor, which takes place this year on Nov. 15. Participants must be 18 or older. The registration deadline is Oct. 24. To register, go to tinyurl.com/2026InTheirShoes. For more information or to register offline, contact Laura Sheehan at 317-542-2492 or lsheehan@archindy.org. †

Right to Life of Indianapolis annual Celebrate Life Dinner is set for Oct. 13

The Right to Life of Indianapolis Celebrate Life Dinner will take place at the Marriott Ballroom, 350 W. Maryland St., in Indianapolis, from 6-9:30 p.m. on Oct. 13. Check-in will start at 6 p.m., the dinner and awards ceremony will begin at 6:45 p.m. and the keynote address will commence at 8 p.m. The evening will serve as a tribute to Marc Tuttle, the former Right to Life of Indianapolis president for 18 years who died unexpectedly on June 2. The keynote address will be offered by Deacon Paul Lunsford, who serves at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish in Carmel, Ind. (Diocese of Lafayette), where the Tuttle family are members. The annual dinner supports Right to Life of Indianapolis in its

mission to help expectant mothers in Indianapolis and its surrounding counties choose life for their unborn children. It does so through education, events, advocacy and connecting expectant mothers with the resources they need to love themselves and their unborn children. The organization seeks to renew efforts to grow the pro-life movement among youths and young adults, reinvigorate the gospel of life in its region’s churches, and push back against the culture of death. The cost is \$125 per person or \$1,250 for a table of 10. To register, sponsor a table or for more information, go to tinyurl.com/RTLIDinner2026, call 317-582-1526 or email life@rtlindy.org. †

Online retreat for adult children of divorce will take place on Wednesdays from Oct. 7 through Nov. 18

Life-Giving Wounds will offer an online retreat via Zoom for adult children of divorce or separation from 8:15-10 p.m. on Wednesdays from Oct. 7 through Nov. 18. Life-Giving Wounds, which has a chapter in the archdiocese, offers unique opportunities for Catholics age 18 and older whose parents have divorced, separated or left broken families, to reflect intentionally on the wounds caused by their family’s breakdown. The online healing retreat provides such adults time to deeply reflect on the wounds caused by their family’s breakdown and to find healing alongside other peers who truly understand this pain. Those within the archdiocese will be grouped together during online breakout sessions. The retreat is led by knowledgeable, compassionate leaders who are also predominantly from families

of divorced or separated parents. The goal is to lead participants to an encounter with Christ who can transform their life-draining wounds into life-giving sources of faith, hope, love and joy. The cost is \$155 for ages 18-25 and \$245 for ages 26 and older. The cost includes a retreat guide, a journal and access to Life-Giving Wounds’ private online community for ongoing connection and formation during and after the retreat. To register or for more information, including topics, speakers and schedule, call Gabriela Ross, director of the archdiocesan Office of Marriage and Family Life, at 317-592-4007 or e-mail gross@archindy.org. To learn more about the national mission of Life-Giving Wounds and the resources it offers, go to lifegivingwounds.org. †

Wedding Anniversaries

HUGH AND DONNA (TUBEROSA) McLEISH, members of Sacred Heart Parish in Clinton, celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary on Aug. 26. The couple was married in Sacred Heart Church in Clinton on Aug 26, 1961. They have five children: Peg McLeish-Minnis, Brian, Mike and Pat McLeish, and the late Krista Grange. The couple also has 18 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren.



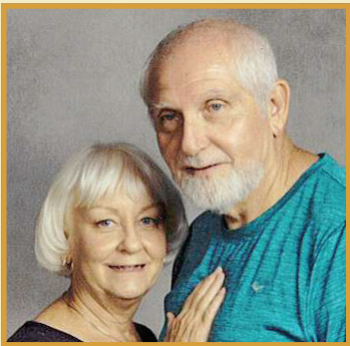
RONALD AND JOANN (CARSON) NEVITT, members of Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish in Greenwood, celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary on Sept. 16. The couple was married in St. Mark the Evangelist Church in Indianapolis on Sept. 16, 1961. They have five children: Christine Crowe, Susan Gallagher, Jeffrey, Joseph and Steven Nevitt. The couple also has 10 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.



DAVID AND ANIDA (HASSE) CONCANNON, members of St. Pius X Parish in Indianapolis, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on Sept. 11. The couple was married in St. Lawrence Church in Indianapolis on Sept. 11, 1966. They have two children: David and Rick Concannon. The couple also has three grandchildren.



JERRY AND SANDRA (O’BRIEN) BEECHLER, members of Holy Spirit Parish in Indianapolis, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on Sept. 25. The couple was married in Holy Spirit Church in Indianapolis on Sept. 25, 1976. They have two children: Mary Koon and Gabriel Beechler. The couple also has one grandchild.



JOHN AND MICHELLE (JONGLEUX) COLLINS, members of St. Pius X Parish in Indianapolis, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on Sept. 11. The couple was married in St. Pius X Church in Indianapolis on Sept. 11, 1976. They have three children: Kelly Diehl, Bart and Brian Collins. The couple also has six 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.

New St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities director has ‘heart’ for people it serves

By Natalie Hoefer

NEW ALBANY—Christopher Haulter’s wife Katie had told her husband for some time he seemed unhappy with the company he’d worked with for more than 12 years. But he stayed out of loyalty.

So, being let go from his upper management job in June gave him “an opportunity to find out what I really wanted to do,” something that, at the end of the day, left him “feeling like I made a difference in people’s lives.”

Father Thomas Clegg had an answer. The pastor of St. John Paul II Parish in Sellersburg, where the Haulters are members, encouraged him to apply for the agency director role at St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities (SECC) in New Albany.

The agency director role matched his desire to make a difference, and Haulter’s skills matched what the agency sought.

In retrospect, the job loss was “all God’s timing,” says Haulter. “God made sure I wasn’t encumbered by employment,” so he felt free to accept the position.

He started as SECC’s new agency director on Aug. 19. Mark Casper, who held that role for more than 18 years and retires on Oct. 2, has worked with Haulter through a time of transition.

“I’ve still got a lot to learn,” Haulter admits.

But he’s driven by the agency’s mission “to affirm the dignity of and respect for all human life”—a mission that resonates with him after seeing his own mother’s struggles raising a family on her own.

‘That, to me, is living your faith’

Haulter was born in Jeffersonville, then moved with his family to New Albany at age 5.

Growing up, he says he “certainly knew of [SECC] but we never used the charity” despite his mother being a single parent.

“Being a child of a single mom who was working two, three jobs at a time to put food on the table and keep the lights on in the house, I certainly understand the struggle faced by some of our young women and children” who seek help from SECC, he says. “That’s why the [agency’s] mission was a big draw for me.”

Having the opportunity to unite his work life and faith life was another pull, says Haulter, who was received into the full communion of the Church in 2009.

“Christ is asking us to help those who need help and are less fortunate or that can’t help themselves in that moment,” he says. “So, we need to be witnesses to that and be living that every day. That, to me, is living your faith, and that was also a big draw for me.”

That view was a big draw for the hiring committee, too. They sought an agency director who was “grounded in faith” and could “see and articulate the way their faith shapes their commitment to the work,” says Melissa Fry, a member of the hiring committee and the president of SECC’s advisory council. Haulter “certainly sees the work that way, as a way to give back and live the faith.”

Fulfilling the Christian call to serve those in need was certainly not part of Haulter’s more than 20 years of corporate and executive-level experience managing people, budgets, departments, programs and strategic plans. But his lack of experience in the social services realm was of no concern, says Fry.

Such experience wasn’t necessary because the agency has “wonderful staff who know their field very well,” she explains.

But SECC’s services are vast. The agency offers four residential programs, an adoption service, school counseling, a community distribution center and a supported living program.

“We also have several buildings, and our campus takes up almost a city block,” Fry adds. “We needed someone who could manage the facilities, finances, fundraising and diverse programs that allow the staff to do their work.”

The person also needed to “have a heart for the work and people we serve,” Fry continues. Haulter “had a strong background in accounting and finance and managing people, and his personal story also resonated. He seemed to have an emotional attachment to the work.”

That work is based on two pillars, says Haulter: relationships and dignity.

‘It all starts with relationship’

“Everything in this job, and in any job I’ve had, it all starts with relationship, whether you’re building it with someone who works for you, someone who’s a peer in the same nonprofit world or the same Catholic charity world, or the person that comes to the shelter door,” he says.

Among the SECC staff, Haulter sees his role as “making sure you have a wonderful team,” he explains. “You support the team and you nurture them. You make sure those teams are fed, as well, so that they can continue to minister to the population that they’re ministering to.”

Haulter says he already has a “wonderful team” to work with. Among the many reasons for SECC’s success is that it has “really good people who are very passionate about what they do,” he says. “They’re doing the rowing, and I’m just making sure the boat’s moving and we’ve got all our oars going in the same direction.”

Managing people might look the same as in the corporate world. But managing budgets will be different, says Haulter, because “the mission of Christ is to help those less fortunate and those in need.

“So, sometimes you’re going to have to make a decision more on that [charitable] side than you are on an economic side because it’s for something that’s needed, and it’s what Jesus would want us to do.”

Such decisions take trust, Haulter admits. “But there’s only one person in the world that can take five loaves and two fish to feed thousands, and I’m not him,” he adds with a smile.

Haulter also sees the agency director position as a “strategic” role.

“We’ve been blessed with such a generous community,” he says. In making sure the agency is “using those riches how the community needs it,” Haulter says he “needs to be strategic and ask, ‘Where is the community heading? Are we still doing the things the community needs? Or is there a new need out there? And if there is a new need, how do we transition and pivot to that and make sure that we’re not duplicating efforts?’ ”

Whatever needs are determined, the final goal is “making sure we’re looking at everyone with dignity, because everybody has dignity,” says Haulter.

“It’s picking the person up who’s down on their luck or is in a hitting slump or whatever, and saying, ‘We value you.’ Every person God has created brings some value to the world.”

That view “aligns ideally with Catholic Charities’ mission of upholding the dignity of every person and serving those in need, which is rooted in Catholic social teaching,” says David Bethuram, executive director of the archdiocesan Secretariat for Catholic Charities. “I am confident that [Haulter’s] leadership will inspire and empower the dedicated staff and volunteers at St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities to continue their mission.”

That mission is part of a “legacy” Haulter hopes to pass on to his daughters.

Resting easy, making a difference

Haulter admits there is more money to be made in the corporate world than in the non-profit one. And with he



Christopher Haulter, the new agency director of St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities in New Albany, poses on Sept. 4 in Holy Trinity Park, a community green space created by the agency next to its administration building. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

and Katie having two daughters in college, one in high school and one in eighth grade at St. John Paul II School in Sellersburg, some might question taking a cut in pay.

Haulter sees the move as “a way to leave a legacy for my daughters. I want to show them that while money is great and we all need money to live on, sometimes that’s not everything in life. You need to be a good steward and follower of Christ.”

He and Katie set that example for their daughters in their own lives as active members of St. John Paul II Parish, where Katie serves as director of worship and liturgy.

Haulter admits that, between his and Katie’s jobs and their youngest daughter’s involvement in travel sports, “There’s not a lot of down time at our house.”

But the couple still finds time occasionally to enjoy what brought them together—acting. In August, they both had roles in a musical at Hayswood Theater in Corydon called “Come Away Home,” which coincidentally was co-directed by SECC’s Supported Living Program director Emily Trinkle.

The Haulters also enjoy watching football and became season ticket holders this year to cheer on the Indiana Hoosiers team.

“Then I took this job and found out [that] between our schedules, I think we can go to half the home games,” Haulter says with a chuckle.

It’s a small sacrifice for having a job he finds fulfilling. “Losing my job in June was God taking care of whatever roadblock I would have” to accepting the agency director position,” says Haulter.

“This [role] was an opportunity for me to find something that I could put my head on the pillow every night and say, ‘We’re making a difference, a tangible difference in people’s lives.’ ”

(For more information on St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities, go to stecharities.org.) †

In AI guardrails push, bishops advocate for Kids Online Safety Act in Congress

WASHINGTON (OSV News)—More than a dozen U.S. bishops met with members of Congress on Sept. 16 to urge lawmakers to enact effective safety guardrails on artificial intelligence and to advocate for the passage of a bill that aims to protect children online.

The meetings came the same day the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) announced a new task force to engage with tech leaders and lawmakers to discuss their concerns about AI, human dignity, and online child safety.

Archbishop Alexander K. Sample of Portland, Ore., chair of the USCCB’s religious liberty committee, told OSV News in an interview that day near the Capitol that, after the USCCB

administrative committee meeting, “We just took the opportunity of being here in Washington, D.C., to visit with some of the senators and the representatives about the pressing issues that are on the minds and the hearts of the bishops.”

After multiple tech leaders called for a slowdown in AI development to establish safety guardrails, debate on Capitol Hill emerged about how to respond. President Donald J. Trump has largely rejected these concerns around AI, taking a bullish position on the advancement of the technology, arguing that failing to do so would leave the U.S. playing catch up with China.

In Congress, some Republicans have spoken affirmatively of Trump’s position, calling on tech leaders to self-regulate their AI efforts, while some Democrats have called for AI regulations.

Earlier this year, Pope Leo XVI called for “adequate regulatory tools capable of upholding justice and curbing the distorting effects of technological power” in his encyclical “*Magnifica Humanitas*,” which

addresses the challenges of AI (#45).

But the bishops’ meetings took place on a busy day at the Capitol, as lawmakers prepared to leave town with no plans to return until after the November elections.

Addressing the emerging differences of opinion among lawmakers about AI technology, Archbishop Sample said, “There’s a sense of urgency to this, because the tech experts themselves told us, this morning, that the next 12-18 months is going to see tremendous advancements.

“We understand there’s a hesitancy—a political hesitancy—to move on any kind of legislation with some guardrails,” he said. “You know, we want both houses of the Congress to work together with the administration to develop some guardrails.”

Acknowledging “the global climate,” he argued that cooperation should also take place among countries as well.

Archbishop Sample also told OSV News that the bishops advocated for Congress to pass the Kids Online Safety

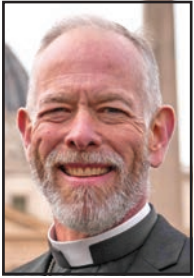
Act (S.1748). The House passed a version of legislation earlier this year, but the Senate’s version includes a “duty of care” provision that was not included in the House bill. The White House has negotiated with senators on that bill.

Placing the burden of duty of care on developers, Archbishop Sample said, would ensure they have the “responsibility to make sure that there’s protections for children.

“Because we know how much harm, certainly, can be done to children on the internet, and so it’s an effort to enact legislation that will keep our young people safe online,” he said.

Archbishop Sample said that the bishops are also concerned about the impact on workers. But more broadly, he added, “We’re speaking to the representatives and senators not as experts, but as pastors.

“We want to make sure that as AI develops and progresses, that there’s always the respect for the dignity of the human person, the protection of life,” he said. †



Archbishop Alexander K. Sample

COACHES

continued from page 1

inspiring.

“Teenage boys, by nature, rarely look past the end of their nose. As a coach, I remind them to be grateful and to appreciate their families. Recently, our senior leader mentioned ‘our families’ in his prayer. We have had daily intentions lasting all season for relatives fighting cancer or high-risk pregnancies. More deaths of aunts or uncles than I care to count.”

That emphasis on prayer leads to a primary goal for Buckley.

“My focus as a coach is to enhance each runner’s personal relationship with Jesus. Runners often train alone, and it provides time for reflection and prayer. ‘He is always with you’ is a saying they hear often.”

‘Being a presence in the lives of young women’

From her time as an athlete growing up, Emma Toney-Rogan knows the impact that a coach can have on someone’s life.



Emma Toney-Rogan

That’s why she strives to be a positive influence in the lives of the teenaged girls she coaches on the volleyball team at Seton Catholic Jr./Sr. High School in Richmond.

“The most important and enjoyable part of coaching for me is being a presence in the lives of young women while they are navigating growing up,” says Toney-Rogan.

“I get to stay connected to my own inner child while helping them reach their individual potential.”

She tries not to take the power of that connection for granted.

“Every time I hear ‘Coach Emma’ called from a prior player, I am reminded of the impact I have. I can remember many coaches I had through the years, and it’s

a genuine honor to think of myself being held in the hearts of my players that same way.”

A burning goal, a life-changing calling

Nearly every high school coach has a competitive streak, and walking off a field, court or course after leading a team to a win is always a burning, primary goal.

That’s true for Daniel McDonald, head coach of the football team at Our Lady of Providence High School in Clarksville. He led the team to Indiana’s Class 1A state championship in 2024.

Still, similar to many high school coaches, McDonald also keeps an important, long-term goal in mind.

“My staff and I coach hard,” he says. “We are intense, and we coach the game to win on Friday nights. But we also understand our calling to use football to build young men.

“When Providence hired me, one of the first things I established was our program’s core values: character first, team before self, and relentless effort. I knew that not only implementing these values would pay off in the football field, but also that ingraining these values in my players would help mold them into faithful Catholics, great citizens, great husbands, great fathers and great employees or employers.”

McDonald believes that everything that happens on a football field becomes a life lesson.



As the head coach of the football team of Our Lady of Providence High School in Clarksville, Daniel McDonald uses the sport to stress the importance of character, faith and family. (Submitted photo)

ceremony that involves my coaching staff, the seniors, their dads and me,” the head coach says. “It is an opportunity for each dad to present his son’s senior jersey to him for his final year as a football player at Providence. In the process of giving his son his jersey, each dad speaks in front of the group for a few minutes about his son.

“Usually, these speeches reflect on the player’s football career, what Providence football has meant to the family, faith formation, funny stories about the player, and how proud the dad is of his son.”

Emotion also marks a ceremony involving the seniors and their moms.

“The Senior Moms’ ceremony is a gathering of the seniors, their moms and me,” McDonald notes. “We all gather in the chapel, and I ask each player to write a letter to his mom in which he shows gratitude to his mom for the sacrifices she has made and the love she has given over the course of his life and football career.”

Both ceremonies reflect the emphasis on family that McDonald strives to create.

“I have always felt it important to build a family culture and give players and their families memories that are not necessarily tied to the actual on-field performance, but contribute to the Providence football experience.”

A bond rooted in trust and vulnerability

As the head coach of the girls’ volleyball team of Cardinal Ritter High School in Indianapolis, Lacey Hunter strives to help her players develop traits that will last a lifetime not just a season.

“The thing I enjoy most about coaching is seeing hard work come to fruition,” Hunter says. “Teaching the importance of hard work, confidence, training and mental toughness with teenage girls is an art. And there is no greater joy than to see them succeed, knowing how hard they worked to get there.

“There is a bond between the girls and myself that comes with their vulnerability and trust in how I lead them. Even if they don’t win, they still are winners as they learn and practice how to conquer the complications of self-reflection, teamwork and competition.

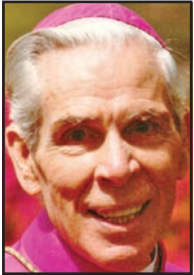
“These are character-building skills that they will carry with them for the rest of their lives.” †



The members of the girls’ volleyball team of Cardinal Ritter High School in Indianapolis are all smiles after winning a tournament at Shortridge High School in Indianapolis on Sept. 19. Head coach Lacey Hunter shares the joy with her players. Front row, Coach Hunter, left, Payton Dill, Mary Buck, Neydelyn Neri-Morales, Nelsyn Neri-Morales, Harpar Finke, Brenda Sandoval and volunteer assistant coach Jo Bogard. Back row, Chima Onyia, Lilly Butler, Owen Finke, Arsema Fitsum, Audrey Eaton, Berkley Finke, Adela Cueto and Kennadi Dillard. (Submitted photo)

Sept. 20 Mass marks anniversary of Archbishop Sheen’s priestly ordination

(OSV News)—Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen “knew Jesus Christ, our Lord” and understood that “the Gospel always sends us outward” to share God’s love with the world, said the homilist at a Mass marking the anniversary of Archbishop Sheen’s priestly ordination before his beatification on Sept. 24. (Look for coverage of the beatification in next week’s issue.)



Ven. Fulton J. Sheen

The Sept. 20 liturgy, at which Bishop Louis Tylka of Peoria presided, was celebrated at that diocese’s Cathedral of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, where Archbishop Sheen’s remains are entombed.

Homilist Father Peter James Alindogan, pastor of St. Veronica Parish in Howell, N.J., admitted to the faithful in attendance that he was “overwhelmed” to stand in the pulpit for the occasion, having been invited by Msgr. Jason A. Gray, cathedral rector

and executive director of the Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen Foundation.

“Preaching about Fulton Sheen is one thing,” said Father Alindogan, a native of the Philippines who along with his parish duties serves as director of the Diocese of Trenton’s Office of Missions. “Preaching near Fulton Sheen is quite another.”

With the late archbishop’s “mortal remains” a mere “20 steps from where I stand right now,” said Father Alindogan, “I can almost hear him saying, ‘Father, get to the point.’ ”

In his homily, Father Alindogan noted that Archbishop Sheen—a pioneer of Catholic media—was a master communicator, and “could stand before a television camera with a blackboard and chalk and explain theology to America without PowerPoint.

“That alone may qualify as a miracle,” said Father Alindogan to laughter.

But, said the priest, “the secret of Fulton Sheen” wasn’t television or microphones, but “the Blessed Sacrament” whom he adored in his “daily Holy Hour.”

“Before [Archbishop] Sheen spoke to millions, he sat silently before our blessed

Lord,” said Father Alindogan. “Before he stood beneath studio lights, he knelt before the sanctuary lamp.”

And, said Father Alindogan, “Perhaps that is why people listened. They sense that he was not merely speaking about Christ. He knew Jesus Christ, our Lord. That may be one of the most important lessons his priesthood leaves us.”

Father Alindogan emphasized that Archbishop Sheen “deeply” understood that “we are one in the mystical body of Christ.”

Pointing to the day’s Gospel, the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Mt 20:1-16a), Father Alindogan said that “[Archbishop] Sheen also understood something else: Prayer cannot end in the chapel.”

Rather, said Father Alindogan, “The Eucharist sends us out.

“The Christ we adore before the tabernacle sends us through the church doors” to “the wounded, to the forgotten, to the lonely, to the poor, to the searching,” he said. “Sometimes across the street, sometimes across an ocean.

“A eucharistic heart must become a missionary heart,” Father Alindogan said.

“That is why the landowner in today’s Gospel keeps going out. And so must the Church.

“We cannot simply wait for people to find us here in our places of worship,” he explained. “We have to go looking for them in the marketplace of life.”

Just as the Gospel parable’s laborers waited in the market square to be sought, said Father Alindogan, so today the Church must reach out to “the young person wondering, ‘What am I supposed to do with my life?’ ” the “man or woman away from the Church for many years,” the “person sitting in the back pew, wondering whether God could possibly forgive what he or she has done years ago.”

Also longing to be invited are “the widow who feels alone,” “the family carrying a burden nobody else sees,” “the illegal immigrant” and “those who hold power in our society and our government,” Father Alindogan said.

“To the person who thinks, ‘God has forgotten me,’ the Lord says, ‘You too. There is a place for you in the vineyard,’ ” Father Alindogan said. “That is mission.” †

SISTERS

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the city’s southside, joined the congregation in 2014. Both are committed to guiding the Sisters of Providence to be as committed now to sharing God’s love and mercy and promoting justice among those on the margins of society as they believe Mother Theodore Guérin did when she and five other sisters arrived in the woods of western Indiana in 1840. “I see our vision as an outgrowth of Mother Theodore’s vision and mission in her time,” said Sister Jeanne who, as general superior, is the 19th successor of Mother Theodore in leading the Sisters of Providence. “It just takes a different shape given the needs of the world and the Church at this time.” Elected alongside Sister Jeanne and Sister Tracey were Providence Sister Lisa Stallings, who serves as second in leadership in the congregation as vicar, and Providence Sister Anne Therese Falkenstein and Providence Sister Norene Wu, who, along with Sister Tracey, serve as general officers.

‘Big shoes to fill’

On July 3, the sisters taking part in the General Chapter processed from the O’Shaughnessy Dining Hall on the campus of the congregation’s motherhouse to its Church of the Immaculate Conception. The procession’s route took the sisters through the shrine of Mother Theodore, who was declared Indiana’s first saint 20 years ago.

As they made their way to the church for the election of their new general superior, the sisters prayed a litany, calling on the intercession of previous leaders in the congregation.

The election was the culmination of a months-long discernment process in which the sisters identified qualities they saw as necessary for their leaders moving forward and nominated various members of the congregation for those offices.

Thus. on the day of the election, Sister Jeanne knew that she was being considered to be called upon to lead the community.

“It was a humbling moment,” she said. “In those moments as people were casting ballots, I think I came the closest I’ve ever been to what St. Ignatius [of Loyola] called holy indifference. If this was God’s will, then I, then I accept it. And if it’s not God’s will, I accept that, too.

“I was calm because I knew that, no matter what happened, God would be walking with me.”

Nonetheless, if Sister Jeanne were elected as general superior, she’d be called to walk in the footsteps of Mother Theodore.

“It’s definitely challenging,” she reflected. “I don’t know that I could ever walk in those shoes. Those are certainly big shoes to fill.”

But, in a way, Sister Jeanne had already walked in those shoes.

Back in 2005, she had a good teaching position at the University of San Francisco, located in one of the most advanced and prosperous cities in the country, just blocks away from the famed Golden Gate Bridge.

Then she received a phone call from Providence Sister Ann Margaret O’Hara, the congregation’s general superior at the time. She asked Sister Jeanne if she would be willing to move across the country back to Indianapolis to start a new high school in an underserved neighborhood to educate students from families that struggled with poverty. It was a mission that many other religious orders had been invited to take on, but had declined.

“I think it might have been the shortest discernment on record, because within five minutes, I was like, ‘Yes, I’m in. I’ll do this,’ ” Sister Jeanne recalled. “It’s where my heart was.”

Although she never wavered in that conviction, Sister Jeanne soon learned that starting Providence Cristo Rey High School was a task that was “against all odds,” words much like Mother Theodore’s description of the prospect of starting a new religious order in primitive conditions on the edge of the American frontier: “All appearances are against it.”

“We were starting with absolutely nothing and trying to create a school,” Sister Jeanne recalled of the work to begin Providence Cristo Rey. “Over and over, I would read Mother Theodore’s letters and journals, seeing her trials and tribulations. I think her dogged perseverance, no matter what, and her dependence on God got me through those days.

“I don’t know that I would have made it had I not had Mother Theodore right there with me.”

‘The best thing that ever happened to me’

Sister Jeanne also had her own formation in the faith to lean on, the formation she received when she grew up in Indianapolis in the 1950s and ‘60s.

“My parents were focused on making sure that others were taken care of,” she recalled. “And there always was a focus on religion and on Catholic values. In October and May in particular, we prayed a family rosary at night, and we were faithful in going to church on weekdays and



The new members of the leadership team of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods stand on Sept. 5 in the sanctuary of the congregation’s church on the grounds of its motherhouse in St. Mary-of-the-Woods after being installed in their leadership positions. The are, from left, Providence Sister Jeanne Hagelskamp, Providence Sister Noreen Wu, Providence Sister Tracey Horan, Providence Sister Anne Therese Falkenstein and Providence Sister Lisa Stallings. (Photo courtesy of the Sisters of Providence)

weekends. “There’s no doubt that this had an influence on me, more than I think I ever realized at the time.”

The members of the Sisters of Providence who staffed the former St. Andrew the Apostle School where she was a student also influenced her to put her “focus on doing things for love of God and on reaching out to others for love of neighbor.”

Sister Jeanne felt so moved by the sisters at St. Andrew that, after graduating from the eighth grade, she entered a high school aspirancy program at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods for teenage girls considering entering the congregation later.

After her first year there, the program came to an end, and she returned to Indianapolis where she became a student at the former Ladywood School for Girls in Indianapolis, which was staffed by the Sisters of Providence.

Looking back on it, Sister Jeanne said that the closure of the aspirancy program was “the best thing that ever happened to me.”

“I lived a normal high school and college life, dating guys and really living a regular life,” she said. “While I was at Ladywood, I still had the opportunity to see the Sisters of Providence in those moments after Vatican II and see what they were like. So, when I finally entered the congregation, I think I knew the Sisters of Providence at their best and I also knew what their warts were, if you will.”

Through her experience of being educated by the Sisters of Providence at Ladywood and then at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, Sister Jeanne became convinced that the congregation would fulfill her “attraction to work with more vulnerable people.”

‘Deep-rootedness in prayer’

It was the desire to dedicate herself to serving people on the margins of society that drew Sister Tracey to the Sisters of Providence.

During her 12 years in the congregation, she has served in Indianapolis to bring together people of various faith traditions to advocate for justice for people in need. In more recent years, Sister Tracey ministered in Nogales, Ariz., and Sonora, Mexico, along the U.S.-Mexico border, giving aid to immigrants and advocating for their just treatment.

On July 7, her fellow sisters asked her to take this experience and apply it to helping to lead the congregation as one of its general officers.

“It was really humbling,” said Sister Tracey. “It felt Spirit-led. I just have a lot of gratitude.”

The ministry she’s done in Indianapolis and along the border were a response to current needs related to justice in the broader society. It’s this focus on the here-and-now that Sister Tracey feels was what led to her being elected to help lead the Sisters of Providence.

“I had this question about whether my desires and hopes for change and for really responding to the signs of the times would align with our broader congregation,” she said. “The more I talked with sisters and shared my hopes and vision, the more I received affirmations. It became clear to me that I’m

not alone in really desiring to move into this time with a new energy and responding to what the world is asking of us now.”

The groundwork for Sister Tracey’s “hopes and vision” were laid in the “deep-rootedness in faith” that she experienced growing up as a member of St. Jude Parish and as a student at Roncalli High School, both in Indianapolis.

“I think about my parents and the model that they set for us,” she said. “Prayer was a part of our life and a cornerstone. Thinking about the ministries that I’ve done and thinking about this moment and this invitation to leadership, I think none of that would have been possible if it wasn’t for that sense of groundedness in prayer.”

Prayer was at the heart of much of her education at Roncalli, which also opened her up to a possible religious vocation after she graduated from there in 2006.

Benedictine Sister Anne Frederick, a member of Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove, was a teacher for Sister Tracey at Roncalli.

“She was really instrumental in my next steps after high school,” Sister Tracey recalled. “I remember telling her that I really felt called to some kind of missionary work.”

Sister Anne got her student in contact with a missionary program in New Mexico, where Sister Tracey ended up spending time with religious sisters who ministered along the border there.

“That really opened my eyes to what religious life can look like in the day-to-day, actually being part of a local community and sharing meals and prayer together,” Sister Tracey said. “That really was a formative experience, and it wouldn’t have happened if it wasn’t for Sister Anne.”

Sister Tracey sees her experience of ministry to immigrants as touching on the heart of the history of the Sisters of Providence, which started with a group of six religious sisters who came to western Indiana from France.

Mother Theodore, she said, “came as an immigrant and didn’t speak the language. We’re in a moment when immigrants in our country are living in fear and are being detained indiscriminately. Many are languishing in detention. So, there is a real connection there between our founding as an immigrant community and what immigrants are facing today.”

Whether it’s Mother Theodore and her five companions braving the challenges of living their vocation in the wilderness of western Indiana in 1840, or their successors living in the 21st century, Sister Tracey is convinced that providence is the key.

“My hope is that we continue to be grounded in trust in providence,” she said. “This is a time of a lot of change for everyone, and a lot of uncertainty.

“The only way we’ll be able to move forward and really respond to what the Church and what the world is asking of us is if we stay grounded in that trust in providence.”

(For more information on the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, go to spsmw.org.) †

All about the babies

Staff members of St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities (SECC) in New Albany pose outside of the agency's administration building with outgoing agency director Mark Casper in the blue baby costume and new agency director Christopher Haulter in the pink costume. As different benchmarks were met toward the goal of raising \$10,000 for the agency during the one-day Give for Good Louisville fundraising campaign on Sept. 10, various staff members donned the inflatable baby suits and walked along the streets around the agency holding promotional signs and waving at cars. When the \$10,000 goal was met, Casper and Haulter suited up and took to the streets together. By the end of the day, \$12,910 was donated to SECC. Give for Good Louisville is a one-day effort of the Community Foundation of Louisville, Ky., to promote online donations for participating non-profit organizations in five Kentucky counties plus Clark, Floyd and Harrison counties in southern Indiana. Caesars Foundation of Floyd County will also match up to 10% of the total donated to SECC during the Give for Good Louisville campaign. Posing in front of Casper at left are Marissa Castaldi, front, Leah Alexander, left, and Cathy Reid. Posing with Haulter are Trica Byrd, fourth from right, Jessica Floyd, Laurie Balmer and Emily Trinkle. (Submitted photo courtesy of St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities)



‘We thank God for the way that he lived,’ archbishop says of Father Flanagan

BOYS TOWN, Neb. (OSV News)—A Mass of Thanksgiving for Venerable Edward J. Flanagan was celebrated on Sept. 13 at Boys Town—and thankfulness abounded.



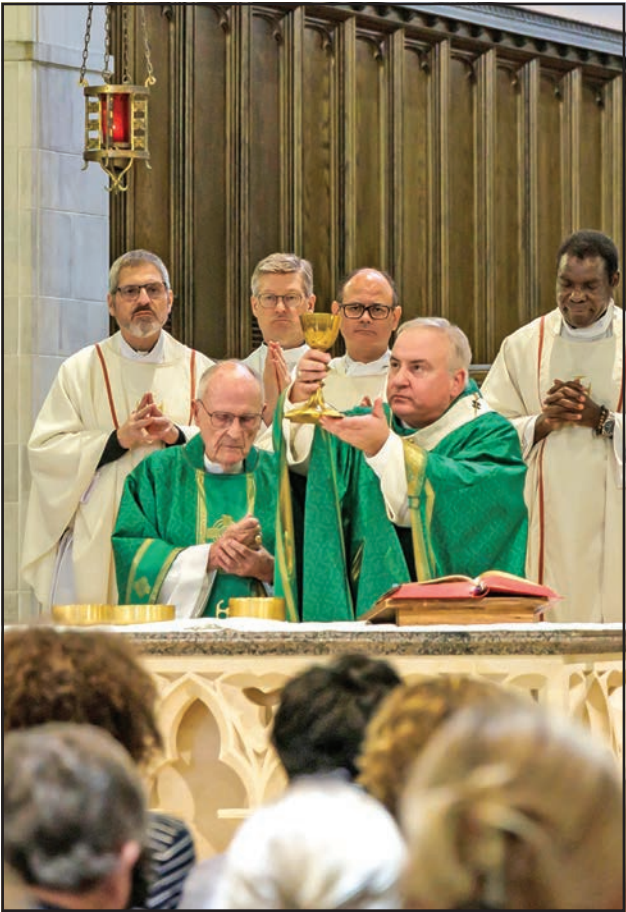
Fr. Edward Flanagan

It was a day of joy and thanksgiving for everyone, including the leader of the Omaha Archdiocese, Archbishop Michael G. McGovern. He presided at the Mass at Dowd Memorial Chapel of the Immaculate Conception, giving “thanks to God for the great news that our Holy Father, Pope Leo [XIV], has recognized the virtues” of the now Venerable Father Flanagan.

“As we gather here and reflect upon Father’s heroic virtues throughout his life, we thank God for the way that he lived, the way that he loved, the way that he served,” the archbishop said in his homily.

A Mass of Thanksgiving was appropriate for Father Flanagan, he said, who lived a life of thanksgiving.

About 600 supporters filled the church to capacity for the historic event for both the local and universal



Archbishop Michael G. McGovern of Omaha, Neb., elevates a chalice belonging to Venerable Edward J. Flanagan during a Mass of Thanksgiving for the priest on Sept. 13 at Dowd Memorial Chapel of the Immaculate Conception in Boys Town. The Irish-born Omaha priest (1881-1948) founded Boys Town. (OSV News photo/courtesy Boys Town)

Church. Many more watched a livestream of the Mass, which was viewed as far away as Father Flanagan’s native Ireland.

The Mass was concelebrated by two former leaders of the Omaha Archdiocese, retired Archbishops George J. Lucas and Elden F. Curtiss, as well as many archdiocesan priests.

Boys Town residents—part of Father Flanagan’s legacy—worshipped at the Mass and served as lectors, ushers and choir members. Members of his family—five great-nephews and one great-niece, and some of their families—were in attendance, as well as supporters from the Father Flanagan League Society of Devotion, which has helped promote Father Flanagan’s sainthood cause.

The Omaha priest, who founded Boys Town, lived from 1886 to 1948 and pioneered care for troubled youths. Father Flanagan recognized their inherent dignity, no matter their race or creed, creating a home for them that has since been copied around the world.

He famously said, “There are no bad boys. There’s only bad environment, bad training, bad example and bad thinking.”

And also: “Rehabilitation needs greater emphasis, punishment, less.”

People in the Boys Town community “like to say that this whole sainthood process is confirming a lot of things we already knew,” said Father Jeff Mollner, Boys Town’s national director of mission and spirituality. “We’ve seen Father Flanagan’s legacy in the lives of the youth that come here and in our alumni.”

Father Mollner, a priest of the Archdiocese of Omaha, said he’s thankful that Father Flanagan’s canonization process took a significant step forward with Pope Leo’s decree on March 23. The title of Venerable recognizes the priest’s heroic virtues.

But he’s also grateful “to see one of our own,” an archdiocesan priest, “get this great honor,” to be held up as an example for the priests as “a life that we can emulate.”

“Our prayers have been answered,” Colleen Gawley said about Father Flanagan’s advancement in his sainthood process. She is a member of St. Patrick Parish in Elkhorn, Neb., who is actively involved in the Father Flanagan League.

Gawley and others with the League pray every Tuesday at the tomb of Father Flanagan, located at the chapel. They seek his intercession for people desperately in need of prayers, hoping for miracles that would advance his sainthood cause.

Father Flanagan League members will continue to pray for the priest’s intercession, hoping for the next step, a healing that would lead to his beatification, which requires at least one verified miracle attributed to his intercession and after which he would receive the title “Blessed.” A second miracle is required for his canonization.

Born in Ireland, Father Flanagan spent his childhood there before immigrating to the United States in 1904 with other members of his large family.

Eight years later, he was ordained a priest of the

then-Diocese of Omaha.

Father Flanagan’s time in the seminary was interrupted with bouts of illness. “But he persevered,” Archbishop McGovern said, “until he was ordained a priest.”

When Father Flanagan worked with men who were down and out in Omaha during the early 1900s, he had an insight: that if they had been helped earlier in life, their lives could be different, their suffering could have been prevented.

He served as St. John Bosco had in Italy, using a “preventative method,” reaching people before their problems could become more complicated, Archbishop McGovern said in an earlier interview. In Omaha, that meant giving homeless and wayward boys “a place where they would be safe, secure and able to receive an education.”

In reaching out to those boys, Father Flanagan took risks, the archbishop said at the Mass.

His courage is motivation for people today, “to give of ourselves without counting the cost, to take risks, to try something new, as Father Flanagan did in his outreach to youth.”

He listened to people and responded, Archbishop McGovern said, “with support, with care, with concern.”

And he taught the children in his care to love. He said, “It costs so little to teach a child to love and so much to teach him to hate.”

“How many young people—with the difficulties of their lives before they came to Boys Town—easily could have become bitter, resentful, hardhearted, hateful,” the archbishop said. “And yet because of the love and the care that they received at Boys Town, there was a new beginning in life. Hearts changed, hearts grew and expanded.”

Father Flanagan’s chalice, which he received in 1912, was used at the Mass of Thanksgiving. Day after day, the archbishop said, the Boys Town founder used the chalice at Mass, saying, “This is my body, this is my blood, given up for you.”

The holy priest also gave of himself “with his own body and blood, strengthened by the Holy Eucharist,” Archbishop McGovern said.

Flanagan family members at the Mass included Ed and Jack Flanagan.

“Of course, it’s an honor” to be related to Father Flanagan, said Jack, a grandson of Father Flanagan’s brother James, who was born two years after Father Flanagan’s death. “We’re all humble and grateful.”

“Look at what he’s done,” Ed said about his great-uncle, “all the good that he did. He went all over the world spreading his mission.”

Both Jack and Ed urged more prayer for those who are learning about their saintly relative and asking for his intercession.

“The one thing that I was told from my grandma is just pray,” Ed said. Father Flanagan “prayed like nobody’s business,” he said. “He was the first one in the chapel every day, the last one to leave. He believed in prayer, and he believed it works.”

The sainthood process is “a long journey,” Ed added, “and I think we’re getting closer.” †

SIMPLY CATHOLIC

Book club can be setting in which members have faith stretched

By Carl E. Olson

(OSV News)—The plan was simple: invite some other men to join us to discuss a book chosen beforehand. The invitation turned the book club into hundreds of monthly meetings over more than a decade.

In hindsight, it’s a minor miracle it worked. So much could have gone wrong; so much should have gone wrong.

But we quickly discovered a truth that G.K. Chesterton expressed so well back in a 1904 essay on Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*: “The sincere love of books has nothing to do with cleverness or stupidity any more than any other sincere love. It is a quality of character, a freshness, a power of pleasure, a power of faith.”

Love of books is obviously necessary for a book club, of course. But there are other important qualities, including good character, a love of truth and a commitment to faith.

A book group that lasts for many years and consistently includes edifying insights and challenging discussions is a bit like a good marriage. It requires purpose, devotion, honesty, patience and, yes, sometimes forgiveness.

This fall, consider starting a group of your own to dive deeply into some of the greatest books by Catholic authors. Here are seven characteristics that stand out to me as essential to the longevity and quality of our group.

Clear purpose

I’ve talked to several men and women over the years who have participated in groups formed “to talk about books.” Most of those groups, unfortunately, had short lives. One reason, I suspect, is that while “discussing books” sounds wonderful in theory, it is often too vague to sustain interest and commitment.

We specifically aimed to have a group of Catholic men discussing good Catholic books, with an emphasis on Catholic belief, practice, spirituality and history.

What about the “men only” approach? I think most Catholic men are rarely able to spend quality time—certainly not on a regular basis—with other Catholic men in a setting that allows them to converse, discuss and debate freely and openly.

Years ago, I was in a book group for about a year that included both men and women, and while it was certainly enjoyable and edifying, it had a more formal and reserved dynamic. One of our group’s longtime members sums it up well in remarking that “what is special for me is the camaraderie of Catholic men unabashedly discussing, learning about and living out their faith.”

The same, I suspect, would be true for a “women only” approach to a book club, with the dynamics of such a club contrasting from those of men.

Stability and structure

Our first meeting was in a typical Oregon pub—and it turned out to be a very loud pub. It also didn’t have the sort of relaxed feel that encourages good—or easily heard—discussion. For a couple of years, we met every month at a different home. That worked fairly well, but it had its own challenges, especially for men with young families.

We’ve been fortunate for many years now to meet in the home of one of our longtime members. Such stability has proven invaluable, especially when the meeting area has its own kitchen and well-stocked refrigerator.

“Having a convenient location is essential,” says a college professor who has been part of the group from the start. He adds: “I’d hope that any local parish would be able to offer some meeting hall or religious school classroom space for such a group. The only inconvenience would be the lack of an onsite refrigerator!”

Having a regular meeting place with a “home” feel establishes a comfort level that shapes the entire evening: There is an authentic sense of routine and familiarity.

In addition, we have long had a simple and effective structure to our two-hour meetings. The first 30 minutes or so are for greetings and informal conversation—time meant, as club member Scott notes, “to build rapport within the group.” We then open with prayer before discussing the book for about 90 minutes.



A bookshelf is seen in this file photo. Love of books is necessary for a book club, but there are other important qualities, including good character, a love of truth and a commitment to faith. (OSV News photo/Margaret Murray)

Good men of common mind

Chesterton mentions “quality of character,” and there’s no doubt that a long-lasting reading group must have men of good character.

Such men respect the goals of the group and participate for the right reasons—not to hog the floor, pitch a pet project or be contrary about every sentence read or opinion expressed.

Sometimes men who are invited to attend will come to one or two meetings and then not return. In some cases, they apparently were looking for something different. In a few cases, it seemed they wanted to bend the group to their own purposes, which simply wasn’t going to happen.

Excellent (but mostly inexpensive) books

It’s an obvious point. But that doesn’t mean it’s easy to figure out which books exactly. Or when to read them.

The first was *God and the Ways of Knowing* by Jesuit Father Jean Daniélou (later a cardinal), followed by works from Father Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI; G.K. Chesterton; Peter Kreeft; Hilaire Belloc; St. John Henry Newman; Jesuit Father James Schall and many others.

Several books have been about Church history: the early Church; monasticism; Western culture; the Crusades; the Reformation; the Enlightenment and modernity.

There have been books about Jesus Christ and sacred Scripture by Benedict XVI, Brant Pitre and Frank Sheed; works about philosophy by Kreeft, St. Thomas Aquinas, Josef Pieper and Dietrich von Hildebrand. A handful of fictional works include *Wise Blood* by Flannery O’Connor and *Lord of the World* by Msgr. Robert Hugh Benson. In many instances, current events or anniversaries influenced book choices.

Some men in our group use e-books, but most prefer physical books, which means price points can be important. We try to select books that can be purchased for \$20 or less, and try to alternate more expensive books with books easily found for less than \$10-\$12.

Length can also be a factor; only occasionally do we take on books longer than 300 pages, and it is often the case that we discuss those books for two or three months.

Leadership

Without a doubt, this can be a tricky issue. On the one hand, the group is quite democratic. It’s not meant to be a class, and it’s certainly not a lecture.

But in order to carry on and stay the course, someone has to be at the wheel. After my group’s first leader moved to take a teaching position across

the country, I took up the mantle of what I jokingly call “benevolent dictator.” Most of this is simply communicating well, letting the men know the day on which we are meeting, what book we are discussing and so forth.

While I’ve always looked for input on book ideas, I’ve often made the final decision about what book to read and discuss. I usually ask for the opinions of men who have been in the group for many years, and I emphasize that the group is not my group, even if I take up the leadership mantle in some ways. It is a matter of being consistent, charitable and always willing to listen to ideas and questions.

Communication and discussion

The combination of a dozen men, some beers and religion is bound (hopefully and usually) to lead to vigorous conversation.

Boundaries are occasionally stretched. Opinions are sometimes strong or even heated. Even so, personal attacks are nonexistent, which is a direct result of good character and strong respect. All the better, as a member once put it, “for iron to sharpen iron.” Where there is a love for truth, charity is close at hand, even if strong disagreements occasionally come to the fore.

While the group is not supposed to be an echo chamber, it should provide mutual support. Keeping discussions on track is often simply a matter of refocusing on the text at hand. What does the author mean when he states a particular idea? Or how do you think this argument or that claim by the author holds up to facts and scrutiny?

In other words, the book in hand can—and even should—take the brunt of criticism on occasion. Yet, while a handful of books have proven disappointing over the years, the vast majority have edified, informed and challenged the group, thus holding up their end of the discussion.

Good beer!

“Drink because you are happy,” wrote Chesterton, “but never because you are miserable.”

In my experience, men who come together to talk about their faith and good books are never miserable. Not that everyone does drink (they don’t), but it’s also true that a good beer or other adult beverage among friends is the sort of “irrational drinking” that Chesterton praises (paradoxically, of course) for not being necessary. It simply wouldn’t be quite the same if we were all drinking bottled water.

And, yes, because we are in Oregon, we are beer snobs. But, regardless, a solid pint and a good book always lead to a worthwhile conversation.

(Carl E. Olson is the editor of Catholic World Report.) †

Faith and Family/Sean Gallagher

Parents and children are called to journey together toward heaven

Four of my five sons are close to or are now living the beginnings of their adult lives. Each is taking his own path, which they are feeling their way along from month to month and year to year.



It’s a special time for my wife Cindy and me. We’re beginning to see at least the beginnings of the outcome of the formation in the faith and in our common humanity that we gave our boys in all of the little ins and outs of the life we’ve shared as a family from day to day.

We know that the outcomes that we’re seeing now aren’t necessarily permanent. On the one hand, we shouldn’t presume that encouraging signs we might see in our sons will always keep going in a positive direction. On the other hand, our Lord gives us grace to have a real and concrete hope for our sons who might be further away from what we truly believe is for their good in parts of their lives.

At the same time, we have to remember that the journey of our sons and, indeed, of Cindy and me also, can end at any moment. That’s why we pray for each other and our boys every day, that God would give all of us the grace to live each day according to his will for us.

Jefferson and Alison Crowther were convinced that they witnessed the heartbreaking end of their son Welles’ journey when they saw live on TV the south tower of the World Trade Center in New York collapse on Sept. 11, 2001. Welles, a 1999 graduate of Boston College worked as a stock trader on the 104th floor of that building.

His remains were found on March 19, 2002. Two months later, an article in the *New York Times* retold stories of survivors from the south tower. One recalled a young man wearing a red bandana caring for many injured people on the 78th floor and leading groups of them to safety down the only usable stairwell in that section of the building.

Welles’ parents thought of their son when reading the story because of the habit he had from his childhood of always keeping a red bandana with him and wearing it when playing hockey or lacrosse.

They sent a photo of Welles to survivors who confirmed that it was their son who had saved their lives. It was eventually learned that he had rescued as many as 12 people that day, going back up the staircase to help more people after he could have escaped the tower with those that he had already saved.

In Jefferson’s words, he and Alison saw in the way in which their son died “the purest form of compassion and

love” and an embodiment of Christ’s words in Jn 15:13, “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”

Now 25 years after 9/11, Welles’ parents remain heartbroken at the loss of their son. But they also have an awe-filled gratitude for coming to know of the noble and selfless way that he lived out the final moments of his life. (You can watch ESPN’s powerful retelling of the story of Welles and his parents here: tinyurl.com/Welles9-11.)

Parents living out their calling from God would want their children to live such lives of heroic virtue, even if it would be in more ordinary circumstances than those faced by Welles.

Parents are called by God to raise the children with which he blesses them so that, with the help of grace, they can ultimately become saints, giving thanks and praise to God forever in heaven.

That’s the destination of the journey of all parents and children. It’s a journey often marked by rugged peaks and dark valleys in which we need each other’s help and the aid of God’s grace to reach our heavenly homeland.

So, parents and children, let’s redouble our efforts at praying for each other and other families and in giving each other encouragement along our way to heaven. †

Journeying Together/Hosffman Ospino

The joy of being an Hispanic Catholic and building our Church

(Editor’s note: National Hispanic Heritage Month is annually observed from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15 in the U.S. to recognize the contributions and influence of Hispanic culture to the nation’s achievements, culture and history.)



Someone asked me recently if there was a defining characteristic I would highlight about the experience of being Hispanic Catholic in the United States. So many came to mind: resilience, communality, generosity, openness, religiousness, among others. I chose joy.

I tread with care when I speak of joy, though. There are far too many stereotypes about Hispanic people in our society, and one of them is that Hispanics are always joyful. Media portrayals of Hispanics in a perennial festive mode or always smiling tend to hide the struggles that millions of Hispanic people face every day.

The temptation to counter that generalization is to portray Hispanics as people always in precarious or dangerous conditions, passive victims of unknown forces, waiting for someone else to rescue us or help us.

Many seem suspicious of joyful people. If one smiles too much, then it is assumed that one is not serious enough to assume responsibility or take leadership. If one exhibits a cheerful attitude toward life, charges of being “too emotional” or not sufficiently thoughtful to take charge of reality soon emerge.

To appreciate joyfulness when speaking of a community, we must recognize that external gestures often reveal deep narratives and time-tested convictions. A smile, a celebratory predisposition and a positive attitude are signs of a community’s worldview shaped over time.

Hispanic Catholics by and large are joyful people. Our joy reflects profound convictions about faith and life, our relationships with other human beings and the created order, and how we seek fulfillment.

Many sources sustain the joy that identifies the Hispanic Catholic experience.

Jesus Christ is the bedrock of Hispanic Catholic faith. Jesus is the Savior. He reveals the God of life who lifts up the vulnerable and the poor. Jesus defeated death and the powers of evil to give us life. He journeys with us in history and meets us in the sacraments as our *hermano*.

To be Hispanic Catholic is to know oneself being part of a community of baptized sisters and brothers who speak a common language: the language of *familia*. Regardless of our many places of origin or the conditions that shape our life, at the end of the day we are one family, the Hispanic Catholic family. In this family one experiences belonging, solidarity and support.

In the Hispanic Catholic imagination, the world is not a cold and dark place where people perceived as enemies await in every corner seeking our destruction. For Hispanic Catholics, the world is a reality permanently charged with the possibility of encountering God. We discover something new about God every time we celebrate the Eucharist, pray by a small altar at home or learn about a miracle.

Despite the fact that many Hispanics struggle significantly in our society, our suffering engenders solidarity and the desire for healing. Just as we know that we do not journey alone, we have the conviction that in the midst of suffering members from our community accompany and advocate for us.

The joy that springs from being saved by Jesus Christ, journeying along the way with others, seeing God in all things with sacramental imagination, and knowing that suffering engenders solidarity renews the Church.

This joy is not exclusive to the Hispanic Catholic community. It is the joy that any person or community experiences when daring to walk with Jesus as his disciples. This joy is our inheritance as we strengthen the U.S. Catholic experience by being authentically Hispanic Catholic.

As we continue to build the Church with Hispanic Catholics, let’s not forget the deep reasons for the smile, the celebratory predisposition and the positive attitude.

(Hosffman Ospino is professor of theology and religious education at Boston College.) †

Caminando juntos/Hosffman Ospino

La alegría de ser católico hispano y de construir nuestra Iglesia

(Nota del editor: El Mes Nacional de la Herencia Hispana se celebra anualmente del 15 de septiembre al 15 de octubre en EE. UU. para reconocer las contribuciones y la influencia de la cultura hispana en los logros, la cultura y la historia de la nación.)



Alguien me preguntó recientemente si hay una característica que yo resaltaría sobre la experiencia de ser católico hispano en los Estados Unidos. Muchas vinieron a mi mente: adaptabilidad, comunalidad, generosidad, apertura, religiosidad, entre otras. Escogí alegría.

Al hablar de alegría, lo hago con cierta discreción. Existen demasiados

estereotipos sobre los hispanos en nuestra sociedad, y uno de ellos es que los hispanos siempre andamos alegres. Los medios de comunicación con frecuencia representan a los hispanos como si viviéramos en un estado permanente de festividad o siempre sonriendo. Dicha representación tiende a ocultar las dificultades que millones de personas hispanas encuentran a diario.

Existe también la tentación de contrarrestar dicha generalización representando a los hispanos como una comunidad que siempre vive en condiciones precarias y peligrosas, víctimas pasivas de fuerzas desconocidas, esperando a que alguien nos rescate o nos ayude.

Muchas personas ven con sospecha a quienes aparecen demasiado alegres. Si uno sonríe mucho, se asume que uno no es lo suficientemente serio para asumir responsabilidades o ejercer liderazgo. Si uno tiene una actitud hacia la vida que se percibe como demasiado

positiva, pronto se le acusa de ser “muy emocional” o de no estar preparado para hacerse cargo de la realidad.

Para apreciar la dimensión de alegría al hablar de una comunidad, tenemos que reconocer que los gestos externos por lo general reflejan narrativas complejas y convicciones que se han forjado con el tiempo. Una sonrisa, la predisposición a celebrar, y una actitud positiva son signos que han adquirido sentido a través del tiempo y ahora representan la perspectiva de una comunidad.

Los católicos hispanos por lo general somos personas alegres. Nuestra alegría refleja convicciones profundas sobre la fe y la vida, nuestras relaciones con otras personas y el orden creado, y cómo buscamos realizarnos.

Hay varias fuentes que inspiran la alegría que caracteriza a la experiencia católica hispana.

Jesucristo es la piedra angular de la fe católica hispana. Jesús es el Salvador. Él nos revela al Dios de la Vida que enaltece a los más vulnerables y a los pobres. Jesús venció a la muerte y a los poderes del mal para darnos vida. Él camina con nosotros en la historia y nos encuentra en los sacramentos como nuestro hermano.

Ser católico hispano significa reconocernos como parte de una comunidad de hermanas y hermanos bautizados que hablamos un lenguaje común: el lenguaje de la familia. No importan los muchos lugares de donde venimos o las condiciones que definen nuestras vidas, al final de cuentas somos una familia: la familia católica hispana. En esta familia experimentamos la solidaridad, el apoyo y la certeza de pertenecer.

En la imaginación católica hispana, el mundo no es un lugar frío y oscuro en donde personas que son

consideradas como enemigas nos acechan en cada esquina para destruirnos. Para los católicos hispanos el mundo es una realidad permanentemente impregnada de la posibilidad de encontrar a Dios. Aprendemos algo nuevo de Dios cada vez que celebramos la Eucaristía, oramos ante un altarcito, o escuchamos que un milagro ha ocurrido.

A pesar de que muchos hispanos viven en nuestra sociedad en una lucha constante por sobrevivir, nuestro sufrimiento engendra solidaridad y el deseo de sanación. Así como sabemos que no caminamos solos, tenemos la convicción de que en medio del sufrimiento muchos miembros de nuestra comunidad nos acompañan y abogan por nosotros.

La Iglesia se renueva con la alegría que brota de ser salvados por Jesucristo, caminar juntos con otras personas, ver a Dios en todas las cosas con una imaginación sacramental, y saber que el sufrimiento engendra solidaridad.

Esta alegría no es exclusiva de la comunidad católica hispana. Es la alegría que cualquier persona o comunidad experimentan cuando se atreven a caminar con Jesús como sus discípulos. Este gozo es nuestra herencia a medida que fortalecemos la experiencia católica estadounidense siendo auténticamente católicos hispanos.

Mientras construimos la Iglesia con los católicos hispanos, no olvidemos esas razones profundas detrás de una sonrisa, la predisposición a celebrar, y las actitudes positivas.

(Hosffman Ospino es profesor de teología y educación religiosa en Boston College.) †

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

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, September 27, 2026

- Ezekiel 18:25-28
- Philippians 2:1-11
- Matthew 21:28-32

The Book of Ezekiel provides the first reading for Mass this weekend. Pivotal in Jewish history was the time spent by Hebrew captives and by their descendants in Babylon, the capital of the then-powerful Babylonian Empire, located roughly in modern Iraq. Babylonia had overtaken the promised land militarily, in a process forever ending the two Hebrew independent kingdoms. Many survivors were taken to Babylon.

Occurring in the sixth century B.C., this event is called the Exile. For the Hebrew people, the Exile was a heartbreaking time. They were so far from their homeland. The Exile seemed as if it would last forever. In the end, it lasted for four generations. Many Jews likely fell away from the traditional religion of their ancestors.

These people were like people in any other time. Religion seemed for many to have failed. God had failed them.

During this time, Ezekiel wrote to respond to the despair of the people. The prophet turned the tables. He confronted the people with their own sinfulness. Where was their devotion to God? How faithful had they been in being God’s people? No one realistically could have argued that there had been no sin. Who deserted whom?

St. Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians is the source of the second reading.

Many early Christians were Jews by birth. Many of these Jews, such as Paul himself, had been pious in their religious practice, well versed in Judaism. Many other early Christians were from pagan backgrounds. In early Christian communities, people of both these traditions lived side by side.

Such was the case in Philippi. Jewish symbols and references appear in the Epistle, but the city was in no sense Jewish. Jews were there, but Philippi was thoroughly pagan, an important military base in the Roman Empire, situated in what now is northern Greece.

Since Christians were in the minority, surrounded by dislike and suspicion at best, Paul tried to reinforce their commitment to the Lord and challenge them to be firm.

The Apostle in this epistle magnificently

proclaims Christ, the Lord, as the Savior, the center, the focus and the example to follow. He is the Redeemer! He is everything!

St. Matthew’s Gospel furnishes the third reading. It recalls an encounter between Jesus and priests and elders. Since religion was a favorite topic for everyone at the time, even priests and people learned in Judaism were interested in what Jesus said.

God is the father in the parable that Christ tells. The vineyard represents the heavenly kingdom. The sons are humanity.

The message is about repentance. Repentance is about being reconciled with God. Facing facts. Anyone can repent and recover access to salvation.

Reflections

Catholics in America were justifiably proud on Sept. 24 as the late Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen was declared blessed in a beatification liturgy celebrated in St. Louis.

Of Irish ancestry, born in 1895 in Illinois and ordained a priest of the Peoria Diocese, he became a household name in this country because of his highly acclaimed programs, first on radio and later on television, in which he eloquently explained the Catholic faith.

Few, even among his admirers, recall his work, from 1950 to 1966, as head of the American branch of the Pontifical Society of the Propagation of the Faith, headquartered in New York, which supports Catholic missions abroad. His leadership was enough reason in itself for the praise given him.

He was appointed an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of New York in 1951, later served as bishop of the Diocese of Rochester, N.Y., from 1966-69, and was given the honorary title of archbishop at the time of his retirement in 1969.

Over many years, Archbishop Sheen publicly applied the Gospels to all circumstances of life, but always, on television or in encouraging foreign missionary efforts, his message was the same.

The example of Jesus Christ means everything. The teachings of Jesus mean everything. Nothing excels them. Christians have been so blessed.

Through the Church, they have met Christ. They are privileged to share this gift, so the world indeed will be a better place. It will be heaven on Earth. †

Daily Readings

Monday, September 28

St. Wenceslaus, martyr
St. Lawrence Ruiz and companions, martyrs
Job 1:6-22
Psalm 17:1b-3, 6-7
Luke 9:46-50

Tuesday, September 29

St. Gabriel, archangel
St. Michael, archangel
St. Raphael, archangel
Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14
or Revelation 12:7-12a
Psalm 138:1-5
John 1:47-51

Wednesday, September 30

St. Jerome, priest and doctor of the Church
Job 9:1-12, 14-16
Psalm 88:10b-15
Luke 9:57-62

Thursday, October 1

St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus, virgin and doctor of the Church
Job 19:21-27

Psalm 27:7-9c, 13-14
Luke 10:1-12

Friday, October 2

The Holy Guardian Angels
Job 38:1, 12-21; 40:3-5
Psalm 139:1-3, 7-10, 13-14b
Matthew 18:1-5, 10

Saturday, October 3

Job 42:1-3, 5-6, 12-17
Psalm 119:66, 71, 75, 91, 125, 130
Luke 10:17-24

Sunday, October 4

Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time
Isaiah 5:1-7
Psalm 80:9, 12-16, 19-20
Philippians 4:6-9
Matthew 21:33-43

Question Corner/Jenna Marie Cooper

Different approaches possible in giving pastoral care to the ‘overly suspicious’

As a parish priest, I found your recent article on the Church’s teaching on Freemasonry interesting, and



I have a follow-up question. How can one deal pastorally with parishioners who are quick to suspect people of being Freemasons? I can think of one or two parishioners who are convinced the Vatican is infiltrated by Freemasons, and that anybody in Church life they in any way disagree with must be a Freemason.

They can be frustrating, as it’s hard to argue with them without them turning around and saying that you must be a Freemason. (Ireland)

As I’m sure you already know, it’s not really possible to give a one-size-fits-all answer to a pastoral question like this one. The “right answer” is always going to depend on the needs and capacity of the individual person, the tone and tenor of your previous relationship (or lack thereof) with them and even the local cultural context.

Still, I can imagine how frustrating it must be to minister to the overly suspicious in general, and to those who are quick to suspect other people of being Freemasons in particular.

I suppose a first line of approach—which granted, it sounds like you may have already tried—might be to combine some basic catechesis with an appeal to commonsense-based logical reasoning.

For instance, it could be helpful to start off by acknowledging that the Church does indeed forbid the faithful from joining Masonic groups or otherwise being involved in Freemasonry, and that this is an offense that is clear-cut and serious enough so as to involve some serious canonical consequences.

At the same time, it can be pointed out that the Church does not expect the rest of the faithful to concern themselves with “rooting out” suspected Freemasons. (Additionally, at least in the United States, individuals involved in Freemasonry generally do not treat this fact as a closely guarded secret anyway.)

You can remind them that, on the level

of basic human and Christian virtue, it’s never good to jump to conclusions, or accuse someone of a crime and to speculate on his or her potential guilt, without some firm, concrete evidence. Likewise, most mature adults should be able to grasp the idea that a difference of opinion doesn’t necessarily make the person with whom they disagree wicked or evil.

With respect to leaders in the Church, it’s entirely possible for clergy to express controversial opinions, or even in principle to make imprudent decisions in governance, without those opinions or problematic decisions being of a character specific to Freemasonry. If the person with whom you are in dialogue is convinced that a Church leader they dislike is a Freemason, you could try asking something like: “Did he do anything in particular that makes you suspect he is actually tied to a Masonic group specifically, as opposed to maybe just being wrong or mistaken on certain issues?”

But if the person you are speaking to is unwilling or unable to reason things out in this way, perhaps it could be helpful to frame it in terms of spirituality. That is, you might encourage him or her to pray and fast for the conversion of any and all Freemasons, known and unknown.

You could point out that, regardless of whether or not the suspected Freemasons are indeed Freemasons, these kinds of spiritual works of mercy will always do much more for the good of the Church than focusing on rumors, speculation or gossip.

Finally, you can also underscore that, at the end of the day, the Church will always be providentially guided by the Holy Spirit. Of course, in the Church’s history there have been bad priests, bishops and even popes, but Jesus did explicitly promise us that the gates of hell would never prevail against his Church (Mt 16:18).

As Catholics, we aren’t required to like or personally admire all individual members of the clergy, but we are called to respect the governing offices that Christ himself established.

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

My Journey to God

One Word

By Janine Schorsch

I sit in prayer.
Petitioning for family and friends,
for those who say, “Please pray for me.”
So many words ...
Jesus holds out His hand
and utters one word,
“Come.”

I empty my heart to Jesus.
All the worries, all the frustrations,
the temptations that tug at my soul.
A torrent of words ...
He opens his arms wide
and speaks one word,
“Come.”

Someone is struggling.
Searching for love,
discerning their purpose.
A cascade of words ...
My heart is stirred by the Spirit.
A single word falls from my lips.
“Come.”



(Janine Schorsch is a member of St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross Parish in Bright. Photo: Zach Dotson, one of the perpetual pilgrims for the May 24-July 5 National Eucharistic Pilgrimage, prays before Mass at the Cathedral Basilica of St. John the Baptist in Savannah, Ga., on May 28.) (OSV News photo/Gretchen R. Crowe)

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.

BISCHOFF, David J., 74, St. Louis, Batesville, Sept. 6. Husband of Mary Bischoff. Father of Taylor Schmidt, Lindsey Schornick and Corey Bischoff. Brother of Albert, Gene, Jim, Larry, Richard, Robert and Tom Bischoff. Grandfather of eight.

D’ANTONIO, Shannon (Sturgeon), 73, St. Charles Borromeo, Bloomington, Sept. 5. Mother of Justin Suer, Arthur III and Ryan D’Antonio. Grandmother of six.

FISCHER, Bradley J., 51, All Saints, Dearborn County, Sept. 8. Father of Carmen Fischer. Son of Bob and Betty Fischer. Brother of Katie Enneking.

KENNEDY, Judith A. (Bruce), 87, Our Lady of the Greenwood, Greenwood, Sept. 9. Mother of Vicki McPherson and Karen Pierce. Sister of Tom Bruce. Grandmother of three.

KRUER, Cindy, 65, St. John Paul II, Sellersburg, Sept. 6. Wife of Marion Kruer. Mother of Halle and Max Nauman and George Budd. Stepmother of Adam and Michael Kruer. Sister of Laura Beyerle and Richard Schroder. Grandmother of seven.

NIESE, Carol A., 74, St. Louis, Batesville, Sept. 11. Wife of Virgil Niese. Mother of Anthony and Matthew Niese. Sister of Marlene Riehle and Paul Roell. Grandmother of two.

POPP, Marcella R., 95, St. John Paul II, Sellersburg, Sept. 4. Mother of Rosemary Sanders and Kathleen Popp. Sister of Bernice Kleehamer. Grandmother of three. Great-grandmother of seven.

SCHRANK, Denis L., 85, Holy Family, Oldenburg, Sept. 6. Husband of Patricia Schrank. Father of Karen Berty, Cindy Gerstbauer, Lisa Nolan, Tina and Tim Schrank. Brother of Anita Brelage and Tom Schrank. Grandfather of 15. Great-grandfather of 10.

SCHUELER, Joan M., 96, St. Mary, New Albany, Sept. 1. Mother of Becky Banet, Kathy Becht and Robin Coulter. Grandmother of five. Great-grandmother of 15.

SLINGER, Paula A., 77, Holy Spirit, Indianapolis, July 16. Wife of Deacon Michael Slinger. Mother of Brigid Bowers. Sister of Patty Talen. Grandmother of two.

SMITH, Christopher C., 91, Holy Spirit, Indianapolis, Aug. 6. Father of Christopher Smith, Jr. Brother of Cora Hughes and Tommy Smith. Grandfather of 12. Great-grandfather of 16.

STEIN, Thomas A., 76, St. Louis, Batesville, Aug. 22. Husband of Virginia Stein. Father of Amber Schell, Christopher and Scott Stein. Son of Elizabeth Stein. Brother of Cheryl Bitterman, Melissa Bradley, Mary Starost, Bill, Dave, Greg, Lawrence and Michael Stein. Grandfather of eight. Great-grandfather of four.

WEILER, Nicholas C., 43, St. Peter, Franklin County, Sept. 5. Husband of Jessica Weiler. Father of Allison, Macie and Garrett Weiler. Son of Allen and Robin Weiler. Brother of Josie Bonilla, Valarie Hoff, Tonya Hudepohl, Jacob and Michael Weiler. Grandson of Shirley Craig. †

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

Special Olympics meeting



Pope Leo XIV is embraced on Sept. 19 by a member of a delegation from the Special Olympics during a private audience at the Vatican. (OSV News photo/Simone Risoluti Vatican Media)

From Illinois to Nigeria: Highlights from book of Father Robert Prevost’s homilies

ROME (OSV News)—A new book containing the homilies and writings of Father Robert Prevost, now Pope Leo XIV, when he served as head of the Augustinians, was released in English on Sept. 15.

The book, “Freedom Under Grace: Reflections on the Spiritual Tradition That Formed Me,” contains writings and homilies from 2001 to 2013, when Father Prevost served as prior general of the Order of St. Augustine.

The collection includes homilies and writings on prayer, the interior life and the search for God, as well as leadership, education, evangelization and social justice. It features homilies he delivered in Nigeria, Australia, Ireland, Spain, the United States and other countries he visited as head of the order.

Father Joseph L. Farrell, the order’s current prior general, wrote in the book’s foreword that among the many themes in Father Prevost’s writings, the most prominent is unity—a theme he said takes many forms, from the communion of the faithful to the need for fraternity among Augustinians.

In an October 2002 homily in the book from a Mass at the Monastery of the Augustinian Nuns in New Lenox, Ill., Father Prevost opened with a reflection on the headlines of the day: terrorism, the prospect of war with Iraq, economic troubles, a string of shootings in the Washington area and upcoming elections.

“‘And with all of that, here we are gathered together to celebrate the blessing of a new chapel of a small community of Augustinian cloistered nuns,” he said. He acknowledged that to some, the occasion might seem “irrelevant” or “out of touch” in a world focused on economic return and political power, but added that it was precisely in such an environment that the gathering “makes more sense than ever,” because the world needs to be reminded that “prayer is valuable, that service in silence is Christlike and Gospel inspired, and that our faith has meaning.”

Of the cloistered nuns, Father Prevost said, “Through their lives, the sisters are like beacons of light in our troubled world. They are participants and teachers in a kind of school of prayer, in which they pray for so many others, and they invite others to learn from their example.

“The lives of these Augustinian nuns are the expression of the mystery of God’s presence, alive and active in our world today,” he added.

The earliest homily in the book came shortly after Sept. 11, 2001, following Father Prevost’s election as prior general on Sept. 14, 2001, which was also his birthday.

“The tragic events of September 11 in the United States cannot be forgotten as we come to the end of this General Chapter,” Father Prevost said in that homily. “The needs of the Church and of the world must determine the forms of our apostolic work. The violence that the world witnessed in the United States last week is a tragic reminder of a series of problems that are growing throughout our world. Hatred and violence will only grow as long as people continue to be forced to live in extreme poverty, oppressed by so many forms of injustice.”

The book also includes the welcome speech Father Prevost gave to Pope Benedict XVI during a 2007 visit to pray at St. Augustine’s tomb in Pavia, Italy. “I wish to express profound gratitude for the beautiful homily Your Holiness gave us today in the celebration of the Eucharist,” Father Prevost told Pope Benedict. “And we pledge our prayers for your difficult mission in the Church and in the world today.”

In a November 2002 letter to friars of the order, Father Prevost wrote, “We must not only live our vocation within the security of our homes and monasteries, but rather we must be a force within our world that will tell others that there is an alternative to division and isolation.”

Speaking about the order’s martyrs in July 2007, Father Prevost said, “May the martyrdom of our brothers encourage us not to fear death but to desire always authentic life, which is Christ.”

In the foreword, Father Farrell wrote that nearly all of Father Prevost’s writings echo an admonition from St. Augustine: “‘Always be dissatisfied with what you are, if you want to arrive at what you are not yet. ... Always add some more, always keep on walking, always forge ahead. Don’t stop on the road, don’t turn round and go back, don’t wander off the road.”

The book is published by Image, an imprint of Penguin Random House, and is available in print, e-book and audiobook formats. The audiobook, produced by Penguin Random House Audio, features homilies and addresses read by comedian Stephen Colbert, with additional text narrated by Scott Brick.

“‘Our prayer for you is that by reading ‘Freedom Under Grace,’ you will be drawn more deeply into the spirituality that formed Pope Leo, and as a result, you will carry its gifts and graces into your own life, your community, the Church, and a world hungry for the love of God,” Matthew Burdette, senior editor at Image Books, wrote in a note following the book’s introduction. †

Edward L. Johnson, Jr., 85, was the father of Father Eric Johnson

Edward L. Johnson, Jr., the father of Father Eric Johnson, pastor of St. Mark the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis, died on Sept. 10, 2026. He was 85.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Sept. 17 at St. Barnabas Church in Indianapolis. Burial followed at Calvary Cemetery in Indianapolis.

Johnson was born on June 28, 1941, in Indianapolis to Edward, Sr., and Dolores (Kistner) Johnson. He grew up as a member of the former Holy Trinity Parish on the near west side of the city.

Johnson went to high school at the former Latin School of Indianapolis and then continued his studies at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad. He later earned a master’s degree at the University of Notre Dame in northern Indiana. Johnson married Carol Ann Koetter of Floyds Knobs in 1973.

They became the parents of four children, all of whom survive: Emily Hatch, Carol, Father Eric and Jeff Johnson.

Johnson nurtured in his family’s home a life of joy, a mutual love of family members for each other and a love of music, literature and adventure.

In his professional life, Johnson managed medical and behavioral health practices and hospitals. In his final years before retirement, he served as a business manager at different periods for three Indianapolis parishes: St. Anthony, St. Philip Neri and Holy Trinity, which was merged with St. Anthony during that time.

In addition to his wife and children, Johnson is also survived by his sisters, Mary Michael and Jean Webb, his brothers Jim and Tim Johnson, and five grandchildren.

Memorial contributions may be made to the St. Anthony Food Pantry, 377 N. Warman Ave., Indianapolis, IN 46222. †

Investing with Faith/Peter Duncan

Endowment funds are earmarked to help parishes, schools and agencies

I’m fond of the adage that the best financial advice is often the most boring. There is no magic wand we can wave to bring ourselves wealth overnight.



For most of us, financial stability comes from the slow, consistent process of spending less than we make, keeping some for a rainy day, and paying our future selves by setting some aside for retirement. Week after week, we stay disciplined, and with the grace of God, we wake up toward the end of a long career and have saved enough to live sustainably in retirement.

So too it goes with planning for long-term financial sustainability for the Church. Just like saving in retirement accounts, for nearly 40 years, the generous faithful of the

Archdiocese of Indianapolis have partnered with the Catholic Community Foundation (CCF) to set money aside in the form of endowment funds.

The CCF stewards these funds responsibly, invests them, grows them, and distributes a portion to parishes, schools and agencies across the archdiocese. Through the generosity of the Catholic faithful, we continue the disciplined process of setting money aside for the future. The best approach is often the most boring.

In some instances, the distribution from an endowment is earmarked to help archdiocesan parishes, schools and agencies sustain ministry work, complete unfunded projects or start a new initiative that meets a local need.

Four such funds exist today that offer parish, school and agency leaders support and opportunities for growth. They are often referred to as the Combined Grant endowment funds:

Queen and Divine Mercy Fund: Used to provide matching grants or outright awards to support projects and initiatives that promote devotion to the Queenship of Mary and/or to the Divine Mercy of Jesus at parishes, schools and agency ministries of the archdiocese.

Home Missions Endowment Fund: Used to support home mission needs in the archdiocese. A home mission parish or school is one that is experiencing poverty or faces emergency needs it cannot meet on its own that are vital to the mission of the Church.

James P. Scott Capital Improvement Fund: Used to provide matching grants or outright awards to support capital projects that demonstrate a great potential impact at parishes, schools and agencies of the archdiocese.

Growth and Expansion Fund: Used to support parishes, schools and agencies that are growing or expanding their ministries. Initiatives may be in the

form of capital requests or programming needs, but the need must be tied to a new or expanding ministry.

Planning for long-term sustainability can be boring to some, but the impact of doing so is not. I can assure you the leaders of parishes, schools and agencies are elated—not bored—with the knowledge that nearly \$800,000 is distributed from these funds annually.

Through the Combined Grants, direct support is provided to the Catholic community in central and southern Indiana. To learn more about how you can support these vital endowment funds, please reach out to us at ccf@archindy.org, 317-236-1482 or visit our website at archindy.org/ccf.

(Peter Duncan is director of the archdiocesan Catholic Community Foundation. He can be reached at pduncan@archindy.org.) †

Baltimore archbishop urges women religious to model renewal of American political culture, continue building bridges, accompany others

(OSV News)—At a time of deep political division and declining trust, Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore told a national



Archbishop William E. Lori

gathering of women religious leaders that renewing American political culture requires more than better politics. It requires a renewal of human character, relationships and spiritual life, a task to which he said women religious make a unique contribution.

In a Sept. 18 keynote address to the 2026 National Assembly of the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious in Florissant, Mo., Archbishop Lori said the Church has always understood that the renewal of society begins “not with structures, but with saints.”

“Before there can be renewal of institutions, there must be renewal of persons,” Archbishop Lori said. “Before there can be civic friendship, there must be conversion of heart, and before there can be lasting peace, there must be reconciliation with God.”

He said religious life must remain “above politics” in the sense that the Church must never become captive to partisan ideologies, but that transcending politics does not mean withdrawing from the world.

“The evangelical counsels are not an escape from history—they are a way of redeeming history,” Archbishop Lori said. “Consecrated women do not flee society; they bless it.”

The vocation of women religious matters not only to the Church, but also to the nation because “every authentic consecrated life becomes a living argument that another way of being human is possible,” he said.

The annual national assembly, held on Sept. 17-20 at the Augustine Institute in Florissant, Mo., brought together major superiors from across the country for prayer, reflection and dialogue aimed at deepening their understanding of consecrated life.

Drawing on his recent pastoral letter, “In Charity and Truth: Toward a Renewed Political Culture,” Archbishop Lori suggested the nation’s deeper problem may not be bad politics, but expecting politics to accomplish what only holiness can achieve.

“We increasingly look to government to provide what families once provided,” he said. “We ask for legislation to heal wounds that require forgiveness. We expect institutions to restore trust that can only be rebuilt through virtue. We seek policies to solve crises of meaning. Politics has become burdened with expectations it was

never intended to bear.” Citing Pope Benedict XVI, he said that government can guarantee justice in certain respects, but cannot create love, manufacture virtue or replace moral formation within families, communities and the Church.

“Democracy depends upon virtues that democracy itself cannot produce,” he said. “It depends on honesty, mutual respect, sacrifice, patience and mercy. It depends on generosity in seeking the common good over private advantage.”

Those virtues are learned in communities that embody them, he said. The contribution of women religious to democracy, he added, has never consisted primarily in political advocacy but in the formation of virtuous citizens.

“Long before America debated civic education, sisters were forming consciences,” he said. “Long before people spoke of ‘social capital,’ sisters were building communities of trust. Long before commentators worried about polarization, women religious were teaching children to recognize Christ in one another.”

Archbishop Lori presented the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience as witnesses to authentic freedom and sources of renewal for American public life. Drawing on St. John Paul II’s 1995 homily at Oriole Park at Camden Yards in Baltimore, he said the vows proclaim a freedom deeper than the ability to satisfy every desire.

Evangelical poverty, he said, challenges a culture in which the religious sister stands before the world and quietly declares: “My security does not come from accumulation, my identity does not come from ownership, and my future does not depend upon what I possess. My treasure is Christ.”

“Evangelical poverty reminds us that societies flourish when people ask not first, ‘What belongs to me?’ but rather, ‘To whom do I belong?’” Archbishop Lori said.

He pointed to St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, whose trust in divine providence enabled her to establish schools, orphanages, hospitals and charitable institutions serving immigrants and the poor. In a culture increasingly tempted to confuse security with accumulation, he said, her example shows that poverty is less about having little than about being owned by less.

He also highlighted Mother Mary Lange, founder of the Baltimore-based Oblate Sisters of Providence, whom Pope Francis declared “Venerable.”

Despite racial prejudice in both society and the Church, she founded institutions that restored dignity through education, hope through community and confidence through faith, Archbishop Lori said. Her witness challenges a political culture that

reduces people to categories, he said, noting that before people are identified by race, wealth or political ideology, they are beloved children of God.

Consecrated chastity, Archbishop Lori said, offers a witness against reducing people to labels, objects or political identities. He held up Servant of God Sister Thea Bowman as a model of joyful, truth-filled engagement.

She confronted racism and challenged the Church to embrace the richness of African American spirituality while remaining rooted in Catholic tradition, and never abandoned truth for popularity or charity for anger. Instead, he said, she “challenged, invited and loved.”

“Because she belonged completely to Christ, she was free to belong to everyone,” he said. Her example offers a model for public life marked by “conviction without contempt,” disagreement without dehumanization and criticism animated by hope rather than hostility.

Laws and institutions alone cannot create trust or virtue, he said. One of the greatest gifts women religious can offer the nation is a witness of “communion without uniformity, conviction without hostility and truth without triumphalism.”

He presented holy obedience as a school of listening and discernment. Christian obedience, he said, begins with receptivity: asking what God is saying before deciding what one must do.

“Social media rewards immediacy—discipleship requires discernment. Political rhetoric rewards certainty—Christian wisdom often begins with silence,” Archbishop Lori said. “Commentary rewards speed—prayer rewards patience. Our nation does not simply suffer from a deficit of information—it suffers from a deficit of contemplation.”

He highlighted St. Elizabeth Ann

Seton, who responded to personal loss and uncertainty by trusting providence and allowing obedience to become a source of creativity.

“Perhaps political renewal begins not with louder voices but with quieter hearts,” he said.

While historians often emphasize the schools, hospitals and orphanages built by women religious, Archbishop Lori suggested their greatest achievement may be shaping the nation’s moral imagination.

“Before children learned algebra, they learned mercy,” he said. “Before they learned history, they learned gratitude. Before they debated political questions, they learned to examine their consciences. Before they became voters, they became disciples.”

As the nation marks 250 years of independence, he asked what kind of witness women religious will offer in the next 250 years.

The natural questions, he said, are whether membership, institutions and the Church’s cultural place will match the past. The deeper question is whether sisters will be as available to Christ as the saints who came before them.

The Church, he said, needs women religious who can build bridges, accompany others and remind the Church that it is not “a collection of competing interests but the body of Christ.”

Every generation of consecrated women has faced uncertainty, he said, but they had confidence in providence.

“The world needs women who have been seized by Christ,” Archbishop Lori said. “It needs women whose lives bear unmistakable witness to the truth that God is real, that holiness is possible, that sacrifice is fruitful and that love poured out in communion with Christ can transform the world.” †

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From the Archives



In This Photo

This photo of Dominican Sisters originally appeared in the Nov. 15, 1957, issue of the *Indiana Catholic & Record* newspaper, the predecessor to *The Criterion*. The sisters were from St. Catharine, Kentucky, and taught in one of two schools in the archdiocese that were staffed by Dominican Sisters.

Trivia Question

Which parish schools in the New Albany deanery were staffed by Dominican Sisters? Let us know your answer at bit.ly/ArchivesTrivia

Previous Trivia Answer

McCormick’s Creek State Park

AI

continued from page 1

the public square. And that puts the appropriate amount of pressure on the technology companies and on our politicians to do the right thing.

“I think we can probably all agree that our politicians are beholden to different voices, whether it’s the voice of money, donors or other political pressures. That seems to be one of the reasons the technology people are coming to the Church—particularly the Catholic Church, because we’re global, and because we’re not motivated to do what we’re doing in this [AI] square by finances.

“We have nothing to gain from AI, and we’re not motivated by politics either. We’re concerned about how this affects human dignity—the individual, the family, society and particularly the most vulnerable.

“I think that these comments have resonated deeply with the technology people, and they want to remain in conversation with us.”

OSV News: Most of us, including elected officials, don’t really know the inner workings of AI, and the concept can seem very broad and abstract. How can the USCCB AI task force help to address the issue of AI literacy, so that more people can feel they have a say in its use?

Bishop Cantú: “Even though I’ve lived in Silicon Valley for the past eight years, everything I know about AI I’ve learned in the past five months.

“Previously, I was just busy with pastoral things. But I think the impetus [to learn more about AI] came from the encyclical, as for so many other people. I’ve listened to the technologists and to those who have been in these conversations for some time, and I’ve been doing a lot of reading.

“Megan Sullivan of the University of Notre Dame [professor of philosophy and founding director of Notre Dame’s Institute for Ethics and the Common

Good] has offered to provide a menu of formation opportunities for bishops and for dioceses. We want to have a set of experts available and resources for both bishops and dioceses.”

OSV News: Should this effort have to start with the bishops, or is it something parishes should undertake as well—both a top-down and bottom-up initiative?

Bishop Cantú: “I think it’s sort of all hands on deck. I have pastors in my diocese who have started putting on AI conferences, because they have parishioners who are in the industry or because they bring people in. I don’t think we need to try to regulate that, because time is of the essence.

“‘But certainly we need to do some capacity building for our bishops, especially, because we need to use our voices as teachers of the faith. Traditionally, the Church is known to be an expert in humanity, and that’s what we need to bring to the table.

“‘One of our tech panelists [during a USCCB Sept. 16 administrative committee meeting] said, ‘Trust your voice. Just because you don’t have a background in technology doesn’t mean you can’t speak to it. Bring your concern about humanity; bring your theological voice and anthropological voice to the table.’ I think that’s important for the bishops to hear.

“‘We don’t need to be experts in technology, but it does help to have a basic understanding of how AI works, and what the upsides and concerns are.”

OSV News: Are there specific AI impacts or scenarios you’re concerned about?

Bishop Cantú: “The big one for me is labor; I’m very concerned about what this can do to the labor market.

“I live in a residential neighborhood in Silicon Valley, and I’ve seen people coming and going constantly over the past eight years—homes for sale, people moving in, and then 12 months later, people moving out. There’s this revolving door with all of these companies; they hire thousands and then they have these

massive layoffs.

“‘What does that do to people’s lives? They build up equity, establish a life and so many of them are on visas from other countries. People are concerned about displacement, whether it’s lawyers or even coders, since a lot of the technology codes better and faster than a human person.

“I have heard from at least one credible voice that the data does not suggest that there will be a massive disruption to the labor force. But as with other technological shifts in history, there will be losses, and there will also be gains of new positions that will be created. I hope that that holds true.

“Many technology people are advocating for a universal basic income [to offset industry layoffs and displacement]. And while that allows us to pay our rent and buy food, what happens to our dignity? If our anthropology from the Scriptures tells us that when we work, we participate in God’s work of creation, are we no longer participating? How does that affect the human psyche and the human spirit?”

OSV News: Are you hopeful that the bishops’ voices on AI will be heard by lawmakers, especially since President Donald Trump has dismissed calls to slow down AI development?

Bishop Cantú: “I don’t mean this in a disparaging way—it’s just the way politics works—but politicians measure the pressure that they get. Certainly, one of those pressures is a sort of moral and intellectual pressure.

“Part of what we bishops need to do is dissuade people from buying into this voice that the first company across the finish line wins, and the winner is the winner. That’s not the message we’re going to be sharing. There are some very serious things on the line here, and we need to proceed very cautiously.

“‘We need to speak with clarity. Technology people are telling us we need to pump the brakes on this. And it’s much more prudent to slow down and to have lost maybe a couple of billion dollars. Perhaps we can save human dignity and even humanity.”

OSV News: What can the faithful do to help the Church respond to the challenges of AI?

Bishop Cantú: “I would say two things, and I think they go together.

“‘First, learn what you can. You don’t need to become an expert, but learn what you can about AI. The USCCB has put together some ‘cheat sheets,’ if you will, on the encyclical that look at its salient points.

“‘Also, speak up. That is critical. Everyone is affected, and so everyone needs to make their voice heard—whether it’s to their city hall, their children’s schools and universities, and so forth. The more that we raise our voices and our concerns, it places the appropriate pressure on those who are in power.”

(To access the USCCB’s resources on “Magnifica Humanitas,” visit usccb.org/magnifica-humanitas.) †



‘One of our tech panelists ... said, “Trust your voice. Just because you don’t have a background in technology doesn’t mean you can’t speak to it. Bring your concern about humanity; bring your theological voice and anthropological voice to the table.” I think that’s important for the bishops to hear.’

—Bishop Oscar Cantú of San Jose, Calif.