



The

Criterion

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Faith and Family

Waiting can take on new meaning during Advent, page 12.



Retired Msgr. Paul Koetter types into a tablet on Oct. 29 in his office at Holy Spirit Parish in Indianapolis, where he previously served as pastor. Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease, has taken away his ability to speak. He types what he wants to say, and software on his tablet vocalizes his words in what sounds like his voice. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

Msgr. Paul Koetter continues to minister despite challenges of ALS

By Sean Gallagher

The pilgrims rode in a boat across choppy waves on the Sea of Galilee with wind gusting and rain blowing into their boat.

A greater storm was churning in the hearts and minds of the pilgrims and the priest who was leading them in their journey of faith through the Holy Land in November 2019.

Msgr. Paul Koetter, at the time pastor of Holy Spirit Parish in Indianapolis, was suffering from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), a degenerative nerve disorder commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease.

The condition was taking away his ability to speak, a prime

way he helps connect the people he serves with God, and a prime way through which God blesses him by connecting him to his parishioners.

As the waves rocked the boat, as the wind blew in the rain, the pilgrims gathered around Msgr. Koetter, lovingly known as Father Paul in the parishes in which he has served, to pray for him.

"We all prayed, our hands touching him," said Cindy Thomas, a pilgrim and a Holy Spirit parishioner. "As soon as we did that, the storm stopped. The sea calmed. The sun came out. It was like God saying, 'OK. I hear you. I've got you.' It was the most powerful thing."

See KOETTER, page 10

A Call to Civility

November 27, 2020

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

Advent, a season of preparation and hope, marks the beginning of a new liturgical year for the Church. It allows for a time of renewal that can bring about what Pope Francis has referred to as the warming of hearts and healing of wounds.



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

As we await with active anticipation to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, I offer this reflection as a means of underscoring the spirit of Pope Francis' recent encyclical

letter, "*Fratelli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship*," as a reminder of our interconnectedness as a human family and the need for our witness to hope that lies at the heart of our capacity to attract believers and transform society.

The ability of any community or group to survive, even thrive, amid adversity is the measure of civility. This is especially true during times of chaos, division and transitioning of authority. Unfortunately,

the misuse of today's social media includes the proliferation of shaming, abusing and scapegoating that marks practically every sphere of our society.

Far from the ability of being able to agree to disagree, persons of differing opinions are quick to demonize one another. With little ground for compromise, there is little possibility for authentic dialogue. Relating to everything as "black and white," one can only perceive another as "for me" or "against me." Such are the effects of the extreme polarization that exists.

The lack of civility is probably no more palpable than what we have experienced in our country during these last few months with the pandemic, social unrest and the political election process. The freedom to protest, march, advocate, hold up signs and make one's voice heard is a right that we all share. Such freedom gives none of us the

See CIVILITY, page 7

Letter in Spanish, page 8.

In virtual meeting, U.S. bishops focus on McCarrick report, pandemic and racism

WASHINGTON (CNS)—The two days of the virtual assembly of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) on Nov. 16-17 initially included discussion of the Vatican report on former cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick. But the bulk of the bishops' conversation focused on the ongoing pandemic and the Church's response to racism.

The meeting concluded with reaction to the presidential election, as Los Angeles Archbishop Jose H. Gomez, president of the USCCB, announced formation of a working group to address various issues of top importance to the Church with the new administration of President-elect Joe Biden.

The assembly, which usually takes

place in Baltimore, was virtual this year due to COVID-19 restrictions, and the public sessions were livestreamed.



Archbishop Jose H. Gomez

About 300 bishops logged on, and for the most part, they crossed the technological hurdles of making sure their individual responses came through on the teleconference format.

The main topic on Nov. 16, added late to the bishops' agenda, was discussion on the Vatican report on

McCarrick, released less than a week before on Nov. 10.

Bishop Joseph E. Strickland of Tyler, Texas, said the report—which described McCarrick's ascent to the highest rungs of the Church, even amid rumors of abuse—read like a list of the seven deadly sins.

"It's very clear that there's still very much a tendency in the world and in the Church to turn a blind eye to many of these sins," he added during the 45 minutes of discussion about the long-awaited 460-page report.

Chicago's Cardinal Blase J. Cupich said Pope Francis had taken historic action in issuing the document as well as other unprecedented measures.

See BISHOPS, page 3

Supreme Court allows execution of Texas inmate to proceed

WASHINGTON (CNS)—Late on Nov. 19, the Supreme Court denied a stay of execution for federal inmate Orlando Hall, who was put to death by lethal injection an hour later, just before midnight.

Last minute filings led to a district judge's injunction earlier that day, temporarily halting the execution. The decision was immediately appealed to the Supreme Court. Justices Stephen Breyer, Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan dissented.

The court also rejected, with no noted dissents, three separate emergency requests filed days prior to Hall's execution, seeking a postponement.

Hall, 49, was the eighth federal inmate executed at the Federal Correctional Complex in Terre Haute since the Trump administration resumed federal executions this past summer. He was convicted of kidnapping and killing a Texas teenager in 1994.

Last minute appeals for Hall stressed that bias played a role in his death sentence. Hall is Black, and his sentence was recommended by an all-white jury. His lawyers also said that COVID-19 restrictions limited their ability to help him.

The Supreme Court's action in Hall's case was the first death penalty decision for Justice Amy Coney Barrett. In 1998, she co-wrote an article saying Catholic judges shouldn't have to recuse themselves in death penalty cases because of the Church's opposition to capital punishment.

On Nov. 18, referring to Hall's pending execution and two other federal executions slated for December, two U.S. bishops' committee chairmen called on the government to end this practice.

"We ask President [Donald J.] Trump and Attorney General [William] Barr, as an act of witness to the dignity of all human life: stop these executions," said the statement from Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of

Oklahoma City, chairman of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, and Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City, Kan., chairman of the USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities.

Earlier in the day of Hall's execution, U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan said it had to be temporarily halted while the court examined the issues raised by Hall's attorneys.

"The court is deeply concerned that the government intends to proceed with a method of execution that this court and the Court of Appeals have found violates federal law," she wrote.

Hall and Brandon Bernard, scheduled to be executed on Dec. 10, had joined a group of 13 inmates appealing that the drug used by the federal government in executions causes "excruciating pain and suffering before dying" when not paired with a separate pain-relieving drug.

Their attorneys told the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit that this execution method was in violation of the Eighth Amendment prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment.

Although the three-judge panel allowed the executions to go forward, it said the lower court was wrong to throw out the inmates' challenge to the execution drug used by the federal government and would allow litigation against this method to continue.

In a separate ruling on Nov. 19, a federal judge postponed the scheduled Dec. 8 execution of federal death-row inmate Lisa Montgomery until at least Dec. 31. Montgomery, who would be the first woman executed by the federal government in more than six decades, sought the postponement because her attorney had contracted the coronavirus after visiting her in prison.

President-elect Joe Biden has said he will end federal executions and plans to incentivize states to stop executions. †



Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

December 1-8, 2020

December 1 – 10 a.m.
Clergy Advent Day of Prayer at St. Bartholomew Parish, Columbus

December 3 – 10 a.m.
Catholic Center Connection meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center, Indianapolis

December 3 – noon
Mass for feast of St. Francis Xavier at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis

December 3 – 3 p.m. CST
Region VII Bishops' virtual meeting

December 3 – 6:30 p.m.
Baptism at St. Luke the Evangelist Church, Indianapolis

December 6 – 4 p.m.
Seminar Prayer and Dinner at Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ Parish, Indianapolis

December 7 – 7 p.m.
Mass of Confirmation for youths of Holy Spirit Parish in Indianapolis, at Holy Spirit Church

December 8 – 10 a.m.
Mass at Marian University, Indianapolis

December 8 – noon
Mass for the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

December 8 – 3 p.m.
Indiana Bishops' Province meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center

How has your Catholic education had an impact on your life?

As part of our coverage for the upcoming Catholic Schools Week supplement in late January, *The Criterion* is inviting our readers to share their thoughts and stories about how their Catholic education has had an impact on their lives and their families.

Send your submissions to John Shaughnessy by e-mail 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. †



Archbishop Thompson calls for prayer, fasting regarding federal executions

In light of a federal execution carried out on Nov. 19, two scheduled in December, and two more slated for January, Archbishop Charles C. Thompson is asking Catholics in central and southern Indiana during Advent to pray and fast for the victims who have been killed, the families of the victims, and the inmates who face the death penalty.

In his message, the archbishop reflected on the sanctity of all human life.

Indiana's bishops in October

of 2019 issued a statement calling for a renewed moratorium on the death penalty (www.archindy.org/archbishop/deathpenalty2019.html). Archbishop Thompson reiterated the Church's stance in opposition to the death penalty in June (www.archindy.org/archbishop/deathpenalty2020.html).

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops on Nov. 17 issued a statement renewing its call to stop executions (www.usccb.org/news/2020/us-bishop-chairmen-renew-call-stop-executions). †



Pope's prayer intentions for December

- **For a Life of Prayer**—We pray that our personal relationship with Jesus Christ be nourished by the Word of God and a life of prayer.

See Pope Francis' monthly intentions at www.archindy.org/popesintentions.

Television Masses

The following channels and times show when Sunday Masses may be viewed over-the-air in different areas of the archdiocese:

Indianapolis: WHMB, 40.1, 9:30 a.m. Cincinnati: EKRC, 12.2, 8:30 a.m.
Indianapolis: WNDY, 23, 6:30 a.m. Evansville: WEVV, 44.2, 7 a.m.
Terre Haute: WTHI, 10.3, 10 a.m. Louisville: WBNA, 21, 7 a.m.



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BISHOPS

continued from page 1

"It really has been a watershed moment," he said. "And something that we should continue to study and read."

The cardinal also stressed the need to "make sure that we never again have a situation where anyone from our conference is taking sides in this, with the Holy Father or challenging him or even being with those who are calling for his resignation. That kind of thing really has to cease, and the Holy Father pointed the way in which we take up this initiative together in a collegial manner."

He said the more "that we listen to victims and make it public that we're meeting with victims, as the Holy Father does on a regular basis, the word will get out there that we are on the side of victims. And we have to continue to do that."

The McCarrick report also overlapped into other parts of the meeting. In his opening address, Archbishop Gomez paused at the start to remember the children and adults within the Church who are victim-survivors of clergy sexual abuse.

Acknowledging the McCarrick report, he also expressed "deep sorrow" and offered prayers the victim-survivors "might find healing and hope."

The archbishop also pointed to the ongoing suffering caused by the coronavirus pandemic, noting that people's faith in God "has been shaken" by the pandemic and related economic turmoil, and he urged the Church leaders to help people navigate this enormous challenge.

The current times, with social unrest and uncertainty caused by the pandemic, "call for heroic Christianity," he explained. In response, he said: "We need to continue to form and empower missionary disciples, as Pope Francis calls us to do."

Archbishop Christophe Pierre, the papal nuncio to the United States, also spoke about the pandemic, as one of the "dark clouds" looming over today's world.

"Our mission is to heal the world. ... I encourage you during your meeting to

look at ways that you can feed your hope and that of your flock," he said.

In a 45-minute discussion about the pandemic on Nov. 17, several bishops spoke about parishes livestreaming Masses and their efforts to keep in touch with parishioners, particularly the elderly, and learning how to help people access food and other basic necessities.

They also spoke of the spiritual lessons that have occurred, saying there has been a renewed desire among Catholics for the Eucharist.

Bishop Daniel E. Flores of Brownsville, Texas, said he has arrived at parishes to see people kneeling outside, praying for the chance to receive holy Communion and the return of normal worship experiences.

"This is the renewal that I find very personally edifying and a source of great strength," he said.

In a practical response to the pandemic, the bishops approved a budget for the year 2021 that took into consideration the economic impact of the coronavirus.

Bishop Gregory L. Parkes of St. Petersburg, Fla., USCCB treasurer and chairman of the USCCB Committee on Budget and Finance, said the USCCB had started trimming budget outlays in 2020 when it appeared the coronavirus pandemic was going to stay far longer than expected. One such measure was a pay freeze and travel restrictions for all USCCB employees.

Due to "consideration for the pressures each of us face in the dioceses," he said no assessment increase is being proposed for 2022.

In another action related to the pandemic and to the ongoing discussion nationwide on racial inequality, the bishops approved addendums to their four-year strategic plan addressing the impact of these issues. The plan, adopted a year ago, will go into effect in January 2021.

Continuing their look at the sin of racism, the bishops approved the renewal of the Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism for three more years.

They also discussed on Nov. 17 their efforts to address racism in their dioceses. Bishop Shelton J. Fabre of

Houma-Thibodaux, La., and chair of the USCCB's Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism, reminded the bishops that when they approved their pastoral on racism two years ago, they had no idea how the nation would have such a reckoning with racial inequality as it has experienced this past summer.

He said the document, among other things, "unequivocally declares that racism is a life issue."

It certainly was a life issue for Bishop Mark J. Seitz of El Paso, Texas, who recalled how a racially motivated mass shooting in his diocese last year left 23 people dead and as many injured.

"It really brought home the fact that white supremacy is not a harmless fringe ideology, but that it is a death-dealing ideology," said Bishop Seitz. "And it also reminded us that words matter. Words that denigrate immigrants and other people of color really matter and feed into these ways of thinking."

Initially, the bishops did not address the presidential election, except when Archbishop Gomez, responding to a reporter's question during the Nov. 16 news conference, said the USCCB's congratulations to Biden was just an acknowledgment, and that he and his fellow bishops "respect the election process."

At the close of the two-day meeting, Archbishop Gomez said several bishops had come to him with concerns in the wake of the election.

"We are facing a unique moment in the history of our country," he said, noting the election of a Catholic president "presents certain opportunities but also certain challenges."

The archbishop said the president-elect "has given us reason to believe his faith commitments will lead to certain policies that we favor," listing immigration, aid to refugees and the poor, racial justice, capital punishment and climate change among them.

He also said there is the expectation



Detroit Archbishop Allen H. Vigneron, vice president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, leads the opening prayer on Nov. 17 at the USCCB headquarters in Washington during the bishops' virtual fall meeting. (CNS photo/CNS photo/Bob Roller)

that Biden "will support policies that are against some fundamental values we hold dear as Catholics," such as a possible repeal of the Hyde Amendment, which prevents the use of federal funds to be used for abortions, and the codifying in law of *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court decision which legalized abortion.

When politicians who profess the Catholic faith support these policies, the archbishop said, it "creates confusion among the faithful about what the Church actually teaches."

For that reason, he said, he was forming a working group led by Archbishop Allen H. Vigneron of Detroit, USCCB vice president, which will address issues surrounding the election of a Catholic president and policies that may come about that would be in conflict with Catholic teaching and the bishops' priorities. †

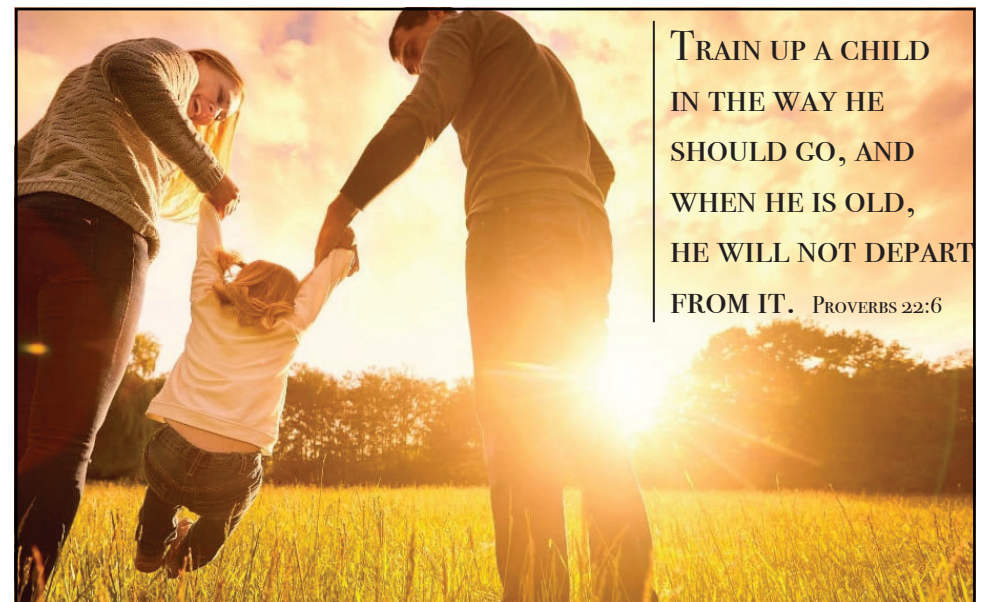
SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral Masses continue to be livestreamed

As the local Church continues to deal with the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, daily Masses at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis are being livestreamed.

The daily Masses at the cathedral, now at 5:15 p.m. on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and at noon on Tuesday and Thursday,

are livestreamed at www.ssppc.org/streaming. You can also view recordings of the liturgy at the same location after Masses have concluded. Additionally, Mass recordings are being posted daily at www.facebook.com/SSPPCathedral.

The 10 a.m. Sunday Mass from the cathedral is livestreamed as well. †



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www.archindy.org/UCA



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Editorial

What happened to Advent?

Apparently we're now in the Christmas season. At least, that's what it looks like. Christmas lights are up all around the city and in rural areas, and Christmas celebrations, even if in limited form because of COVID-19, are ready to begin in earnest. Of course, the stores have had their Christmas decorations up for a long time already.

Soon people who still send Christmas cards to relatives and friends will get them in the mail, and they'll start to wish one another a "Merry Christmas"—unless they think that sounds too religious and they substitute "happy holidays."

But what happened to Advent? This Sunday, Nov. 29, will be the first day of the Advent season, not the Christmas season. Doesn't anyone observe Advent anymore?

Yes, the Catholic Church, among others, does. It doesn't rush the season as our secular society does. Rather, it prepares for the season of Christmas. Then it observes the Christmas season until the feast of the baptism of Jesus, two Sundays after Jan. 6, long after most people have taken down the Christmas tree, stashed away their Christmas decorations and stopped listening to Christmas music.

Advent has a twofold character for Christians. It is both a season meant to prepare us for Christmas when Christ's first coming to us is commemorated, and a season when we should direct our minds and hearts to await Christ's second coming at the end of time. It is, therefore, a period for devout and joyful expectation.

Historically, some period of preparation for Christmas began at least as far back as the mid-fourth century, but the type of celebration and its duration have varied. In some places, the season was longer than it is today—in Gaul (France) it began on the feast of St. Martin of Tours—on Nov. 11—while in other places it was rather brief.

Even today the length of the season varies. For Roman Catholics, this year's Advent will be three weeks and five days. It can be as short as three weeks and one day. The Ambrosian Rite's Advent lasts six weeks. (The Ambrosian Rite is one of the Catholic Church's non-Roman rites that exists in and around Milan, Italy, and is named after St. Ambrose, who was archbishop of Milan from 374 to 397.)

On the other hand, most of the Catholic Church's Eastern Rites observe only a short "pre-feast" period before Christmas.

Advent was sometimes observed like Lent, as a time of penance, again mainly in Gaul. In 11th-century Scotland, St. Margaret and her husband, King Malcolm, observed "two Lents," one before Christmas and the other before Easter, with fasting and extra almsgiving.

In most places today, the penitential aspect of Advent has been replaced with joyful anticipation.

During the first part of Advent, until Dec. 16, that joyful anticipation is directed toward Christ's second coming.

The first Scripture reading during Masses is usually from the prophet Isaiah, while the Gospel readings show how Jesus fulfilled the prophetic promises. John the Baptist, with his emphasis on repentance, makes his appearance.

Beginning on Dec. 17, the Old Testament readings proclaim the most important Messianic prophecies, while the Gospel readings describe the events immediately before the birth of Christ. Mary and Joseph, of course, are the most prominent figures.

One of the popular Advent devotions, in homes as well as in churches, is the Advent wreath. It is a circle of evergreens with four candles that are lighted successively in the weeks of Advent to symbolize the approaching celebration of the birth of Christ, the Light of the World. The wreath originated among German Catholics and Lutherans in the 16th century.

There is certainly nothing wrong with Catholics joining our culture's secular celebration of the Christmas season, especially with its emphasis on gift giving and making charitable contributions to organizations that help the poor. Christmas has long been a wondrous time for children, and that's good. Santa Claus has long been an important part of Christmas for children. However, as our society joyfully anticipates the secular season of Christmas, let us Christians remember its religious significance. Christians have long urged that we "keep Christ in Christmas," and that's a good place to start.

—John F. Fink

Top photo: A lit candle is seen on an Advent wreath. Advent begins on Nov. 29. (CNS photo/Lisa Johnston, St Louis Review)

Bottom photo: A sculpture shows Mary with Joseph traveling to Bethlehem in a Missouri church. (CNS photo/Lisa A. Johnston)



Amid the Fray/Greg Erlandson

What the McCarrick report means for the Church

Two years ago, Pope Francis called for a full accounting of how Theodore E. McCarrick was able to rise through Church ranks, and he promised to make the report public. Some people



disbelieved such a report would ever see the light of day. Others feared it would.

On Nov. 10, Pope Francis kept his word. The report is unprecedented, reading like no other Vatican document

I can recall. It is not clothed in dense Church-speak or vague references to misdeeds. It is at times graphic and always revealing. As a whole, it is a devastating portrait of personal deception and institutional blindness, of opportunities missed and faith shattered.

For those of us who have experience with Vatican documents and Vatican investigations, the report is amazing in its efforts to be transparent. At 449 pages, the report is exhaustive and at times exhausting. Not only were more than 90 interviews conducted, but extensive quotations from relevant Vatican correspondence and documents reveal the internal back and forth between individuals and offices.

There are heroes to be found, even in the unsettling story of how McCarrick rose through the ranks despite persistent rumors that he was sharing his bed with seminarians and priests. Cardinal John J. O'Connor of New York, for one. He not only raised his concerns, he did so in writing, trying to stop McCarrick's ascendancy to the cardinalate see of Washington.

More courageous still were the victim survivors who tried to speak up, the mother who sought to protect her children, the counselors who warned of the allegations they were hearing.

Unfortunately, the lasting impression is that those who wanted to raise concerns were not listened to, and rumors were dismissed rather than investigated thoroughly.

Like many large and not particularly

efficient organizations, the Church is a series of silos, inhibiting close communication and collaboration. Also like large organizations, it is inherently cautious and self-protective. Add to this the deference given to rank and hierarchy, and it is too easy to see how the default was to explain away, ignore or hide.

There are still elements that I wish had been explored further. One is the money trail. While the report says McCarrick did not buy his appointment to Washington, it makes clear that he was a prolific fundraiser and valued as such. He spread his largesse around in the form of gifts to many Church officials that in retrospect raise ethical concerns. An audit of the money trail seems in order.

Also disturbing is that there were many seminarians and priests in the dioceses where McCarrick served who had firsthand knowledge of what happened at his beach house because they were there too. What has happened to those men? Have they continued to remain silent? If so, what does this tell us about the culture that may still remain?

The most important lesson may be simply this: If you see something, say something. Fear of retaliation, fear of being ignored, fear of authority can no longer govern laity or clergy. Even anonymous allegations must be paid attention to.

At the same time, an allegation is not a conviction. A man's vocation cannot be ruined because of a rumor. Justice demands we do not simply convict by allegation, but it also demands that allegations not be ignored.

The sin of abuse, the sin of covering up or ignoring the abuse will not disappear with this report. Pope Francis, who himself failed to meet his own standards in places like Chile, knows the challenge. He must continue to press for accountability and transparency without fear or favor, and both laity and clergy must continue to press for reform and renewal.

(Greg Erlandson, director and editor-in-chief of Catholic News Service, can be reached at gerlandson@catholicnews.com.) †

THE COLLEGE OF CARDINALS

After the Nov. 28 consistory the College of Cardinals will have 128 electors.

ELECTORS BY REGION



COUNTRIES WITH THE MOST ELECTORS



Source: Catholic News Service

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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.

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. †



Christ the Cornerstone

Watch! We do not know when Christ will come again

“Jesus said to his disciples: ‘Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come. It is like a man traveling abroad. He leaves home and places his servants in charge, each with his own work, and orders the gatekeeper to be on the watch. Watch, therefore; you do not know when the lord of the house is coming, whether in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning. May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to all: ‘Watch!’ ” (Mk 13:33–37)

The First Sunday of Advent seems especially welcome this year. Perhaps, because this year has been so unlike previous years, the chance to begin again has greater significance. Or maybe the challenges and deprivations of the past year have increased, and deepened, our longing for the coming again of our Savior Jesus Christ.

Sunday’s Gospel reading from St. Mark (Mk 13:33–37) tells us that our Lord’s second coming will be a surprise. We don’t know the day or the time. All we can do is wait and be alert. “May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping!” (Mk 13:36)

During this time of pandemic, it’s clear that we’re waiting for several things: a cure for a modern day plague (COVID-19), economic recovery, political and social stability, and a “return to normal” to whatever extent this can be accomplished. We are understandably impatient after more than nine months of fear, deprivation and uncertainty.

Sunday’s First Reading from the Book of Isaiah (Is 63:16b-17, 19b; 64:2-7) describes our impatience and anxiety:

“Why do you let us wander, O Lord, from your ways, and harden our hearts so that we fear you not? Return for the sake of your servants, the tribes of your heritage. ... Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, with the mountains quaking before you” (Is 63:17, 19).

We acknowledge that we have lost our way, and we long for the Lord’s return to save us from both external and internal threats to our health, safety and spiritual well-being. As we pray in Sunday’s responsorial psalm:

“O shepherd of Israel, hearken, From your throne upon the cherubim, shine forth. Rouse your power,

And come to save us” (Ps 80).

There is a paradox here. Advent recalls our longing for the Savior’s return, but it also challenges us to remember that our salvation has already occurred in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

The Blessed Hope that we await now is the One who came among us as a man 2,000 years ago and who is present to us in his Word, his sacraments (especially the Eucharist), and in our encounters with our sisters and brothers in his name. The paradox is that what we are longing for is something we already have—the healing power of Jesus Christ.

The fact remains that we must be vigilant. We must wait in joyful hope for the “new normal” that will happen when our Lord returns to ensure peace, justice and human dignity for all. We must strenuously resist the temptation to despair or become complacent or indifferent, especially toward the suffering of others. And we must do everything in our power to make sure that we are ready for the changes that will occur when the Lord returns on the Last Day.

In the Second reading for the First Sunday of Advent, St. Paul tells us how

blessed we are—in spite of everything.

“I give thanks to my God always on your account for the grace of God bestowed on you in Christ Jesus, that in him you were enriched in every way, with all discourse and all knowledge, as the testimony to Christ was confirmed among you, so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 1:4-7).

We are “enriched in every way,” and we are not “lacking in any spiritual gift” as we await the Blessed Hope who is, in fact, here with us now by the miracle of God’s grace.

This means that we can endure the devastating effects of the pandemic—provided that we watch for Jesus as he manifests his presence among us in sacred Scripture, in the Eucharist and in our encounters (socially distant but spiritually close) with everyone we meet. Alone, we are no match for the evil we confront every day. Together, with the grace of God bestowed on us in Christ, we can prevail.

Let’s pray for the coming of our Lord this Advent. Let’s ask him to help us be ready and watch for him patiently until he returns. †



Cristo, la piedra angular

¡Estemos atentos! No sabemos cuándo vendrá Cristo de nuevo

“Jesús dijo a sus discípulos: ‘Estén alerta, velen; porque no saben cuándo es el tiempo señalado. Es como un hombre que se fue de viaje, y al salir de su casa dejó a sus siervos encargados, asignándole a cada uno su tarea, y ordenó al portero que estuviera alerta. Por tanto, velen, porque no saben cuándo viene el señor de la casa, si al atardecer, o a la medianoche, o al canto del gallo, o al amanecer; no sea que venga de repente y los halle dormidos. Y lo que a ustedes digo, a todos digo: ¡Velen!’ ” (Mc 15:33-37).

El Primer Domingo de Adviento parece ser especialmente bienvenido este año. Tal vez, debido a que este ha sido un año tan diferente a los anteriores, la oportunidad de comenzar de nuevo tiene mayor importancia. O tal vez los desafíos y las privaciones del año pasado han aumentado, y profundizado, nuestro anhelo por la venida de nuestro Salvador Jesucristo.

La lectura del Evangelio del domingo del libro de san Marcos (Mc 13:33-37) nos dice que la segunda venida de nuestro Señor será una sorpresa. No sabemos ni el día ni la hora y lo único que podemos hacer es esperar y estar alerta. ¡“No sea que venga de repente y los halle dormidos”! (Mc 13:36).

Durante esta época de pandemia,

está claro que esperamos varias cosas: una cura para una plaga moderna (la COVID-19), la recuperación económica, la estabilidad política y social, y un “retorno a la normalidad” en la medida en que esto se pueda lograr. Estamos comprensiblemente impacientes después de más de nueve meses de miedo, privación e incertidumbre.

La primera lectura del domingo del libro de Isaías (Is 63:16b-17, 19b; 64:2-7) describe nuestra impaciencia y ansiedad:

“¿Por qué, oh Señor, nos haces desviar de Tus caminos y endureces nuestro corazón a Tu temor? Vuélvete por amor de Tus siervos, las tribus de Tu heredad. [...] ¡Oh, si rasgaras los cielos y descendieras! Si los montes se estremecieran ante Tu presencia” (Is 63:17; 64:2).

Reconocemos que nos hemos extraviado del camino, y anhelamos el regreso del Señor para salvarnos de las amenazas externas e internas a nuestra salud, seguridad y bienestar espiritual. Como rezamos en el salmo responsorial del domingo:

“Presta oído, oh Pastor de Israel; Tú que estás sentado más alto que los querubines; ¡resplandece! Y ven a salvarnos” (Sal 80).
Esto encierra una paradoja. El

Adviento recuerda nuestro anhelo por el regreso del Salvador, pero también nos desafía a recordar que nuestra salvación ya ha ocurrido en la vida, muerte y resurrección de Jesús.

La Bendita Esperanza que anhelamos ahora es la que estuvo entre nosotros como hombre hace 2,000 años y que se hace presente en su Palabra, en sus sacramentos (especialmente la Eucaristía), y en nuestros encuentros con nuestros hermanos y hermanas en su nombre. La paradoja es que lo que anhelamos es algo que ya tenemos, el poder curativo de Jesucristo.

El hecho es que debemos estar atentos. Debemos aguardar con alegre esperanza la «nueva normalidad» que ocurrirá cuando nuestro Señor regrese para garantizar la paz, la justicia y la dignidad humana para todos. Debemos resistir enérgicamente la tentación de desesperar o de volvernos complacientes o indiferentes, especialmente ante el sufrimiento de los demás. Y debemos hacer todo lo que esté a nuestro alcance para asegurarnos de estar listos para los cambios que ocurrirán cuando el Señor regrese en el Día Final.

En la segunda lectura del primer domingo de Adviento, san Pablo nos dice lo bendecidos que somos, a pesar de todo.

“Siempre doy gracias a mi Dios por ustedes, por la gracia de Dios que les fue dada en Cristo Jesús. Porque en todo ustedes fueron enriquecidos en Él, en toda palabra y en todo conocimiento, así como el testimonio acerca de Cristo fue confirmado en ustedes; de manera que nada les falta en ningún don, esperando ansiosamente la revelación de nuestro Señor Jesucristo” (1 Cor 1:4-7).

Estamos “enriquecidos en todos los sentidos” y no nos “falta ningún don espiritual” mientras esperamos la Bendita Esperanza que está, de hecho, aquí con nosotros ahora por el milagro de la gracia de Dios.

Esto significa que podremos soportar los efectos devastadores de la pandemia siempre que vigilemos a Jesús mientras manifiesta su presencia entre nosotros en las Sagradas Escrituras, en la Eucaristía y en nuestros encuentros (socialmente distantes, pero espiritualmente cercanos) con todos los que nos encontramos. Solos, no somos rivales para el mal al que nos enfrentamos cada día; juntos, con la gracia de Dios otorgada en Cristo, podemos prevalecer.

Oremos por la gracia de la venida de nuestro Señor este Adviento. Pidámosle que nos ayude a estar listos y a vigilarlo pacientemente hasta que regrese. †

Events Calendar

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

November 22-30

Becky's Place virtual Run for Hope 5K, \$30 includes T-shirt, register online through November or in person per time and date above. Information, registration: beckysplacebedford.org.

December 1

Becky's Place virtual Open House, 7-8 p.m., Facebook livestream tour, interviews from Catholic Charities Bloomington women's homeless shelter in Bedford, free. Information: 812-275-5773 or chayes@ccbin.org.

Indiana Right to Life virtual Christmas Gala, 7-8 p.m., featuring two speakers: pro-life executive film producer/president of Movie to Movement and the Human Rights Education Organization

James Jones, and twin abortion survivor Claire Culwell, free. Registration: cutt.ly/IRTLGala. Information: 317-413-9123.

December 2

MCL Cafeteria, 5520 Castleton Corner Lane, Indianapolis. **Solo Seniors**, 5 p.m., Catholic, educational, charitable and social singles—separated, widowed or divorced—age 50 and older, new members welcome, also call about regular Friday night dinner events. Information: 317-796-8605 or 317-243-0777.

December 4

Women's Care Center, 4901 W. 86th St., Indianapolis. **First Friday Mass**, 5 p.m., Father James Farrell celebrant, optional tour of center to

follow. Information: 317-829-6800, www.womenscarecenter.org.

Our Lady of the Greenwood Church, 335 S. Meridian St., Greenwood. **First Friday bilingual celebration of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus**, Mass 5:45 p.m., exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, following Mass until 9 p.m., sacrament of reconciliation available. Information: 317-750-7309, msross1@hotmail.com.

December 5

John Paul II Parish, St. Paul Chapel, 216 Schellers Ave., Sellersburg. **First Saturday Marian Devotion**, 8 a.m. rosary, meditation, prayer; 8:30 a.m. Mass with confessions prior. Information: 812-246-3522.

St. Michael Church, 145 St. Michael Blvd., Brookville. **First Saturday Marian Devotional Prayer Group**, Mass, devotional prayers, rosary, 8 a.m. Information: 765-647-5462.

December 8

Sisters of Providence **virtual "Act justly, Love tenderly, Walk humbly" Monthly Taizé Prayer Service**, 7-8 p.m., silent and spoken prayers, simple music, silence. Link: cutt.ly/Taize. Information: 812-535-2952, provctr@spsmw.org.

December 11

Our Lady of Guadalupe online celebration, hosted by St. Mary Parish in New Albany, 10 p.m., rosary, includes "The

Apparitions of Mary to Juan Diego" play and songs. Link: facebook.com/stmarysnewalbany

December 12

Our Lady of Guadalupe online Mass in Spanish, hosted by St. Lawrence Parish in Indianapolis, 11 a.m. Link: facebook.com/MinisterioHispano2006.

Our Lady of Guadalupe bilingual online celebration, hosted by St. Joseph Parish in Shelbyville, 4:30 p.m. rosary followed by Mass. Link: facebook.com/stjoes Shelby.

Our Lady of Guadalupe online celebration, hosted by St. Mary Parish in New Albany, 6:30 p.m. rosary followed by Mass.

Link: facebook.com/stmarysnewalbany.

December 16

Calvary Mausoleum Chapel, 435 W. Troy Ave., Indianapolis. **Christmas Mass**, 2 p.m. Information: 317-784-4439 or www.catholiccemeteries.cc.

December 17

St. Joseph Parish, 1401 S. Mickley Ave., Indianapolis. **Third Thursday Adoration**, interceding for women experiencing crisis pregnancy, 11 a.m.-7 p.m., with Mass at 5:45 p.m.

Our Lady of Peace Cemetery and Mausoleum, 9001 Haverstick Road, Indianapolis. **Christmas Mass**, 2 p.m. Information: 317-574-8898 or www.catholiccemeteries.cc. †

Retreats and Programs

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

December 11

Sisters of St. Francis, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **A Day of Quiet Renewal**, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., self-guided tour or private retreat, dine at local restaurants or bring packed lunch, room with bathroom available \$20, or \$70 with spiritual direction. Information and registration: 812-933-6437 or cutt.ly/oldbgprograms.

December 12

Sisters of St. Francis, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **Advent Retreat**, 9:30-11:30 p.m., led by Sister Olga Wittekind, \$25. Information and registration: 812-933-6437, cutt.ly/oldbgprograms.

December 3

Virtual Coffee Talk: Native American Spirituality, via Zoom, 10:45 a.m.-noon, Franciscan Sister Mary Ann Stoffregen, presenter, focuses on Black Elk, Oglala Lakota medicine man and convert to Catholicism, freewill donation. Information: center@oldenburgosf.com. Registration: cutt.ly/BlackElk.

December 15-18

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Advent Days of Silence**, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.,

includes breakfast and lunch, room to use throughout the day, access to common areas and grounds, \$35 per day, overnight stay (depending on availability) additional \$28, \$9 dinner when available. Information and registration: Jennifer Burger, 317-545-7681, jburger@archindy.org, www.archindy.org/fatima. Spiritual direction available for additional suggested donation, contact Georgene Beiriger, gbeiriger@archindy.org, 317-545-7681, ext. 105.

December 26

Sisters of St. Francis, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **Audubon Bird Count**, 7:30 a.m.-1 p.m., meet at Michaela Farm, no experience necessary, \$10 for lunch. Information, registration: center@oldenburgosf.com or www.oldenburgfranciscancenter.org/programs.html.

January 6

Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **Contemplative Prayer**, 3-4:30 p.m., Franciscan Sister Olga Wittekind facilitator, freewill donation. Information and registration: center@oldenburgosf.com or visit oldenburgfranciscancenter.org/programs.

Providence Spirituality and Conference Center, Foley Room, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Art and Soul Creation Guild**, 9:30 a.m.-noon, annual membership \$30 per person plus \$5 for each additional monthly session. Registration and information: 812-535-2952, provctr@spsmw.org or www.spsmw.org/event.

January 7

Providence Spirituality and Conference Center, Havlik Center at Providence Hall, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Art and Soul Creation Guild**, 6:30-8:30 p.m., annual membership \$30 per person plus \$5 for each additional monthly session. Registration and information: 812-535-2952, provctr@spsmw.org or www.spsmw.org/event.

January 9

Virtual Forgiveness Retreat, Oldenburg Franciscan Center via Zoom, 9:30-11:30 a.m., Franciscan Sister Bernice Stenger facilitator, \$25. Information and registration: center@oldenburgosf.com or visit oldenburgfranciscancenter.org/programs. †

Benedict Inn gift shop annual Christmas sale going on now through Dec. 23

Shop INN-Spired, located in the Benedict Inn Retreat & Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., in Beech Grove, will host its annual Christmas sale now through Dec. 23.

The gift shop sells books, music, unique gifts, religious items and jewelry. Many items have been prayerfully made by the Sisters of St. Benedict at the adjoining Our Lady of Grace Monastery: hand-crafted cards by Sister Bernardine Ludwig; afghans and character hats by Sister Cathy Anne Lepore; rosaries by Sister Nicolette Etienne; children's crafting aprons with crayons and scissors by Sister Mary Carol Messmer; original paintings by Sister Mary Sue Freiberger;

pottery by Sister Carol Falkner and Sister Jennifer Mechtild Horner; books by Sister Mary Margaret Funk; and inspirational music recorded by the sisters.

Mention seeing this announcement in *The Criterion* to receive an additional 15% off purchases of more than \$50.

Purchases from Shop INN-Spired support the ministries of the Benedict Inn Retreat & Conference Center and the Sisters of St. Benedict at Our Lady of Grace Monastery.

Normal hours for Shop INN-Spired are Mon.-Fri. from 9 a.m.-4 p.m., and from 9 a.m.-noon on Saturdays in December. Call 317-788-7581 for more information. †

Wedding

ANNIVERSARIES

60 Years



ROBERT AND ALMA (PRINGLE) BLAKE, members of Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Indianapolis, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on Nov. 19. The couple was married in Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Indianapolis on Nov. 19, 1960. They have one child: Christina Tuley. The couple also has one grandchild. †

55 Years



DALE AND JOAN (NOBBE) GREIWE, members of St. Mary Parish in Greensburg, will celebrate their 55th wedding anniversary on Nov. 27. The couple was married in St. Mary Church in Greensburg on Nov. 27, 1965. They have four children: Miranda Burt, Carla Rekucki, Craig and Jeff Greiwe. The couple also has 10 grandchildren. †

50 Years



LAWRENCE AND MARY (HAGERTY) DOUGHERTY, members of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Indianapolis, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on Nov. 28. The couple was married in St. Mary Church in Kalamazoo, Mich., on Nov. 28, 1970. They have three children: Megan McLarty, Brian and Kevin Dougherty. The couple also has six grandchildren. †



JOE AND SUSAN (BECKER) HUSER, former members of St. Lawrence Parish in Indianapolis, now members of Holy Spirit at Geist Parish in Fishers, Ind. (Lafayette Diocese), will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on Nov. 28. The couple was married in Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Indianapolis on Nov. 28, 1970. They have three children: Leo, Paul and David Huser. The couple also has two grandchildren. †

Events and retreats can be submitted to The Criterion by logging on to www.archindy.org/events/submission, or by mailing us at 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202, ATTN: Ann Lewis, or by fax at 317-236-1593.

Couples with anniversaries of 50, 55, 60, 65, 70 or more years : go to bit.ly/2M4MQms.

Dream big, don't settle for less, pope tells young people

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Young people today should not waste their lives dreaming of obtaining trivial things that provide only a fleeting moment of joy, but aspire to the greatness God wants for them, Pope Francis said.

Celebrating Mass on the feast of Christ the King on Nov. 22, the pope told young people that God “does not want us to narrow our horizons or to remain parked on the roadside of life,” but instead he “wants us to race boldly and joyfully toward lofty goals.”

“We were not created to dream about vacations or the weekend, but to make God’s dreams come true in this world,” he said. “God made us capable of dreaming, so that we could embrace the beauty of life.”

At the end of the Mass, young people from Panama, the host country of World Youth Day 2019, handed over the World Youth Day cross to young people from Lisbon, Portugal, where the next international gathering is expected to take place in August 2023.

The handoff originally was scheduled for April 5, Palm Sunday, but was

postponed because of the lockdowns and travel bans in place to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

In his homily, the pope reflected on the day’s Gospel reading from St. Matthew, in which Jesus tells his disciples that the good done to the least ones are done to him.

Pope Francis said that works of mercy such as feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger and visiting the sick or imprisoned are Jesus’ “‘gift list’ for the eternal wedding feast he will share with us in heaven.”

This reminder, he said, is especially for young people as “you strive to realize your dreams in life.”

He also explained that if young people today dream “about real glory and not the glory of this passing world,” the works of mercy are the path to follow because those works “give glory to God more than anything else.

“Life, we come to see, is a time for making robust, decisive, eternal choices,” the pope said. “Trivial choices lead to a trivial life; great choices to a life of greatness. Indeed, we become what we

choose, for better or for worse.”

By choosing God, young people can grow in love and happiness, he said. But one can possess a full life “only by giving it away.”

“Jesus knows that if we are self-absorbed and indifferent, we remain paralyzed, but if we give ourselves to others, we become free,” he said.

Pope Francis also warned of the obstacles one faces in giving his or her life for others, especially “feverish consumerism,” which can “overwhelm our hearts with superfluous things.

“An obsession with pleasure may seem



Pope Francis looks on as youths from Panama hand over the World Youth Day cross to their Portuguese peers at the end of Pope Francis' Mass at the Vatican on Nov. 22. (CNS photo/Vincenzo Pinto, Reuters pool)

the only way to escape problems, yet it simply postpones them,” the pope said. “A fixation with our rights can lead us to neglect our responsibilities to others. Then, there is the great misunderstanding about love, which is more than powerful emotions, but primarily a gift, a choice and a sacrifice.” †

CIVILITY

continued from page 1

right to violence, rioting, looting, abusing, slandering or defamation. It is in the absence of civility, of course, that the line between what is acceptable and unacceptable becomes blurred.

True justice is a matter of conviction, right judgment, rather than feelings. True justice is rooted in the rule of law, based on the notion of the common good within a just society.

While everyone has a right to an opinion, there are some who seem to be unaware that not every opinion needs to be spoken. Still others seem unable to distinguish between opinions that are based on knowledge and experience from those that are based on mere emotion or speculation. While conscience and intuition are to be respected, these should not be confused with pride and vanity.

Everyone in practically every phase of life—including the political, medical, scientific, religious and economic—has an opinion about the COVID-19 pandemic. Within each of these spheres, however, opinions vary. This would seem to indicate that we are still in the process of really understanding and fully appreciating the situation.

In such moments, the true character of an individual or group is realized. Let us not be drawn into one extreme or another, but find the proper balance of freedom and responsibility. My individual freedoms do not outweigh my responsibility to treat others with respect, caution and care. Safety precautions such as wearing a facial cover, social distancing and disinfecting are inconveniences for practically everyone. On the other hand, they are signs of our respect for the sacredness of life as well as our defense for the dignity of every human person.

Within any form of social unrest, there must be an ability to listen and learn from one another. This can be difficult, of course, especially when there is need for change. No one likes to think of themselves as causing hurt and pain any more than they like being the victims of hurt and pain. The demands of justice, however, involve the recognition of wrongdoing for the sake of both perpetrators and victims.

With regard to politics, it does not take a mental heavyweight to realize that the growing polarization taking place over the last several years has made it very difficult for a decent candidate to make it through either major political party’s process of endorsement and support for election. This is not to say that there are not good men and women in politics. How many of us, however, have found ourselves casting our vote against someone rather than really voting for a candidate of choice? Both major political parties seem to have been hijacked by the radicals within their respective groups. This is a mere symptom of the effects of radical individualism that has overtaken any real

appreciation for the common good of society.

Three things, in particular, must be avoided if we are to preserve authentic dialogue: namely, name-calling, making threats and raising voices in hostility. Any one of these can readily erode the trust and openness needed to maintain mutual relationships.

Regardless of differences and disagreements, humanity cannot afford to lose sight of its own dignity. Failure to appreciate one’s own dignity often leads to the denial of another’s dignity. Without properly rooted conviction, we allow others to get the best of us.

Any authentic conviction of a true Christian is rooted in the person of Jesus Christ. Such conviction does not guarantee always being right, but it does provide the pathway to seeking what is right, just and true. Remaining Christ-centered, one is able to respond rather than to react to a perceived challenge, disagreement or even threat. Rather than seeking to win or gain against one another, we should be seeking what is best for humanity as a whole.

As Pope Francis has exhorted us time and again, the ability to accompany, dialogue and encounter one another is essential to the preservation of civility in any society or community. Apart from civility, human beings are apt to engage in behavior that is detrimental to healthy relationships and personal well-being, such as gossip and bullying.

Accompaniment, dialogue and encounter enable us to relate to one another in a way that honors and respects human dignity rather than speaking and acting in destructive ways. Contrary to the old adage “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me,” words can be as destructive and divisive as actions or objects. What else might we call shaming, ridiculing and scapegoating if not the weaponizing of words or behavior?

To be Christ-centered is basically to draw a line in the sand and refuse to no longer perpetuate the hostility of man’s inhumanity toward man. The cross stands as a paradoxical symbol of Christian civility. In and through the cross, Jesus Christ took upon himself the weight of the world’s sins to be conquered by divine grace. As Jesus showed, it involves the courage to let down our guard of defensiveness, a willingness to be vulnerable and seeking reconciliation rather than vengeance.

The principles of our Catholic social teaching provide us with a wonderful blueprint to paving the way of civility; namely, through respect for the dignity of every person created in the image of God, option for the poor, defense of family and community, the dignity of work and the worker, the balance of rights and responsibilities, solidarity and care for creation. In essence, we must adhere to the so-called “golden rule” if we are to be beacons of hope: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you,” rather than do unto others before they do it to you.

Civility is not the absence of differences and disagreements, though it does involve a refusal to allow the radicals of polarization to divide and destroy the very soul of humanity. Rather than pulling away, civility demands that we pull together. Rather than succumb to despair, we must dare to trust in the Holy Spirit. It requires of us the capacity to seek forgiveness, understanding and justice tempered with the sweetness of mercy.

Let us not surrender to the darker side of judgment, ridicule, revenge, hostility and manipulation. By the grace of God, may our efforts to preserve civility enable our families, communities and nation to experience a renewed sense of peace, healing, trust and unity. We cannot allow

pride, vanity, agendas, bitterness, resentment or selfishness to stand in our way.

May we rise above our differences and disagreements in order to restore hope for a new tomorrow in reaching new horizons of our humanity as both individuals and communities of peoples. With Jesus Christ as our cornerstone, all is possible.

With assurance of my continued prayers and best wishes, I remain,
Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Charles C. Thompson

+Charles C. Thompson
Archbishop of Indianapolis

— FOR IT IS IN —

GIVING

THAT WE RECEIVE

CHARITABLE GIFT ANNUITY

A GIFT THAT GIVES BACK

WHAT IS A CHARITABLE GIFT ANNUITY?

As its name implies, a charitable gift annuity (CGA) is both a gift and an annuity. It’s an uncomplicated gift that is exceedingly popular because it benefits both charities and donors. When you contribute through a CGA, some of the donation supports the parish, school or agency of your choice and some is returned to you in periodic payments for life.

HOW GIFT ANNUITIES WORK

When you make a CGA gift through the Catholic Community Foundation, we use approximately half of the gift to support your designated parish, school or agency and pay the other half back to you in the form of annuity payments for the rest of your life.

A POPULAR GIVING TOOL

Gift annuities are appealing because they provide an opportunity to make a meaningful gift but require only modest funding.

For more information about this and other planned giving options through the Catholic Community Foundation, call 1-800-382-9836, ext. 1482, or email us at ccf@archindy.org.

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CATHOLIC COMMUNITY FOUNDATION, INC.
FOR GOD. FOR OTHERS. FOREVER.

Arzobispo Charles C. Thompson: Un llamado al civismo

27 de noviembre de 2020

Queridos hermanos y hermanas en Cristo:

El Adviento, una temporada de preparación y esperanza, marca el comienzo de un nuevo año litúrgico



Arzobispo Charles C. Thompson

para la Iglesia. Se trata de un tiempo de renovación que puede traer lo que el papa Francisco ha denominado calidez para los corazones y la sanación de las heridas.

Mientras esperamos con activa expectativa para celebrar el

nacimiento de Jesucristo, ofrezco esta reflexión como un medio para destacar el espíritu de la reciente carta encíclica del papa Francisco, “*Fratelli Tutti*: Sobre la fraternidad y la amistad social.” como un recordatorio de nuestra interconexión como familia humana y la necesidad de nuestro testimonio de esperanza que se encuentra en el núcleo de nuestra capacidad para atraer a los creyentes y transformar la sociedad.

La capacidad de cualquier comunidad o grupo para sobrevivir, incluso prosperar, en medio de la adversidad, es la medida del civismo. Esto es especialmente cierto en tiempos de caos, división y transición de la autoridad. Lamentablemente, el uso indebido de las redes sociales que existen hoy en día fomenta la proliferación de la vergüenza, el abuso y la utilización de chivos expiatorios, situación que ocurre en prácticamente todas las esferas de la sociedad.

Lejos de desarrollar capacidad de convenir en las desavenencias, las personas de opiniones diferentes se demonizan rápidamente unas a otras. Cuando existe un margen escueto para lograr el compromiso, las posibilidades de lograr un diálogo auténtico son exiguas. Si todo se percibe “en blanco y negro,” lo único que podemos captar del otro es que “está a mi favor” o “en mi contra.” Tales son los efectos de la polarización extrema que existe.

La falta de civismo probablemente no es más palpable que lo que hemos experimentado en nuestro país durante estos últimos meses con la pandemia, los disturbios sociales y el proceso de elección política. La libertad de protestar, marchar, defender, levantar carteles y hacer oír la voz es un derecho que todos compartimos; sin embargo, esa libertad no otorga a ninguno de nosotros el derecho a la violencia, los disturbios, el saqueo, el abuso, la calumnia o la difamación. Por supuesto, en ausencia

de civismo la línea entre lo que es aceptable e inaceptable se vuelve difusa.

La verdadera justicia es una cuestión de convicción, de juicio correcto, más que de sentimientos. Está arraigada en el estado de derecho, basada en la noción del bien común dentro de una sociedad justa.

Aunque todos tienen derecho a opinar, pareciera que algunos no están conscientes de que no es necesario pronunciar todas las opiniones. Otros parecen incapaces de distinguir entre las opiniones basadas en el conocimiento y la experiencia, de las basadas en la mera emoción o especulación. Si bien es cierto que se debe respetar la conciencia y la intuición, estas no deben confundirse con el orgullo y la vanidad.

Todo el mundo en prácticamente todas las esferas de la vida—incluyendo la política, la médica, la científica, la religiosa y la económica—tiene una opinión sobre la pandemia de la COVID-19. Sin embargo, dentro de cada una de estas esferas, las opiniones varían. Esto parecería indicar que todavía estamos en el proceso de comprender realmente la situación y ser capaces de evaluarla en su totalidad.

En tales momentos se pone de manifiesto el verdadero carácter de un individuo o grupo. No nos dejemos arrastrar a un extremo u otro, sino que encontremos el equilibrio adecuado entre libertad y responsabilidad. Mis libertades individuales no superan mi responsabilidad de tratar a los demás con respeto, precaución y de cuidar al otro. Las precauciones de seguridad como el uso de una cubierta facial, el distanciamiento social y la desinfección son molestias para prácticamente todo el mundo. Por otro lado, son signos de nuestro respeto por lo sagrado de la vida, así como nuestra defensa de la dignidad de cada persona humana.

En el seno de cualquier forma de malestar social, debe existir la capacidad para escuchar y aprender unos de otros. Esto puede resultar difícil, por supuesto, especialmente cuando hay necesidad de cambio. A nadie le gusta considerarse causante de daño y dolor más de lo que le gustaría ser víctima del daño y el dolor. Sin embargo, las exigencias de la justicia implican el reconocimiento de los actos ilícitos en beneficio tanto de los autores como de las víctimas.

En lo que respecta a la política, no hace falta ser un pensador avanzado para darse cuenta de que la creciente polarización que se ha venido produciendo en los últimos años ha dificultado enormemente que un candidato decente supere el proceso de aprobación y apoyo a la elección por parte de cualquiera de los principales partidos políticos. Esto no quiere decir que no haya buenos hombres y mujeres en el ámbito de la política. Sin embargo, ¿cuántos de nosotros nos hemos encontrado votando

en contra de alguien en lugar de votar realmente por el candidato de nuestra elección? Los dos principales partidos políticos parecen haber sido secuestrados por los radicales de sus respectivos grupos. Esto es tan solo un síntoma de los efectos del individualismo radical que ha superado cualquier valoración real del bien común de la sociedad.

Si queremos preservar el diálogo auténtico, debemos evitar especialmente estos tres elementos: los insultos, las amenazas y alzar la voz con hostilidad. Cualquiera de ellas puede fácilmente socavar la confianza y la apertura necesarias para mantener las relaciones mutuas.

Independientemente de las diferencias y los desacuerdos, la humanidad no puede permitirse perder de vista su propia dignidad. La ausencia de valoración de la propia dignidad a menudo conduce a la negación de la dignidad del otro. Sin una convicción bien arraigada, permitimos que otros nos saquen de nuestras casillas.

Toda convicción auténtica de un verdadero cristiano está arraigada en la persona de Jesucristo. Dicha convicción no garantiza que siempre se tenga la razón, pero proporciona el camino para buscar lo que es correcto, justo y verdadero. Al permanecer centrados en Cristo, somos capaces de responder en vez de reaccionar a un desafío, desacuerdo o incluso una amenaza percibida. En lugar de buscar salir victoriosos o ganar frente a otros, deberíamos buscar lo que es mejor para la humanidad en su conjunto.

Tal como el papa Francisco nos ha exhortado una y otra vez, la capacidad de acompañar, dialogar y encontrarse es esencial para la preservación del civismo en cualquier sociedad o comunidad. Aparte del civismo, los seres humanos son propensos a tener comportamientos como los chismes y la intimidación, que resultan perjudiciales para las relaciones sanas y el bienestar personal.

El acompañamiento, el diálogo y el encuentro nos permiten relacionarnos de una manera que honra y respeta la dignidad humana en lugar de hablar y actuar de manera destructiva. Contrariamente al viejo adagio que dice que “Los palos y las piedras pueden romperme los huesos, pero las palabras no pueden hacerme daño,” las palabras tienen un poder tan destructivo y divisorio como las acciones o los objetos. ¿Qué otro título podríamos darle al bochorno, a la ridiculización y a convertir a alguien en chivo expiatorio, si no la transformación de las palabras o las conductas en armas?

Estar centrados en Cristo es básicamente trazar una línea en la arena y negarse a no perpetuar más la hostilidad de la inhumanidad del hombre hacia el hombre. La cruz se erige como un símbolo

paradójico del civismo cristiano. En y a través de la cruz, Jesucristo tomó sobre sí el peso de los pecados del mundo para vencerlos por la gracia divina. Como lo demostró Jesús, esto implica tener el valor de bajar la guardia de la defensividad, la voluntad de ser vulnerable y la búsqueda de la reconciliación en lugar de la venganza.

Los principios de nuestra enseñanza social católica nos proporcionan un maravilloso proyecto para allanar el camino del civismo; a saber, a través del respeto a la dignidad de cada persona creada a imagen de Dios, brindar opciones a los pobres, la defensa de la familia y la comunidad, la dignidad del trabajo y del trabajador, el equilibrio de los derechos y responsabilidades, la solidaridad y el cuidado de la creación. En esencia, debemos adherirnos a la llamada “regla de oro” si queremos ser faros de esperanza: “Haz a los demás lo que quieras que te hagan a ti,” en lugar de hacer a los demás antes de que nos lo hagan a nosotros.

El civismo no es la ausencia de diferencias y desacuerdos, aunque implica el rechazo a permitir que los radicales de la polarización dividan y destruyan el alma misma de la humanidad. En lugar de alejarnos, el civismo exige que nos unamos; en vez de sucumbir a la desesperación, debemos atrevernos a confiar en el Espíritu Santo. Esto requiere de nosotros la capacidad de buscar el perdón, la comprensión y la justicia templada con la dulzura de la misericordia.

No nos entreguemos al lado oscuro del juicio, el ridículo, la venganza, la hostilidad y la manipulación. Que por la gracia de Dios nuestros esfuerzos por preservar el civismo permitan a nuestras familias, comunidades y país experimentar una renovada sensación de paz, sanación, confianza y unidad. No podemos permitir que el orgullo, la vanidad, las agendas, la amargura, el resentimiento o el egoísmo se interpongan en nuestro camino.

Que nos elevemos por encima de nuestras diferencias y desacuerdos para restaurar la esperanza de un nuevo mañana al alcanzar nuevos horizontes para nuestra humanidad como individuos y comunidades de pueblos. Con Jesucristo como nuestra piedra angular, todo es posible.

Con la certeza de mis oraciones continuas y mis mejores deseos,

quedo de ustedes en Cristo,

+ Charles C. Thompson

Reverendísimo Charles C. Thompson
Arzobispo de Indianápolis

Pope, in new book, talks about personal ‘lockdowns’ that changed his life

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—While the coronavirus lockdowns and restrictions have interrupted people’s lives and brought suffering on a global scale, every individual—including the pope—has or will experience traumatic interruptions in their lives, Pope Francis said in a new book.

“Illness, the failure of a marriage or a business, some great disappointment or betrayal,” he said, are moments that “generate a tension, a crisis that reveals what is in our hearts.”

In *Let Us Dream: The Path to A Better Future*, a book written with author Austen Ivereigh, Pope Francis said he had experienced three “COVID moments” in his lifetime: lung problems that threatened his life when he was 21; his “displacement” in Germany in 1986 for studies; and when he was sent away to Cordoba, Argentina, for almost two years in the early 1990s.

Let Us Dream will be published on Dec. 1 by Simon & Schuster. The section on what the pope called his “personal COVIDs” was excerpted in Italian newspapers on Nov. 23.

In those major moments of challenge and pain, Pope Francis wrote, “what I learned was that you suffer a lot, but if you allow it to change you, you come out better. But if you dig in, you come out worse.”

Writing about his diseased lung, the pope said, “I remember the date: Aug. 13, 1957. I got taken to a hospital by a [seminary] prefect who realized mine was not the kind of flu you treat with aspirin. Straightaway they took a liter and a half of water out of the lung, and I remained there fighting for my life.”

He was in his second year at the diocesan seminary, and it was his “first experience of limit, of pain and loneliness,” he said. “It changed the way I saw life.

“For months, I didn’t know who I was and whether I would live or die. The doctors had no idea whether I’d make it either,” the pope wrote. “I remember hugging my mother and saying: ‘Just tell me if I’m going to die.’”

After three months in the hospital, “they operated to take out the upper right lobe of one of the lungs,” he said. “I have some sense of how people with coronavirus feel as they struggle to breathe on ventilators.”

One of the nurses, “Sister Cornelia Caraglio, saved my life” by doubling his antibiotics, he said. “Because of her regular contact with sick people, she understood better than the doctor what they needed, and she had the courage to act on her knowledge.”

Pope Francis said he also learned the meaning of “cheap consolations.”

“People came in to tell me I was going to be fine, how with all that pain I’d never have to suffer again—really dumb things, empty words,” he said.

Instead, he learned from a nun who had prepared him for his first Communion and would come and hold his hand, how important it was to sit with people, touch them and keep words to a minimum.

The time in the hospital recovering, he said, gave him the time and space he needed to “rethink my vocation” and explore his longing to enter a religious order rather than the diocesan priesthood. It was then that he decided to join the Jesuits. †



Pope Francis meets with author Austen Ivereigh in November 2019. The pope collaborated with Ivereigh on the book, *Let Us Dream: The Path to A Better Future*, which will be published on Dec. 1 by Simon & Schuster. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

Go forth and read: Catholic fiction and where to find it

By Ann Margaret Lewis

When one says “Catholic fiction,” what comes to mind? Is it a story featuring a Catholic character, say a priest or religious like G.K. Chesterton’s *Father Brown* or Ralph McInerny’s *Father Dowling*? Is it horror like William Peter Blatty’s *The Exorcist* or suspense like Dean Koontz’s *Odd Thomas*? Is it a literary work like Sh saku End ’s *Silence*, or *Brideshead Revisited* by Evelyn Waugh? Is it written by a Catholic author, or simply literature that contains Catholic themes or insights?

The truth is, like many things in our Catholic faith it is “both/and”—all these things and more.

Catholic fiction is often hard to describe even for those like me who write and read it. It isn’t simply literature that doesn’t offend Catholic sensibilities, because while there is certainly a good deal of fiction that rubs against our moral convictions, the material that doesn’t isn’t always Catholic. Late author Father Andrew Greeley once wrote that Catholic works of art, specifically the classics, “assume a God who is present in the world, disclosing himself in and through creation” and calling this trait the “Catholic imagination.”

This makes Catholic fiction more difficult to define than Christian fiction, which, by contrast, is produced by a cluster of book publishers that strictly adhere to a mutually agreed upon set of literary guidelines.

Readers of Christian fiction know where to find this material and are encouraged by their religious communities to read it, though critics have often noted its formulaic quality. Many Catholic writers do not seek publishing contracts with Christian publishers, as the publishers usually require edits that remove the Catholic nature of their work. While deep themes might slip through an edit, a practicing Catholic character that prays the rosary or attends Mass is not allowed by their guidelines.

There was a time when the Catholic Church had a sort of litmus test of its own for literary faithfulness

when the Holy Office (now the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith) placed fiction and non-fiction books on the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, a list of books the Catholic faithful were forbidden to read. It did not, however, create a list of recommended reading or suggest guidelines for creating works of fiction it found favorable.

As a result, after that list’s abolition, Catholic readers did as they always have done—purchase fiction from secular book sellers, only now without considering how a work did or did not enrich, or at least not deride, their faith. If a Catholic wants a novel now, he or she searches on Amazon or walks into Barnes and Noble to find what interests him or her the most regardless of spiritual impact.

Perusing regular bookstores or using the search features on Amazon for Catholic fiction can be problematic, however. Search results on Amazon and its partner site Goodreads are not necessarily attuned to a faithful Catholic sensibility. When Amazon’s search feature sees “Catholic fiction,” it can serve up books that may have Catholic characters, tropes or situations but present narratives counter to our faith. Reviews help a bit, perhaps, but reading them can be time-consuming.

One is also not likely to find much Catholic fiction on the shelves of standard bookstores, as only the largest Catholic publishers distribute their products to the brick and mortar retailers, and these companies publish little or

no fiction. This is because they primarily market to Catholic retail stores that in turn cater to a gift-buying or research-minded consumer. You might stumble upon a single piece of Catholic fiction in a Catholic bookstore, perhaps a children’s book or two, but certainly not a hearty collection of it. And if a secular chain bookstore stocks Catholic fiction at all, it is shelved with the Christian fiction or among religious non-fiction books with a given publisher’s other offerings.

So, where does one go if one wants a good story that is Catholic in character or theme? To connect Catholic readers with Catholic fiction literature, several institutions have developed that focus on this niche market. The related article below contains a selection of them. I hope you’ll investigate these avenues to Catholic fiction, buy a title as a Christmas gift, or curl up this winter yourself with an entertaining, yet spiritually edifying, new book. Go forth and read!

(Ann Margaret Lewis is executive assistant in the archdiocesan Office of Communications and the author of several books. E-mail her at alewis@archindy.org.) †



Where is good Catholic fiction? Lots of places online

Compiled by Ann Margaret Lewis

Catholic Reads (catholicreads.com):

Catholic Reads is the “Catholic BookBub.” If you are not familiar with BookBub, it is registration-required service that sends e-mail blasts with a list of titles offered at sale prices at online retailers like Amazon. Catholic Reads does the same for Catholic books, and their web site also provides reviews as well as a semi-regular video blog with authors. For so young an enterprise they have already covered an impressive list of titles.

Catholic Teen Books (catholicteenbooks.com):

This is another new site with a good collection of titles. Many teen parents will tell you that it is almost impossible to find edifying young adult fiction today. Much of it is quite dark, featuring graphic situations, sexual content and language. Teen and young adult fiction does not have to be that way to present an engaging story. All the titles listed on Catholic Teen Books are written by decent writers and include a variety of genres young people really like. For educators, there’s a list of learning materials and names of authors who’ll visit your classroom.

Catholic Writers Guild Seal of Approval List (catholicwritersguild.org/seal-approval):

The Catholic Writers Guild Seal of Approval is a service the Catholic Writers Guild (CWG) provides for Catholic bookstores, in which trained volunteers read content for its faithfulness to Catholic teaching. Many of the titles read and approved by CWG readers are listed on the guild’s web site.

Cath-Lit Live (cutt.ly/cath-lit-live)

Young adult author A.J. Cattapan hosts this regular 10-minute long live Facebook/YouTube video cast in which she interviews Catholic authors with new releases.

Good News! Book Fair (goodnewsbookfair.com):

A Catholic competitor to the Scholastic book fairs,

Good News! Book Fair offers a slew of titles for young people. They bring their show to Catholic (and Christian) schools the same way Scholastic does. They recently launched a general online bookstore called goodnewsbookshop.com which is adding more products every day. Worth keeping an eye on this one.

Ignatius Press print catalog and web store (ignatius.com):

While Ignatius Press is the largest Catholic publisher in the United States, it publishes only a smattering of fiction. Its print catalog and web store, however, offer Catholic fiction for children and adults from other publishers, as well as the few fiction titles it publishes in-house.

Tumblr House (tumblrhouse.com):

Tumblr House is a sizeable online Catholic retailer that carries a thorough collection of Catholic fiction books classic and new, all chosen for quality and faithfulness.

Independent or small presses that produce Catholic fiction:

Many small or “indie” presses offer titles worth reading that are available through their web sites as well as Amazon:

Angelico Press (angelicopress.org):

Angelico offers classic Catholic fiction as well as new literature in that vein.

Full Quiver Publishing (fullquiverpublishing.com):

Full Quiver publishes fiction and non-fiction with a Theology of the Body theme.

Raven Crest Publishing

(ravencrestpublishingandproduction.com):

Raven Crest offers stories that communicate a powerful, life-changing and redemptive message.

Scepter Publishers (scepterpublishers.org):

An outgrowth of Opus Dei, a personal prelature in

the Church around the world made up largely of lay Catholics, Scepter publishes works to lead readers to find Christ in everyday life

Silver Empire (silverempire.org):

A Catholic-owned publisher of edgy (PG-13) suspense, horror, urban fantasy and science fiction with Christian and Catholic themes and characters, Silver Empire offers a book club in which users purchase credits to have works delivered to them regularly at a discount.

Sophia Press Institute Press

(www.sophiainstitute.com):

Sophia Institute Press is one offering of Sophia Institute, a non-profit organization “that nurtures the spiritual, moral and cultural life of souls and spreads the Gospel of Christ in conformity with the authentic teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.” They offer fiction and non-fiction books for adults and children.

Wiseblood Books (wisebloodbooks.com):

Inspired by Catholic writer Flannery O’Conner, Wiseblood offers fiction, poetry, and philosophic works that focus on finding redemption in uncanny places and people.

Short fiction: These literary journals offer Catholic short stories as well as poetry:

Dappled Things (dappledthings.org):

A magazine “committed to quality writing that takes advantage of the religious, theological, philosophical, artistic, cultural and literary heritage of the Catholic Church in order to inform and enrich contemporary literary culture.”

Ever Eden Literary Journal

(everedenpublishing.com):

A magazine featuring the writing of Catholic women intended for all readers. †

KOETTER

continued from page 1

"I noticed, and I wondered if it might be a sign from God," recalled Msgr. Koetter.

He shared his diagnosis with the pilgrims at the start of their trip and had arranged for a letter about it to be published in Holy Spirit's bulletin while he was away.

"The bond with the pilgrims was very deep," Msgr. Koetter said. "I think us all knowing my illness allowed a deeper bond of love and support going both ways."

Bonds of love and support continue to connect Msgr. Koetter to Holy Spirit parishioners as ALS has totally taken away his physical ability to speak.

But he is so determined to continue those connections that he now uses software developed by the Belgium-based Acapela Group to speak. He types into his tablet what he wants to say. Then, using recordings of Msgr. Koetter speaking that are stored in the software, the tablet verbalizes what he wrote, producing a sound like his voice.

'Overwhelming support'

In July, Msgr. Koetter, 69, was granted early retirement from active ministry. With the permission of Holy Spirit's current pastor, Father Michael O'Mara, he continues to live at the parish and ministers in limited ways.

At the same time, he finds that the parishioners minister to him.

"They have been an overwhelming support," he said through his tablet. "The number of people praying for me is very high. And I really think those prayers are sustaining me."

This sustaining strength allows him to continue to live out the priestly vocation given to him by God.

"God is always calling us to serve

in some way," Msgr. Koetter said. "So, now that I have this illness, I think it creates an opportunity for me to serve in a unique way. The illness opens doors with people who are suffering in their lives. They feel that I would understand."

It was hard for Suzy McLaughlin, Holy Spirit's director of finance and facilities, to see the condition take hold in her pastor and limit his ability to minister.

But she finds that his willingness to be open to her and the parishioners about his condition is a kind of ministry.

"It's a privilege to go through this with someone," McLaughlin said. "I feel that Father Paul is letting us share his journey . . . We're just all blessed by being able to be with him during this. It's such a gift that he's given the parish to stay as long as he can."

So far, ALS has only affected Msgr. Koetter's ability to speak and to swallow. His motor skills have been unaffected. He also experiences no physical pain from the illness.

To help him in his continued life in the parish, Thomas and other parishioners make meals for him. She speaks with him when she delivers the food.

"He's never sad," Thomas said. "He never has the attitude of 'Why me?' He's still pastoring. He has so much to give and to share. I consider it a blessing to be able to cook for him and to have those few minutes with him. It's such a gift, because he has so much to give."

Msgr. Koetter agreed that the giving goes both ways.

"In the last year, I have received many letters about how my ministry has impacted someone's life," he said. "Those are beautiful to read. It has helped to confirm my role as a priest and the life I have tried to lead. It is one of the big blessings that I have experienced."

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"God is always calling us to serve



Msgr. Paul Koetter and members of his pilgrimage group are shown on a boat during their visit to the Holy Land in November 2019. (Submitted photo)

to do one weekend each month.

He types his homily in advance into the software. Then the recording of the homily produced by the software is sent through the church's sound system while Msgr. Koetter stands at the ambo, motions with his hands and moves his head as if he was actually speaking the homily.

"The message is always the word of God," he said. "But what I say is heard differently now. So, if I give an example about carrying one's cross, people hear that with more focus. They understand that I know what that means."

Homilies aren't the only way that Msgr. Koetter shares this message. It comes across throughout his continued life and ministry at Holy Spirit.

"A phrase I have often used in my preaching is, 'God is good all the time. All the time, God is good,'" he said. "I want people to know that I still believe that this is true. While my illness has been a big burden, the blessings given have been overwhelming. So, God is still blessing me each day."

'God is in the present moment now'

Though he continues to live and assist in ministry at Holy Spirit, Msgr. Koetter no longer serves as the principal celebrant at Mass. He doesn't celebrate baptisms, funerals or weddings. And he no longer has the responsibility of leading a parish of more than 2,000 households.

"In the past, being a priest and being a pastor were very interlocked," Msgr. Koetter said. "Now, I think my priesthood is best expressed in how I carry this illness. So, I think my impact as a spiritual leader is not through many concrete ministries, but through a witness. I am not a perfect witness, but I try."

That witness comes across strongly for Holy Spirit parishioner Teresa Heil. "It's just his presence that you need sometimes," she said. "You don't need him to say anything."

Teresa's husband Larry has come, like Msgr. Koetter, to see his former

pastor's condition and the way he lives with it as a gift.

"It's not the gift that you would ask for," Larry said. "But it's the gift that allows you to be there for other people."

Without all the duties of a pastor to fill up his daily life, Msgr. Koetter now has more time for prayer and reflection.

"The busyness of life as a priest sometimes can control the mind. I was running all the time," he said. "Now I am not running."

"I would say that the elements of faith and awareness of God are easier today than before, because my emotions are more raw and I have the time to sit. Like when a loved one dies, we are more emotionally open to the reality of God."

Although he knows that his condition will eventually take his life, Msgr. Koetter tries to live in the present moment as much as possible.

"I do not project myself into the future of the illness any more than I need to do," he said. "I find that that can increase anxiety and fear. So, I try to stay in the present moment in my life and in my prayer."

"It is also a belief in where God can be found. God is in the present moment, right now. So, if we want to experience God, then we stay present to the now."

By living in the present moment, he also remains aware of the difficulties of his condition.

"Certainly, the diagnosis was a hard reality for myself, my family and the parish," Msgr. Koetter said. "But we get past the diagnosis into daily life."

While he noted that he wants "to have a sense of normalcy in each day," he admitted that one "blessing of this illness is that there is no pain. I feel fine."

Still, said Msgr. Koetter, "I am carrying an illness that will eventually take my life unless a miracle happens."

"But we all carry our future with the reality of death."

(To hear Msgr. Paul Koetter pray through the software that he uses to communicate, visit www.CriterionOnline.com.) †



Msgr. Paul Koetter, right, blesses Dave Thomas during a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in November 2019. The blessing took place on the banks of the Jordan River when pilgrims renewed their baptismal vows. Msgr. Koetter was at the time pastor of Holy Spirit Parish in Indianapolis. Thomas is a member of the faith community. (Submitted photo)

'God is still blessing me each day'

Although the software has allowed Msgr. Koetter to "speak," he still finds communicating challenging.

"The flow of the conversation is very different now," he said. "If I am in a group, it is hard to get my words in, because conversations move forward while I am typing. And yet, I don't want the conversation to be controlled by my pace unless I am with only one or two. It seems to work better one-on-one."

"Being an extrovert, I would often talk to come to understand myself. That is natural for extroverts. Now that is hard to do. So, I miss that a lot."

But Msgr. Koetter hasn't had to miss preaching homilies at weekend Masses at Holy Spirit, which he continues

Report shows many Americans rely on their faith in these uncertain times

WASHINGTON (CNS)—An annual survey on public attitudes toward religious faith release by the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty on Nov. 17 indicates, not surprisingly, a considerable amount of objection to government-imposed limits on the size of congregations in houses of worship amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

"In a number of cases during the pandemic where houses of worship asked to receive equal treatment with businesses, . . . courts ruled that the place of business could receive higher priority," the report stated.

"But when asked to compare priorities for reopenings after coronavirus outbreaks, a majority of respondents said that houses of worship should be treated with at least the same priority as reopened businesses," the report states.

Because respondents said "that religion is part of an individual's identity, not just a hobby or weekend activity," they also saw that it "requires protection and accommodations," the report stated.

That protection and accommodation even extends to ensuring hospital patients who request it still have access to spiritual care, as a recent intervention by the Office for Civil Rights in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) made clear.

In two cases, citing safety protocols, hospitals had denied requests for priests to visit patients in order to administer baptism and anointing of the sick. HHS worked with the hospitals to make the in-person interactions possible with the use of personal protective equipment, an effort praised by the bishops' Committee on Religious Liberty.

"COVID-19 requires us to limit or modify our physical interactions to some degree, in order to reduce risks to physical health," said Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski of Miami, then the chairman of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Committee on Religious Liberty, in an Oct. 21 statement.

"Medical experts play a natural role in this effort but must

avoid treating physical interactions in religious exercise as unnecessary or unacceptable risks because they are religious," he said. "Jesus Christ, physician of our souls and bodies, gave us the sacraments to convey God's grace and healing."

COVID-19 restrictions on houses of worship are at the center of the Diocese of Brooklyn, N.Y., filing an emergency application with the U.S. Supreme Court on Nov. 12 for an injunction against Gov. Andrew Cuomo's executive order limiting the size of a congregation for in-person services at Catholic churches and other houses of worship.

The diocese's filing complains that the order "expressly singles out 'houses of worship' by that name for adverse treatment relative to secular businesses."

On Nov. 16, Agudath Israel of America, an umbrella organization that represents affiliated Orthodox Jewish congregations across the U.S., and two Orthodox congregations in New York City also asked the Supreme Court to stop Cuomo's order. †

Faith *Alive!*

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God's face is still present to us this Advent—even in 2020

By Mike Nelson

How many of you, when asked, "How are you doing?" have replied, "I'm just waiting for this year to end"?

We have experienced in 2020 a pandemic like none we have ever seen, political turmoil like none we have ever seen, an economic shutdown like ... you get the picture. For many of us, 2021 can't come soon enough.

For those of us who are Catholic, the new year comes a few weeks earlier—the new liturgical year, that is, starting with Advent, a season of desire. And rarely have many of us desired the breath of fresh air that a new year can bring.

But even this new season and new year does not begin without grim and sobering reminders of how far from God many of us are.

"Why do you let us wander, O Lord, from your ways, and harden our hearts so that we fear you not?" laments Isaiah in the first reading of the First Sunday of Advent (Is 63:17). "Behold, you are angry, and we are sinful; all of us have become like unclean people" (Is 64:4-5).

This, then, is a call to repentance—to "straighten up and fly right," in the words of an old Nat King Cole song. Or as Scripture frequently suggests, "Make straight [your] paths," words proclaimed by St. John the Baptist in three of the four Gospels.

This weekend's Gospel reading from St. Mark suggests this is best done sooner than later.

"You do not know when the Lord of the house is coming," Jesus tells his disciples (Mk 13:35). "Be watchful."

Jesus' words are spoken shortly before he and his disciples head for Jerusalem where Jesus knows what awaits him. His disciples do not, of course; nor do we know what awaits us in the months and years ahead.

And after this year, many of us are afraid to ask. Yet go forward we must. And we will, for God always offers us the chance to atone and correct our course.

"Give us new life," says the psalmist, "and we will call upon your name" (Ps 80:19).



Sandra Cruz of Chelsea, Mass., waits for a ride with her daughter after picking up free groceries from a food pantry on July 22. This year has been a grim and sobering time for many. Nonetheless, God's face is still present to us this Advent. (CNS photo/Brian Snyder, Reuters)

But to acknowledge where we have fallen short and who is really in charge requires humility on our part. Such humility is more abundant, it seems, in times of uncertainty and desperation.

Isaiah understands this. "Yet, Lord, you are our father," he says. "We are the clay and you the potter: We are all the work of

your hand" (Is 64:7).

Right before this, though, Isaiah says something else to God, a lamentation that invites our reflection on how to straighten out our lives, and our world: "You have hidden your face from us and have delivered us up to our crimes" (Is 64:6). God has hidden his face from us?

Really?

Many years ago, at the Los Angeles Religious Education Congress, I participated in a workshop in which the presenter asked us (ordered us, actually) to move all the chairs in the room out of the way (several hundred of them), close our eyes and walk (with care) around the room until we encountered (bumped into) another person.

At that point, we were to ask that person, "Are you God in hiding?"

The answer, of course, was yes. The point was for us to realize that we are all creations of God and that we are called to be the loving, caring face of God to one another to build and nourish the kingdom of God on Earth.

Like Isaiah, many

of us have lamented, "Lord, you have hidden your face from us." But if God created us all in his image and likeness, should we not seek his face among those already in our midst? And be the face of God to others?

"Rouse your power," pleads the responsorial psalm, "and come to save us. ... Let us see your face, and we shall be saved" (Ps 80:3-4).

That sounds like a call to pay closer attention to what already is in our midst: the face of God, present in our lives, serving us and calling us to serve one another. That suggests hope, if we let God's love—embodied in Christ Jesus—shine from us.

St. Paul expands on that promise in the second reading. "You were enriched in every way, with all discourse and all knowledge ... so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift," he tells the people of Corinth (1 Cor 3:5-7).

Moreover, Paul reminds his readers, "God is faithful, and by him you were called to fellowship with his son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor 3:9).

These are words of comfort we need to hear in these challenging times. But we also need Jesus' poignant reminder that we cannot wait for God to do all the work.

"Be alert!" says Jesus to his disciples. "You do not know when the time will come. ... May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping" (Mk 13:33, 36).

If we desire the Lord in our lives, let us act accordingly—in this and in every new year.

(Catholic journalist Mike Nelson writes from Southern California.) †



Father Mark Searles, a resident priest at St. Thomas More Parish in Allentown, Pa., wears a mask while giving Communion to a parishioner during an Oct. 2 Mass celebrated in the parish parking lot. Although 2020 has been a year of challenges and difficulties, God's presence can still be found during this upcoming Advent season. (CNS photo/Chaz Muth)

Corrections Corner/Deacon Marc Kellams

Programs are aimed to help inmates on the path to reform

The Indiana State Constitution states in Section 18: “The penal code shall be founded on the principles of reformation, and not of vindictive justice.” And thus, the Indiana Department of Correction (IDOC) is mandated to do more than just house offenders in the various facilities. They must also provide opportunities for “reformation.”



After a court sentences a defendant to the IDOC, the offender is transported to the Reception and Diagnostic Center (RDC) in Plainfield, Ind., for evaluation. This determines where the offender is committed in one of 19 facilities, nine of which are within the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

Upon arrival at the RDC, a case plan is developed from the results of an Indiana Risk Assessment System, a survey tool which assesses the following criminogenic risk domains: criminal history, school and employment, family and social support, substance abuse and mental health, and criminal lifestyle. The goal of assessing these risk domains is to break down barriers to re-entry and reduce recidivism by identifying what is described as “solution-based programming.”

There are three categories of

programming that are offered. The first is labelled simply “Activity” programming. These are facility-specific activities which do not meet the criteria of a program or course and are basically designed for personal enrichment. Examples include: AA/NA (Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous) meetings, Dog/Cat Rescue Projects, and Shifting Gears, a bicycle restoration project designed to rebuild or refurbish bikes.

The second category is identified as “Courses.” These are group or self-study programs and courses which follow a standardized curriculum, but do not qualify for a time cut or earned credit time. Examples of these courses include: Anger Management, Coping with Depression, Criminal Thinking Errors, Decision Making, Grief and Loss, Responsible Fatherhood, Stress Management, Wellness and Nutrition, and English as a Second Language. These courses help build life skills that can help the offender develop into a better whole person and equip them to deal with the stresses and responsibilities of life.

The third category is “Programs,” which are of particular interest to offenders because successful completion earns the offender a shorter sentence. These programs of study must include at least one of the following criteria: standardized curriculum, validated

evidence-based practices (EBP), or established performance measures. Evidence-based practices are defined as outcome-focused approaches and interventions that have been scientifically tested in controlled studies that have proven effective. Examples include: Literacy Education (which is critical considering that 34 percent of the adult offender population is functionally illiterate), Employment (including vocational education courses such as business technology, cosmetology and barbering, building trades, and culinary arts), Purposeful Living Units (which are faith and character-based communities designed to prepare offenders for living as law-abiding citizens upon their release), and Addiction Recovery Services or “Recovery While Incarcerated.”

Alcoholism and drug addiction are among the greatest contributors to criminal behavior. The IDOC currently has more than 1,700 therapeutic community beds for both male and female offenders. Releasing an offender while in recovery greatly enhances their prospects of successful re-integration into society.

(Deacon Marc Kellams is the coordinator of Corrections Ministry for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. He can be reached at mkellams@archindy.org or call 317-592-4012.) †

Faith and Family/Sean Gallagher

Waiting can take on new meaning during Advent

My five sons learned how to wait at an early age.

They’re constantly asking my wife



Cindy and I for things. It might be for things as mundane as a snack or a cup of milk during a meal. At other times, they might want a special toy, to go to the library or to have a movie night.

It’s not unusual that when they make their requests, those desires are really important to them and they want them fulfilled as soon as possible.

But since Cindy and I are forced by the nature of our family situation to divide our attention among our five sons and to our duties to the family as a whole, the boys usually have to wait for their requests to be met—at least for a little bit.

Most of the time, they do a pretty good job with it. But not always. They are boys, after all.

Maybe their long practice at waiting is a reason why they don’t go crazy at this time of year waiting for Dec. 25 to come around. (Another might be that we don’t go overboard on Christmas gifts and try as much as possible to put the focus on the reason for the holiday, to celebrate Christ’s birth.)

Waiting is an important aspect during the season of Advent, but one that can be easily overlooked. After all, we know that we’ll celebrate Christ’s first coming at Christmas. And, for good or ill, we often don’t put a lot of spiritual attention on his second coming, so focused as we often are on the here and now.

But that’s not how it was for the people of Israel before the first coming of Christ. God had promised through one prophet after another to save his chosen people from their hardships. Yet times of suffering came upon them again and again—often through their unfaithfulness to God.

So, we see many times in the Book of Psalms the expression of frustration at having to wait for so long for the coming of the Savior.

Psalms 13 shows this exasperation rather intensely: “How long, Lord? Will you utterly forget me? How long will you hide your face from me? How long will I carry sorrow in my soul, grief in my heart day after day? How long will my enemy triumph over me? Look upon me, answer me, Lord, my God!” (Ps 13:1-4).

Maybe 2020 has helped us become more acquainted with this kind of waiting. How many of us wait with eager longing for the end of the coronavirus pandemic? Perhaps we have prayed to God for an end to the suffering of so many people, and then wondered why those prayers haven’t been answered as the pandemic has increased in intensity recently.

Even with vaccines soon to be approved and distributed, it’s easy to be suspicious about how and when life will get back to the way it was before the pandemic hit.

One thing, though, that the coronavirus has not changed and will never change is God’s steadfast love for us. We may have to shoulder heavy crosses for a while in this life, marked as it is by the brokenness caused by original sin. But God never abandons us. This is especially true in our suffering, for in Christ he has taken on himself all of our crosses and suffered for and with us.

Living in the light of this blessed reality might make the difficult waiting during this Advent season easier to bear. Knowing that the babe in Bethlehem came to suffer with us might bring the real meaning of Christmas to the forefront of our hearts and minds in 2020 and help us be more truly thankful for this greatest of gifts. †

Guest Column/Richard Etienne

Look for every opportunity to be thankful in life

What does the word Thanksgiving immediately bring to mind? Do you think of turkey and dressing, pilgrims, or the cornucopia of plenty? Or did you immediately think of the eucharistic celebration?



The word “Eucharist” means thanksgiving. What are you thankful for? Your health, possessions, relationships?

In your own life, do you spend more time thinking about your next “want” or purchase than all of the blessings in your life? Becoming a more thankful person is a part of maturing in life.

When one is born, we are completely dependent on others for our every need. It is understandable that an infant has to make his or her needs known to their caregiver. For example, “I am hungry. I need changing. I am tired.”

But as we mature, we must spend more energy on being thankful for the many blessings that God has given us than on our next request. There is the story of 10 lepers who were healed by Jesus. I am sure that they all “wanted” to be healed of this terrible social as well as physical ailment. But we are told that only one took the initiative to return to Jesus to express gratitude for his healing.

I recently read that gratitude is at the heart of being a Catholic—we can only be thankful once we realize how little we can be or do without God!

In the Gloria, we sing, “We give you thanks for your great glory.” As humans, it is very easy to always recite our wants when praying, but overlook the importance of being thankful for what we have been given.

Before meals we say, “Bless us, O Lord, and these thy gifts, which we are about to receive ...” This same attitude can be applied in so many other areas of our lives. As just one example: I am often very aware of my feeling of gratitude when I crawl under my covers at night—because of the feel of those sheets! Are you thankful for the clothes as you fold them after laundering? Do you thank God for your means of transportation when you travel—and do you ask for safety as you get underway? The situations for being thankful are endless.

What is the next purchase that you are planning? Take a period of time to thank God for what you have for at least as long as you spend planning for that purchase. Look for every opportunity to be thankful!

(Rick Etienne is a member of St. John the Baptist Parish in Newburgh, Ind., in the Evansville Diocese.) †

Guest Column/Debra Tomaselli

A birthday marked by games, new friendships and ... deodorant

“Come on, Grandma, tell us another embarrassing story.” Ave’s blue eyes shone with delight.



My granddaughters love my childhood stories.

Angelina spun on her heels. “Yes,” she said. “Tell us another.”

I pursed my lips, shifted my eyes, stroked my chin, and remembered the day of my 13th birthday party.

We’d moved to a new state, and the party at my home was the perfect opportunity to get to know my classmates better.

When the doorbell rang, I felt excited, nervous, and delighted.

Mom organized the activities. We had a treasure hunt, a hula hoop contest and a race to build pyramids with paper cups. I had a conversation with Margaret, who had the shiniest, dark brown hair I’d ever seen. I shared candy with Bobby, who made everyone laugh. I talked with Paula, who wondered about the Church’s position at the time that only boys could be altar servers.

The party was in full swing when Mom

announced it was time to open presents. Swathed in streamers, I took a seat in the living room. My classmates crowded around, and Madeline handed the gifts to me, one by one. Some were wrapped in floral paper. Some in bold stripes. Others boasted cartoon characters. It was a happy, joyous time.

Finally, I opened a fancy box covered in floral gift-wrap. Inside was a beautiful, plastic container about the size of my palm. It was covered with pink rose images. It looked like something you’d give my mom.

I turned it over in my hand, admiring the pastel florals. It was a far cry from the bright primary hues. It was so different than the neon colors.

“What is it?” someone asked.

I rolled it over. I tried to open it. “I don’t know,” I said.

My friend Madeline took it, inspected it, and handed it back.

I turned it over and forced the cap off. A beautiful rose scent wafted up my nose. Beautiful.

“Who gave it to you?” they asked.

I looked at the tag. “Danny,” I said.

As everyone looked his way, Danny blushed and sank into his chair.

“What is it?” they asked.

“I don’t know,” he murmured. “My mother bought the gift.”

Then Madeline grabbed it from me.

Squinting, she read the label.

“Deodorant,” she said. “It’s deodorant.”

The room fell silent.

Deodorant? I didn’t even use it yet. I blushed and sank into my seat.

Some kids, like myself, were clueless.

Others smothered their giggles.

I felt so embarrassed.

Afterward, I tried to forget the awkwardness.

But, as you can see, I never forgot.

Surprisingly, however, the unexpected gift became my favorite gift. I loved the fragrant, floral scent. I’ve spent a lifetime searching for that same brand, but to no avail.

The party, too, was a priceless gift.

Nobody teased me or Danny. I liked these considerate kids. They became my friends.

Looking back, I realize there was something sacred about that deodorant, that scent, that gathering, that moment.

And I’ve never forgotten that either.

(Debra Tomaselli writes from Altamonte Springs, Fla.) †

First Sunday of Advent/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, November 29, 2020

- Isaiah 63:16b-17, 19b, 64:2-7
- 1 Corinthians 1:3-9
- Mark 13:33-37

This weekend, the Church begins Advent. It begins the use of biblical readings from Year B of its three-year cycle for Sunday Mass readings.



It also is the start of a new liturgical year. Each liturgical year is carefully planned so that the seasons and feasts guide us through our worship to a closer relationship with God in Christ.

The first reading is from the third section of Isaiah, composed when the Jews were in a difficult situation. Years before, the exiles had been allowed to return to the Holy Land from Babylon, but this return brought the exiles home to no paradise. Life was miserable.

The prophet called for faith in God, not only as almighty, but as unfailingly true to the covenant, to the divine pledge that God would protect the chosen people.

Isaiah appealed to God for relief in the name of the people. He did not say God was treating the people unfairly or putting them in a place of anguish and want. Instead, the prophet made clear that sin led the people away from God. It was this estrangement that produced their woes.

St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians provides the next reading. Counseling the Christians of Corinth challenged St. Paul. Not only did temptation and vice surround them on every side, but they also argued among themselves. Paul called them to faithfulness and to put aside their differences with each other.

He saw unity among disciples as having great religious potential. Unity was possible if, despite all odds produced by their surroundings and the human inclination to sin, they drew more closely to God and to each other. They could then infuse the goodness of Christianity into the circles in which they moved.

St. Mark's Gospel is the source of the last reading. It offers us a theme found

often in the New Testament—that Christ will come to Earth again as the great victor and the judge of all creation.

When the Gospels were written, certainly in the case of the Gospel of Mark, thought to be the oldest of the four, Christians were numerous and geographically distributed enough to catch the public eye, but not numerous enough or powerful enough to withstand their enemies. The culture was an enemy.

The political system would soon be an enemy. Professing Christianity became a capital crime, as the martyrs were horribly to know.

Understandably, the atmosphere was tense, uncertain and frightening. Thoughts of the second coming naturally were appealing. Jesus would come again, but they did not know when. Neither do we.

In the meantime, they had to acknowledge God, live in his law and trust in their reward. So do we.

Reflection

The prayers of the Mass are the united statements of all believers, spoken with and by the celebrant to proclaim our faith and to show our trust in Almighty God.

We speak with the priest, but are we speaking with the voice of faith? Are we sincere? Are we good Catholics? When the priest prays the prayers at Mass, do we join him, prompted by a genuinely authentic faith? Bluntly, are we absolutely committed to Christ?

St. Mark's Gospel assists us to have solid faith. Only God is permanent and real.

Advent is an opportunity to receive the blessing of a greater communion with God, to realize that God's love for us is real.

If we respond to the opportunity given to us by Advent, then Christmas becomes not a national holiday, or even a holy religious commemoration, but the moment when we encounter God, firmly believing that Jesus will come again, but also believing that here and now we know the Lord. †

Daily Readings

Monday, November 30

St. Andrew, Apostle
Romans 10:9-18
Psalm 19:8-11
Matthew 4:18-22

Tuesday, December 1

Isaiah 11:1-10
Psalm 72:7-8, 12-13, 17
Luke 10:21-24

Wednesday, December 2

Isaiah 25:6-10a
Psalm 23:1-6
Matthew 15:29-37

Thursday, December 3

St. Francis Xavier, priest, principal patron of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis
Isaiah 26:1-6
Psalm 118:1, 8-9, 19-21, 25-27a
Matthew 7:21, 24-27

Friday, December 4

St. John Damascene, priest and doctor of the Church
Isaiah 29:17-24
Psalm 27:1, 4, 13-14
Matthew 9:27-31

Saturday, December 5

Isaiah 30:19-21, 23-26
Psalm 147:1-6
Matthew 9:35-10:1, 5a, 6-8

Sunday, December 6

Second Sunday of Advent
Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11
Psalm 85:9-14
2 Peter 3:8-14
Mark 1:1-8

Question Corner/Fr. Kenneth Doyle

Distraction in prayer common to believers throughout Church history

Q Because of what has been going on in the world lately—the COVID-19 pandemic, difficulty finding work, etc.—I am having trouble concentrating when I pray. Any suggestions for avoiding such distractions? (Oregon)



A First of all, don't be discouraged—or surprised. Distraction is a normal companion to prayer.

The holiest people we've known, some of the best-known saints, have spoken of their struggles to focus while praying.

St. Therese of Lisieux, the "Little Flower," had a "trick" that she would use. She explained, "I also have many [distractions], but as soon as I am aware of them, I pray for those people the thought of whom is diverting my attention, and in this way they reap benefit from my distractions."

It is important, I think, for us to set

aside certain times exclusively for prayer. Sometimes I do pray when I am doing other things—driving a car, even working out on a stationary bike. But those can't be the only times that I pray—I need to pray when I am doing nothing else as well.

And I can't rush in from a busy day, plop down in a chair or on my knees and expect to focus immediately on the Lord; instead, I need some moments to settle and catch my breath before I start to pray.

The saints seemed to do this a bit more easily. St. Francis of Assisi, when he was about to enter a church to pray, would say: "Worldly and frivolous thoughts, stay here at the door until I return." So, when you meet with distractions while praying—as

inevitably you will—don't be discouraged. Simply pause, refocus and then continue your conversation with the Lord.

Q We have been parishioners for more than 25 years in a parish in a small town. Last Sunday at Mass, we were asked to pray for President-elect Joe Biden. Then we were asked to pray (as always) for an end to the taking of unborn lives.

My husband and I were deeply concerned about these two prayers coming one after another considering how Biden so strongly supports legalized abortion.

My husband later had a difficult conversation with our pastor about the matter. After reflection, my husband e-mailed our pastor and apologized for losing his temper. When he asked to sit down with the priest again, our pastor suggested that they wait for a while before they meet.

This is a difficult situation for us, and we would appreciate your advice on how to handle this spiritually. (Massachusetts)

A I admire your husband for his apology, and I am encouraged that he and your parish priest will have a further conversation. It does seem proper to me to offer prayers for our president-elect. And while I disagree strongly with President-elect Biden on the issue of abortion, I can understand your priest's feeling that the prayer of the faithful was not the proper setting to argue our case.

On Nov. 7, Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles, the president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, issued a statement congratulating President-elect Biden on his election and praying that the Blessed Virgin Mary may "help us to work together to fulfill the beautiful vision of America's missionaries and founders—one nation under God, where the sanctity of every human life is defended and freedom of conscience and religion are guaranteed."

On Nov. 12, Pope Francis called President-elect Biden to congratulate him. No account of their conversation was released by the Vatican, but Biden's transition team said that the president-elect "expressed his desire to work together on the basis of a shared belief in the dignity and equality of all humankind on issues such as caring for the marginalized and the poor, addressing the crisis of climate change, and welcoming and integrating immigrants and refugees into our communities."

(Questions may be sent to Father Kenneth Doyle at askfatherdoyle@gmail.com and 30 Columbia Circle Dr., Albany, New York 12203.) †

My Journey to God

Advent Haikus

By Tom Yost

Preparing the way

Eyes fixed on Jesus the Lord

Like John the Baptist

Saying yes to God

Like Mary did long ago

Trusting in God's plan

(Tom Yost is a member and pastoral associate of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in New Albany. Photo: Sandro Botticelli's "Madonna and Child with Young St. John the Baptist" oil painting, 1470-75.) (Courtesy of www.wikimedia.org)



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.

ANDRES, Odell, 87, St. Mary-of-the-Knobs, Floyd County, Nov. 10. Father of Janette Burns, Doris Deuser, Annette Fowler, Linda Fulton, Edward and Thomas Andres. Brother of Rosella Klein, Bernie and Henry Andres. Grandfather and great-grandfather of several.

BIEHLE, Anna L., 93, St. Mary, North Vernon, Nov. 18. Wife of Frank Biehle. Mother of Debra Hackman, Cynthia Speer, Donald and Mark Biehle. Grandmother of 12. Great-grandmother of 21.

DEOM, William, 58, St. Pius V, Troy, Nov. 14. Husband of Diane Deom. Father of Jason and Justin Deom. Brother of Regina Deom-Davis, Susie Fortwendel, Kathy Shireman, Carol Smith, Fred and Tom Deom. Grandfather of two.

GROSSMAN, Thelma C., 97, St. Louis, Batesville, Nov. 10. Mother of Valerie Davenport and Maria Grossman. Sister of Evelyn Kiefer and Louis Wolter. Grandmother of three.

HEIDELBERGER, Richard E., 91, SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi, Greenwood, Nov. 15. Husband of Rosemary Heidelberg. Father of Chris Wise, Dan, Dave, Dennis, Mark and Mike Heidelberg. Brother of Roseanne Acker. Grandfather of 18. Great-grandfather of 24.

HOWARD, Greg E., 58, St. John Paul II, Sellersburg, Nov. 2. Son of Michael and Sue Howard. Brother of Susan, Brian, Chris and David Howard.

JOHNSON, William A., 83, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Richmond, Nov. 10. Husband of Judith Johnson. Father of Andrea Curren, Carmen Mills, Bridgette Scott, Rochelle Smith, Mark and Marty

Johnson. Brother of Rhea Adams, David and Eddie Johnson. Grandfather of 16. Great-grandfather of 14. Great-great-grandfather of one.

KENNEY, Mary Ann, 89, St. Matthew the Apostle, Indianapolis, Aug. 24. Mother of Kathleen Malarney, Mary Marsh, Sheila McNelis, Ann Unversaw, Philip and Vincent Kenney. Sister of James Wilhelm. Grandmother of 19. Great-grandmother of three.

MEHLBAUER, Kenneth E., 67, St. Louis, Batesville, Nov. 17. Father of Greg Mehlbauer. Brother of Liz Frey, Sharon Fuller, Pat Hamilton, Rosie Stepp, Teresa Toucher, Danny, Larry and Tony Mehlbauer. Grandfather of two.

NOEL, Peter J., 66, St. Michael the Archangel, Indianapolis, Nov. 1. Husband of Patricia Noel. Father of Angela Wallstrum, Tara and Nicholas Noel. Brother of Joan Kinnaman, Greg, Jeff, John and Michael Noel. Grandfather of four.

SCUDDER, Kenneth, 75, St. Mary, Greensburg, Nov. 10. Husband of Joanne Scudder. Father of Tina Barkey, Brenda James and Brian Scudder. Stepfather of Diane Thornton,

Bart and David Eckerle. Brother of Janet Black, Shirley Moore and Jake Scudder. Grandfather of nine.

SHEETS, Barbara K., 86, St. Martin of Tours, Martinsville, Nov. 14. Sister of Sarah Sighting and Father Joseph Sheets. Aunt of several.

STITH, Raymond L., 85, St. Mary-of-the-Knobs, Floyd County, Nov. 9. Father of Lisa King, Teresa Sims, Raymond, Jr., and Terry Stith. Brother of Richard Stith. Grandfather of six. Great-grandfather of nine.

WIEDEMAN, Jessica, 38, All Saints, Dearborn County, Nov. 6. Wife of Brandon Wiedeman. Mother of Caroline and Nora Wiedeman. Daughter of Cheryl Wilhelm. Sister of Ashley Andres, Rhonda Savage, Renee Vaughan, Andy and Brad Wilhelm. Aunt of several.

YACONE, Doris D., 89, St. Luke the Evangelist, Nov. 11. Grandmother of one. †

Sunset in Madrid



A woman walks down a hill in a park during sunset in Madrid, Spain, on Nov. 18. (CNS photo/Sergio Perez Reuters)

Dominican Sister Dorothy Gabel taught science education at Indiana University

Dominican Sister Dorothy Gabel (formerly Sister Marie Carl), a member of the Dominican Sisters of Sinsiniwa, Wis., died on Oct. 30 at St. Dominic Villa in Hazel Green, Wis. She was 84.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Nov. 11 at her community's motherhouse chapel. Burial followed at the motherhouse cemetery.

Sister Dorothy was born on Jan. 2, 1936, in Amityville, N.Y. She made her first profession of vows as a Dominican sister on Aug. 5, 1959, and her perpetual profession of vows on Aug. 5, 1964.

She excelled at teaching the sciences, especially chemistry, to high school students for 11 years and at the collegiate level for 32 years.

In the archdiocese, Sister Dorothy taught science education at Indiana University in Bloomington from 1974-

2003. She later served in retirement as a professor emerita from 2003-09.

Her *Handbook of Research on Science Teaching and Learning*, published in 1994 by the National Science Teaching Association, is considered a classic reference for researchers.

Sister Dorothy was an experimental scholar in chemical education research. Her driving force was to use research to shape classroom practice. Sister Dorothy shared what she gleaned from her research with children, graduate students and teachers and was a requested speaker around the world.

She is survived by a brother, Carl Gabel, Jr.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Sinsinawa Dominicans, 585 County Road Z, Sinsinawa, WI 53824-9701. †

World leaders must not use pandemic for gain, but to find solutions to help people, pope says

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Government leaders and authorities must not exploit the COVID-19 pandemic to discredit political rivals, but instead set aside differences to find “viable solutions for our people,” Pope Francis said.

In a video message on Nov. 19 to participants at a virtual seminar about the coronavirus pandemic in Latin America, the pope said leaders should not “encourage or endorse or use mechanisms that make this serious crisis a tool of an electoral or social nature.”

“Discrediting the other only succeeds in destroying the possibility of finding agreements that help alleviate the effects of the pandemic in our communities, especially on the most excluded,” the pope said.

“Who pays [the price] for this process of discrediting?” he asked. “The people pay for it; we progress in discrediting the other at the expense of the poorest, at the expense of the people.”

Elected officials and public servants, he added, are called to “be at the service of the common good and not place the common good at the service of their interests.”

“We all know the dynamics of the corruption that goes on in this area. And this is also true for the men and women of the Church,” the pope said.

Corruption within the Church, he said, is “a true leprosy that sickens and kills the Gospel.”

The Nov. 19-20 virtual seminar, titled, “Latin America: Church, Pope Francis and scenarios of the

pandemic,” was sponsored by Pontifical Commission for Latin America, as well as Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences and Latin American bishops’ conference, commonly known as CELAM.

In his message, the pope expressed his hope that initiatives like the seminar would “inspire paths, awaken processes, create alliances and promote all the mechanisms necessary to guarantee a dignified life for our people, especially the most excluded, through the experience of fraternity and the building up of social friendship.

“When I say the most excluded, I do not mean it [in the same way] as saying to give alms to the most excluded, or as a gesture of charity, no, but as a key to hermeneutics,” he said.

The poorest people are the key for interpreting and understanding the fault or benefit of any response, he said. “If we don’t start from there, we are going to make mistakes.”

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, he continued, will be felt for many years to come and solidarity must be at the center of any proposals to alleviate people’s sufferings.

Any future initiatives should be “based on contributing, sharing and distributing, not on possessing, excluding and accumulating,” the pope said.

“Now, more than ever, it is necessary to regain consciousness of our common belonging. The virus reminds us that the best way to take care of ourselves is by learning to care for and protect those around us,” he said. †

Online Lay Ministry Formation

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

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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:

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Investing with Faith/Jim Maslar

Charitable gift annuity enables philanthropic goals, provides income

Catholics are generous by nature and are often very humble in their giving. That is what I have found during



the last two years working in the archdiocesan Office of Stewardship and Development.

Most of us, I've surmised, would love to be able to give a major gift to our favorite Catholic parish,

school or agency. Many of us do not, however, have that capacity at any one point in our lives. Family financial responsibilities, coupled with retirement expenses, can limit the feasibility of contributing a larger gift.

One of the best parts of my job is to share creative giving options with folks from any and all economic backgrounds that may prove empowering to them.

Everyone's circumstances are unique and allow for meaningful giving avenues that are known to them and God alone (and perhaps their financial or tax advisor!)

There is one particular gift option I'd like to share with you that works in that "middle ground" between charitable giving and financial limitations—charitable gift annuities or CGAs. Many of our donors have found that CGAs offer a unique "win-win-win" opportunity for them, especially those nearing or in retirement.

A CGA is simply a contract made between a donor and a charity in which the charity provides the donor (and/or a loved one) with a fixed-income stream for life in exchange for a sizable donation of cash or assets.

Whatever value remains in the CGA when you pass into your eternal reward is then transferred to the charitable beneficiary you had designated—like your favorite Catholic parish, school or agency. In the meantime, the lump sum is invested and grown, maximizing the eventual gift and ensuring your lifetime of supplemental retirement income. (This is the first win.)

A CGA gift can also provide several personal tax benefits. A partial tax deduction of the lump sum is available in the year of the gift, and capital gains

taxes are partially avoided if appreciated assets (like stocks or mutual funds) are used to fund the CGA. The first few years of payouts also provide partial tax-free income. (This is the second win.)

Some donors find that using lower performing assets, like a CD or money market fund, to fund a CGA can provide a better rate of return for them (especially in today's interest environment). Your fixed annual payment is calculated at the time of the gift using a percentage based on your age.

For example, where a \$10,000 CD with your bank might provide a 1% (or less) return through a set number of years, a 75-year-old donor starting a \$10,000 CGA today would receive a 5.4% interest payment each and every year (or \$540) for the rest of his/her life. (This is the third win.)

Our archdiocese's Catholic Community Foundation administers CGAs that benefit our parishes, schools and agencies, as well as the local Catholic community. In fact, we exist to serve them and you exclusively.

We utilize the American Council on Gift Annuities' suggested percentages

for determining our CGA rates and invest our funds in a socially responsible manner in accord with Catholic teaching and the U.S. Catholic bishops' investment guidelines.

We currently have 68 open CGAs at the Catholic Community Foundation (with starting gifts ranging from \$10,000 to more than \$100,000) that will benefit everything from parish endowments to needs-based scholarships at our schools to our archdiocesan Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary in Indianapolis—and everything in between.

If a Catholic CGA is of interest to you or a loved one, it would be our privilege to help you explore that possibility. For more information, please contact the Catholic Community Foundation at ccf@archindy.org.

(Jim Maslar is a Catholic philanthropic advisor for the archdiocese. Tax information or legal information provided herein is not intended as tax or legal advice and cannot be relied on to avoid statutory penalties. Always check with your legal, tax and financial advisors before implementing any gift plan.) †

Marian receives nearly \$1 million grant to develop faith of Latino communities

Special to *The Criterion*

Marian University in Indianapolis has received a grant of nearly \$1 million from Lilly Endowment Inc. to partner with Latino communities to provide spiritual and faith development programs.

The grant of \$994,318 will help build on the Latin@ Leadership Initiative with a parish-focused certificate program and curriculum supporting the Initiative for Parish Renewal/Iniciativa Parroquial de Renovación (Renovación).

The program is funded through Lilly Endowment's Thriving Congregations Initiative. The aim of the national initiative is to strengthen Christian congregations so they can help people deepen their relationships with God, build strong relationships with each other,

and contribute to the flourishing of local communities and the world.

Lilly Endowment is making nearly \$93 million in grants available through the initiative.

"Lilly Endowment's Thriving Congregations Initiative provides the Marian University community with the resources necessary to more effectively partner with Latino communities through Renovación and to provide spiritual, educational and leadership development programs," said Marian University President Daniel Elsener.

The program will support pastors in collaborative ministry, provide lay leaders with theological education, lead parishioners through a retreat process of discernment and empowerment, and create small parish communities to

support the spiritual lives of families.

"Marian University believes the Holy Spirit is at work in the Catholic Church through the Latino community, but so many obstacles prevent Latino-serving parishes from thriving," said Adam Setmeyer, Marian's vice president of mission and ministry and director of campus ministry. "Through Renovación, we will partner with parish leadership teams to cultivate missionary communities that will bring Christ's light to the world."

Marian University is one of 92 organizations taking part in the initiative. They represent and serve churches in a broad spectrum of Christian traditions. Marian is one of eight Catholic organizations and one of three Catholic colleges to receive this grant.

"In the midst of a rapidly changing

world, Christian congregations are grappling with how they can best carry forward their ministries," said Christopher Coble, Lilly Endowment's vice president for religion. "These grants will help congregations assess their ministries and draw on practices in their theological traditions to address new challenges and better nurture the spiritual vitality of the people they serve."

"The creation of a center for faith, life and culture is a priority for us," said Manuela Higgins, executive director of Marian's Latin@ Leadership Initiative. "The Latin@ Leadership Initiative is not just about supporting Latino students, but also having a positive impact on their families and the entire Latino community. This grant will get us there, and we are expecting great results." †

Mary shows how to turn fear into invitation to hear God's call, pope says

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—There is no better way to pray than like Mary, who opened her heart to God with humility and trust, Pope Francis said.

"It is putting our life in the Lord's hands, that he be the one who guides us. We can all pray like this, almost without words," the pope said on Nov. 18 during his weekly general audience, which was livestreamed from the library of the Apostolic Palace.

Continuing his series of audience talks about prayer, Pope Francis reflected on Mary as a model of prayer.

Mary does not autonomously orchestrate her life, the pope said. "She waits for God to take the reins of her path and guide her where he wants."

By being docile and willing to be God's instrument, she prepares the way for "the great events in which God takes part in the world," he said.

"There is no better way to pray than to place oneself like Mary in an attitude of openness with a heart open to God, 'Lord, what you want, when you want and how you want,'" he said.

Those whose lives are inspired by such a prayerful attitude, he said, "do not get upset when their days are filled with problems," but face reality knowing that if they offer themselves with humble love, "we become instruments of God's grace."

When the angel Gabriel told Mary of God's plan for her, the pope said, Mary "knew how to reject fear, even

while sensing that her 'yes' would bring her tremendously difficult trials. If in prayer we understand that each day given by God is a call, our hearts will then widen, and we will accept everything."

People also should pray that the Lord would be present every step of the way, "that he does not leave us alone, that he does not leave us to temptation, that he does not abandon us during terrible moments," he said.

Mary not only accompanied Jesus' entire life in prayer, right up to his death and resurrection, she also accompanied the first steps of the Church, praying with "the men and women whom her Son had called to form his community," Pope Francis said.

"Mary is not a priest among them. No. She is the mother of Jesus who prays with them in community, like one of the community; she prays with them and for them," he said.

Not only did she become the mother of God, she also became the mother of the Church through the work of the Holy Spirit, he said.

Her "natural feminine intuition is exalted by her most singular union with God in prayer," the pope said. "This is why, reading the Gospel, we note that she seems to disappear at times, only to reappear for crucial moments: it was God's voice that guided her heart and her steps where her presence was needed." †

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