

The MESSAGE

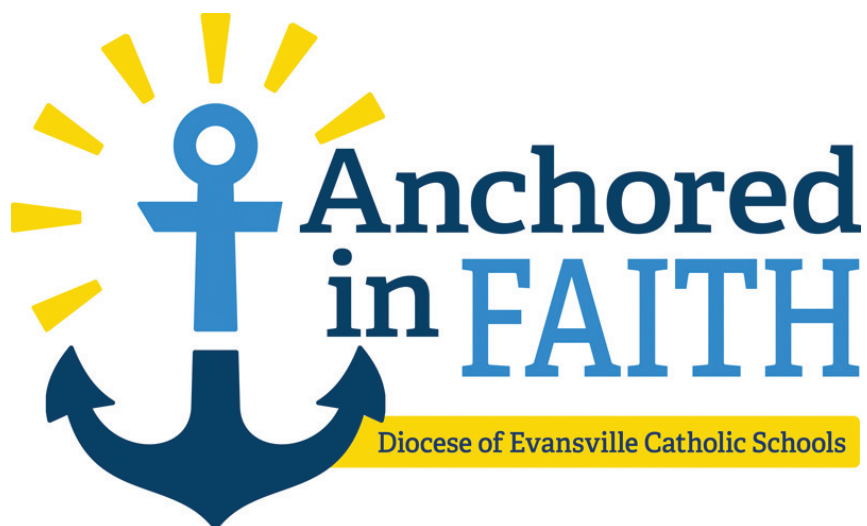
Southwestern Indiana's Catholic
Community Newspaper

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www.evdiomessage.org

Catholic Schools Week kicks off Jan. 28



By **MICHELLE PRIAR**
Superintendent of
Catholic Schools

Catholic schools in the Diocese of Evansville will soon be joining other Catholic schools across the nation in the celebration of National Catholic Schools Week. This year, the event runs from Jan. 28 to Feb. 3. It's an opportunity to applaud and recognize the many ways Catholic schools

prioritize academic excellence alongside the development of strong moral character and spiritual growth.

In the Diocese of Evansville, we're blessed to partner with families as we serve over 7,000 students in 26 schools. We truly value this partnership, and we recognize that it's a team effort. Pastors, administrators, teachers, support staff and community members all work together to help our

young people grow in their love for Christ, live healthy and productive lives, and contribute to the great community. It's our hope that students think of their Catholic school family as an extension of their family at home; one where they feel safe, nurtured, inspired and loved.

The theme this year for schools in our diocese is "Anchored in Faith." During Catholic Schools Week, I know

schools will be finding ways to engage students in activities, assemblies, prayer services and liturgies centered on this theme. It's a reminder that our faith keeps us steady, grounded and secure in who we know God wants us to be. Being anchored in our faith is central to who we are and what we do as Catholic schools.

If you have a child enrolled in one of our Catholic schools, check out your school's sched-

ule of events. If you don't currently have a child enrolled with us, but want to learn more, contact the principal at a local Catholic school, visit www.evdi.org/schools-information.html, or stop by a school from 5-7 p.m. local time on Feb. 1. Each school will be hosting a "Come and See" evening where you can speak directly with a school administrator. Come, see and help us celebrate Catholic schools!

Catholic Foundation of Southwestern Indiana to launch new grant initiative

By **TODD BROCK**
Executive Director
Catholic Foundation of
Southwestern Indiana

On behalf of our board of directors at The Catholic Foundation of Southwestern Indiana, Inc., I am pleased to announce the genesis of a new initiative that we are hopeful will provide assistance to our brothers and sisters within their ministries in the Diocese of Evansville.

In 2024, the foundation will begin awarding grants for limited-term projects and programs focused upon the "Four Pillars" of our organization supporting the Diocese of Evansville. In our first year, we will be awarding three grants to total \$50,000 toward ministries within:

- I. Parish Support
- II. Catholic Education
- III. Social Justice Initiatives
- IV. Vocational Assistance

We focus on organizations listed within the Official Catholic Directory, but other tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organi-

zations whose missions are consistent with that of the church may also apply for consideration.

The grant focus and funding must be directed toward Catholic ministries within the 12 counties of our Diocese: Sullivan, Greene, Knox, Daviess, Martin, Gibson, Pike, Dubois, Posey, Vanderburgh, Warrick and Spencer. We typically will not focus on multi-year, emergency or capital/endowment grants.

An online application will be available for review on Feb. 14 on our website www.catholicindiana.org. You can also call the foundation offices at 812-424-5536 for assistance or inquiry. We

anticipate to announce the award recipients on May 1 for the calendar year.

Our vision at The Catholic Foundation of Southwestern Indiana is to empower Catholics to be the hands and feet of Christ. We are hopeful that by providing funds dedicated to that action ability, we continue to be a valuable partner in creating a vibrant, sustainable, Catholic culture, for our children's children . . .

If you have other ideas, or we can be of assistance to you in your ministerial efforts, we are here to serve you, our brothers and sisters.

Marching for Life!

For the first time, groups from all five Indiana dioceses participated in the Indiana March for Life and Mass for Life, both held on Jan. 22 in Indianapolis. During the seventh annual event, marchers numbered an estimated 1,800 — shattering last year's record of 1,100.



In the *first photo*, youths from the Diocese of Evansville kneel in prayer in the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis during a Mass celebrated prior to the 2024 Indiana March for Life. In the *second photo*, more than 140 high school students and adult chaperones from across the Diocese of Evansville marched in support of life during the 2024 march.

Photo by Sean Gallagher, special to The Message / The Message photo courtesy of Jeremy Goebel

Reitz Memorial senior Luke Woodyard awarded Lilly Scholarship

Special to The Message

In December, Reitz Memorial High School senior Luke Woodyard was named a Vanderburgh County 2024 Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship recipient.

The scholarship provides full tuition, required fees and an annual stipend of up to \$900 for required books and equipment for four years of full-time undergraduate study at any eligible Indiana public or private nonprofit college or university. The scholarships are awarded based on academic merit, extracurricular activities, two essays and a selective interview process.

Woodyard is the son of James and Laura Woodyard. He has volunteered with Reitz Memorial’s Incognito Instructors and the Boys and Girls Club. He is an active member of Scouts BSA, where he achieved recognition as an Eagle Scout. During high school, Woodyard participated in tennis, cross country and track, along with being a member of the Academic



LUKE WOODYARD

Team and International Club.

In college, Woodyard is interested in studying industrial engineering.

Lilly Endowment Community Scholars are known for their community involvement, academic achievement, character and leadership.

Lilly Endowment Community Scholars may also participate in the Lilly Scholars Network (LSN), which connects both current scholars and alumni with resources and opportunities to be active

leaders on their campuses and in their communities.

Sidney Hardgrave, Vanderburgh Community Foundation regional director of community engagement and impact, said in a press release, “This year’s recipients impressed the committee with their accomplishments, leadership skills and maturity.”

“Our community has many students who excel both academically and in service to others,” Hardgrave said. “The selection process is never easy.”

Since its inception for the 1998-99 school year, Lilly Endowment has supported the Community Scholarship Program. More than 5,200 Indiana students have received the Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship with grants totaling more than \$505 million.

The primary purposes of the program are: 1) to help raise the level of educational attainment in Indiana; 2) to increase awareness of the beneficial roles Indiana community foundations can play in their communities; and 3) to encourage and support the



Photo credit

Pictured are Zach Woodyard, left, Dr. James Woodyard, Luke Woodyard and Laura Woodyard.

efforts of current and past Lilly Endowment Community Scholars to engage with each other and with Indiana busi-

ness, governmental, educational, nonprofit and civic leaders to improve the quality of life in Indiana.

Sarto Retreat Center facility study completed Findings and Recommendations Report

Special to The Message

In October 2022, Bishop Joseph M. Siegel convened an ad hoc committee made up of diocesan staff, clergy, Diocesan Building Commission, Diocesan Finance Council, and volunteer retreat coordinating representatives to study the Sarto Retreat Facility on the Catholic Center Campus of the Diocese of Evansville.

The Sarto Retreat facility has had a significant role in the life of the Diocese, hosting countless retreat and formation opportunities for our Catholic people and others. However, with the building now over 60 years old (built in 1960) and facing ongoing operating issues, Bishop Siegel believes that this is an appropriate time to assess the remaining useful life of the facility and whether it still offers the appropriate space for retreat, reflection, and faith formation.

With this in mind, the ad hoc committee was formed to conduct this study and provide findings and recommendations to Bishop Siegel for his further consideration. The committee concluded its work in June 2023 providing a report of findings and recommendations. Over the last several months, this report has been reviewed and discussed with various consultative bodies of the Diocese including the Council of Priests, the full Presbyterate, the Diocesan Pastoral Council, and the Diocesan Finance Council.

The additional discussions with these groups have provided valuable feedback and general support for the results of the study. The Bishop would now like to share the primary elements of that same report with our Catholic faithful as we continue to discern the possible next steps in evaluating options for maintaining a vibrant retreat center in our diocese.

The following summarizes the primary ele-

ments of the ad hoc committee’s assignment, findings, and recommendations.

The committee was assigned the task to assess and study a number of key items, including:

- Determine whether we still want or need a retreat facility by assessing its use and impact in our Diocese.
- Determine whether the Sarto Retreat House currently provides the best possible environment and facilities for the various groups that are hosted there.
- Evaluate the level and feasibility of repair and maintenance required to sustain and extend the useful life of the existing building.
- Evaluate and assess the existing Catholic Center campus land and layout.
- Assess the possibilities/value of a new retreat house build on campus.
- Assess other retreat facility options off-campus.
- Recommend best options: Update and expand? New build? Other?

Actions taken by the Committee

The Ad Hoc Committee conducted a series of meetings between October 2022 and June 2023, and accomplished the following:

- Discussed facility specifications and current uses
- Conducted whiteboard discussions — What works and what doesn’t: Needs, Wants, Dreams
- Conducted a full facility walkthrough and evaluation

We Remember in Prayer

Following is a feature in *The Message*, designed to help draw together the People of God in southwestern Indiana.

• **Sister Theresa (Theresa Marian) Peck, 89**, died at Seton Residence Jan. 12. Sister Theresa was born Oct. 14, 1934, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She was one of three children of Leopold Leon (Pocwiardowski) and Marie Dorothy (Pietruszynski) Peck. She graduated from Notre Dame High School in 1952 and St. Mary’s School of Nursing in 1955 and entered the Daughters of Charity in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1956.


After initial formation and reception of a Bachelor of Science in nursing and hospital administration from Marillac College, Sister Theresa served as a Nurse Supervisor in San Francisco, California, El Paso, Texas, and Los Angeles, California. She received a master’s degree in business administration from George Washington University in Washington, D.C., in 1969. Sister Theresa was a hospital administrator in Chicago, Illinois; London, Kentucky; Alton, Illinois; St. Mary Medical Center in Evansville, Indiana; and Indianapolis, Indiana. From 1986-93, she served in the roles of president and vice president of Daughters of Charity National Health System in St. Louis, Missouri. She was president and CEO of St. Joseph Health Centers and Hospital and Catholic Health Partners in Chicago, Illinois.

Sister Theresa served in the roles of Councillor, Provincial Assistant and Treasurer at Mater Dei Provincialate and as Administrator of the Mater Dei Campus. She was an active board member of Mission and Ministry, Inc., Visioning for the Mission Steering Committee, Seton Harvest, Inc., St. Vincent Early Learning Center and Habitat for Humanity. She served in the Ministry of Prayer at Seton Residence until her death.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated Jan. 19 in the Seton Chapel. Interment followed in St. Joseph Cemetery. Please keep Sister Theresa, her family and the Daughters of Charity in your prayers.


Please send information for WE REMEMBER IN PRAYER to The Message, P.O. Box 4169, Evansville, IN 47724 or e-mail message@evdio.org.

SISTER THERESA PECK



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www.facebook.com/CatholicMessage

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[@messageonline](https://twitter.com/messageonline)



See **SARTO**, page 16

AROUND THE DIOCESE

Happy Birthday!

Father Pastory Masunga, parochial vicar of St. Mary Parish in Ireland and canonist for the Diocese of Evansville Tribunal, celebrates his birthday Feb. 3.

Deacon Michael Helfter of Holy Family Parish in Jasper celebrates his birthday Feb. 3.

Annie-Rose Keith, parish catechetical leader at Resurrection Parish in Evansville, celebrates her birthday Feb. 5.

Christian Mocek, president of Reitz Memorial High School in Evansville, celebrates his birthday Feb. 6.

Sisters to host Reading Retreat Feb. 2

Join the Sisters of Providence of St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana, for the upcoming in-person Reading Retreat. The retreat is scheduled to begin 6:30 p.m. EST on Feb. 2 and conclude at 11 a.m. Feb. 4. Guests will stay in the Woodhaven Guest and Retreat House. Those attending will discuss the book, "Do I Stay Christian?" written by Brian McLaren, while reflecting on many of the questions McLaren asks in his book. Cost is \$275, which includes lodging, snacks and meals.

Participants are asked to purchase and bring their own copy of the book. For more information, visit Events.SistersofProvidence.org, or contact 812-535-2952 or provctr@spsmw.org.

Teens invited to volunteer with Sisters of Providence Feb. 3

Teenagers ages 12-18 are invited to make a difference by volunteering with the Sisters of Providence and health care residents at St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana. The next volunteer opportunity is from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., EST Feb. 3, 1 Sisters of Providence Road, St Mary-Of-The-Woods, IN 47876. Meet in the lobby of Providence Spirituality and Conference Center and wear comfortable shoes and clothes. Lunch will be provided. Register online at TeenVolunteer.SistersofProvidence.org or contact Sister Joni at 361-500-9505 or jluna@spsmw.org.

Holy Cross chicken dinner is Feb. 4

Holy Cross Parish in Fort Branch is hosting an all-you-can-eat, family-style chicken dinner from 10:45 a.m. to 1 p.m. Feb. 4 at Kaiser Hall, 202 S. Church St., Ft. Branch, IN 47648. Dine-in and carry-out options available. Cost is \$14/adult, \$5/child.

St. Meinrad will host Cyprian Davis Lecture Feb. 8

Archbishop Shelton J. Fabre, of the Archdiocese of Louis-

ville, Kentucky, will be the featured presenter at the Cyprian Davis Lecture at St. Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology. His talk, "Equal to Us: The Church Responds to Racism," will be 7 p.m. CST Feb. 8 in St. Bede Theater, 200 Hill Drive, St Meinrad, IN 47577.

From 2018 to 2023, Archbishop Fabre served as the chair of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism and led the writing of the USCCB's most recent pastoral letter on racism, "Open Wide Our Hearts — The Enduring Call to Love."

The lecture is free and open to the public. Parking is available at St. Bede Hall and in the Guest House and student parking lots. For more information, call Krista Hall at 812-357-6501.

Mother to Mother consignment sale is Feb. 10

St. John the Baptist Parish in Newburgh's Mother to Mother group will host their Spring/Summer consignment sale Feb. 10 from 8-10:30 a.m. Items are half-price from 11 a.m. to noon. Admission is \$1; cash or check only. Registration is open to consign and volunteer. For more information, visit www.mothertomothersale.org or on Facebook at St. John Mother to Mother Consignment Sale.

St. Wendel Ladies Club breakfast Feb. 11

The St. Wendel Ladies Club wants to cook you breakfast! Join us in the school cafeteria from 7:30-11 a.m. CST Feb. 11 for a home-cooked meal of scrambled eggs, whole hog sausage (made by our Men's Club), French toast casserole

Have you ever wondered how the Catholic Diocese of Evansville operates in partnership with all of its parishes to carry out the ministry of the Catholic Church in southwestern Indiana?


Here's your opportunity to learn more!

Watch **3-D Communications**, *Diocesan Director Discussions*, A TED-Talk style video sharing an overview of the Catholic Diocese of Evansville. Learn more as Dean Happe, Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer explains the Diocese's structure and how it works together with all of its parishes to carry out the mission of the Catholic Church in our diocese. Scan the QR Code or visit www.evdio.org and select "3-D Communications" from the main menu.

Catholic Diocese of Evansville

A Diocesan Overview
How the Diocese is structured, funded, and works with all of its Parishes to carry out the ministry of the Catholic Church

For a Video Presentation
Scan below
or visit
[evdio.org](https://www.evdio.org): 3-D Communications



Scan Me

Auditors certify diocese Charter reporting

Special to The Message

StoneBridge Business Partners of Rochester, New York, has notified Bishop Joseph M. Siegel that it has received scheduled reporting from the diocese related to the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. This reporting covered the period from July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023.

StoneBridge has reviewed the information and forwarded it to the USCCB Secretariat of Youth and Child Protection for use in its 2023 Audit Report.

Dioceses across the country are subject to in-person audits every three years, and the Diocese of Evansville will have an in-person audit in 2024.

or pancakes, and fruit. Adults cost \$8, children (ages 5-12) \$4, children 4 and under free. Bring the whole family!

Holy Redeemer to host "Love Ed"

Holy Redeemer Parish in Evansville will host "Love Ed" training for all parents and their children (grades 4-8) who are looking for empowerment to have conversations with their child about the theology and science of human sexuality within God's plan. Parent training is from 6-8 p.m. CST Feb 18. Level 1 (grade 4-5) is 6-8 p.m. CST Feb. 25. Level 2 (grades 6-8) is 6-8 p.m. March 3. Register by Feb. 4. If you have questions, contact Emily Hamilton at ehamilton@evdio.org or 812-424-8344.

Please send information for AROUND THE DIOCESE to The Message, P.O. Box 4169, Evansville, IN 47724. The e-mail address is message@evdio.org.



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2022 William Kinzer, New Albany, IN
2021 John Taylor, Louisville, KY
2019 Barry Thorsby, Montrose, MI
2018 Jackie Kirby, Louisville, KY
2017 Greg Huber, Borden, IN
2016 Richard Bergman, Marathon, WI

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Treasures for the future

Snap, snap, snap — the smells of fresh air and garden dirt, and the taste of instant iced tea. All of these combined bring back one of my fondest memories from childhood; sitting on my grandparents’ porch snapping beans with my grandma.

My grandparents have always had a garden and for as long as I can remember, they have pressure canned produce. My mother is the same, she preserves everything from green beans to pie fillings.

It’s a treasure to have been given the knowledge of a craft that feeds and nourishes loved ones. This past summer as I canned much of my garden, I spent time praying for the generations of women in my family who cared for their families and passed on the craft of home canning.

This winter as I have opened jar after jar of home-made soups, applesauce, tomatoes, green beans, and assorted jams from the summer, I have thought and prayed about what it is my children will be gifted in the form of knowledge or craft. There have been many things that have come to my mind like gardening and canning, but one sticks out. The liturgy — specifically living liturgically.

The liturgy is a work of divine worship that is unceasingly offered to God by the Holy Mother Church. It is in the most supreme form in the sacrifice of the most holy Mass. In addition to our opportunities for Mass, the liturgy should be a rhythm of our individual day-to-day lives. The liturgy of the hours or pausing to pray the Angelus at noon are other ways to pray and live the liturgy daily. The



CONNECTING FAITH AND LIFE

BREA CANNON

liturgy allows us to daily live our primary duty of worshipping God in a way that unites us to heaven.

I have a book written by Maria von Trapp that was originally published in 1955 — yes, the real-life woman we all fell in love with from the movie, “The Sound of Music.” In her book, “Around the Year with the von Trapp Family,” Maria explains how she incorporated dancing, baking, singing (of course) and parties into the daily flow of her family life. She saw living the liturgy as such, “Holy Mother Church teaches her children how to celebrate. In it, one learns how to turn family days such as birthdays, anniversaries, baptisms, weddings, and even funerals into feasts celebrated in the Lord.”

In addition to prayer, living liturgically can focus life around the saints and the sacraments. It can be as simple as lighting a candle at dinner on a specific saint’s feast day, reading about the saints’ life, and praying through his or her intercession. One could even celebrate a baptismal anniversary. It’s a reminder that in baptism one becomes a member of the mystical Body of Christ. That is certainly something to celebrate! Go ahead, have that donut at

breakfast and cake for dessert.

For baptismal anniversaries in our home, it’s simple but beautiful: we have a special dessert, light a baptismal candle (you can buy one, if necessary), and then my husband gives a special blessing to whoever’s baptism it is. There are many liturgical calendars available; I add our baptisms and other special days to my calendar so I don’t forget.

We also remember the penitential parts of the liturgical calendar are a form of worship and celebration too. Fasting and penance are beautiful ways to unite ourselves to Christ through the liturgy. During Lent, from Ash Wednesday to Passiontide to Holy Week, with the ultimate joys of Easter, the Church gives us special opportunities outside of the Mass to be a part of divine worship in our communities and our homes. This Lent, follow the Holy Mother Church as a guide for living the liturgy.

I do plan to pass gardening and pressure canning knowledge on to my children, but I also long for elements of liturgical living will be passed on too. My hope is that they see the beauty of the liturgy and in turn, thank God for Holy Mother Church and the model she has laid out for daily worship and celebration. May we all fall deeper in love with Jesus through rich traditions that are being passed on in our Catholic faith through living liturgically.

Brea Cannon is an Evansville Diocese native and member of St. Peter Parish in Montgomery with her husband, three children and extended family.

Loved by God . . .

“I give thanks to my God always on your account for the grace of God bestowed on you in Christ Jesus”
(1 Corinthians 1:4).

The Epistles of Paul reminds us that we belong to Christ; we are loved by God and called to be saints. This powerful message seems fairly simple, but in a big and complicated world, we need help to remain focused on Jesus! By the power of the Holy Spirit, we are strengthened by grace infused in the sacraments. The sanctifying grace from our baptism makes us a participant in the Trinitarian life of the Church.

Our salvation and freedom to worship God came with great sacrifice. Persecutions are still a concern in a secular world that opposes the values of Christian believers. The most important message we can share with family, friends and even strangers is the simple truth that God loves us all. He loved us first! We belong to Him!

I started a tradition for our young grandchildren. I create a book with pictures and information about the preparation and reception of their first sacraments. This past weekend, I scanned hundreds of photographs to put together books for two of our grandchildren who made their First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion in 2023.

I enjoy documenting life with photographs as much as I love writing in journals. Looking through our pictures I am reminded of how much God has blessed our family. Our Catholic faith is the reason for much of the joy shared from one generation to the next. Conversation about the gift of faith in a family instills tremendous value in the life of a child.



GRATITUDE FOR THE GIFT OF FAITH

ZOE CANNON

A faith-filled picture book with recorded dates and memories of our sacramental life is a great keepsake!

When I searched my iCloud storage for specific pictures, other memories popped up and made me realize how fast people and life change. The photos also revealed how beautifully unchanged the reception of sacraments is in the Church. I found an incredible picture taken in January 2016, inside the doors of St. Francis Xavier Minor Basilica in

Vincennes. “The Year of Mercy” had just begun on Dec. 8, 2015, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, with the opening of the Holy Door in St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome. The Holy Door closed and the “Year of Mercy” ended Nov. 20, 2016, the Solemnity of Christ the King.

I stood in awe of the beauty inside this Cathedral when I opened the designated “Door of Mercy” in Vincennes on that day. The sunlight coming through the stained glass windows illuminated the altar and the mural of the crucifix behind it. As I focused on God’s mercy — the greatest expression of His love for the world — I saw this image with a new and overpowering perspective — different than the thou-

See **GRATITUDE**, page 5

To the Catholics of the Diocese of Evansville: This edition is one of six issues of **The Message** to be mailed to every registered Catholic household this year. Two dollars of each Catholic Church member’s contribution pays for these diocesan-wide subscriptions.

Diocesan policy: Report and inform

Report child abuse

Every allegation of child abuse must be reported to Child Protection Services, an agency of Indiana state government.
Toll-free: 800-800-5556

Denuncie

Toda acusación de abuso de menores debe ser reportada al Servicio de Protección al Menor (Child Protective Services, CPS), una agencia del gobierno de Estados Unidos que está localizada en el estado de Indiana.
Puede llamar gratis al: 800-800-5556.

Report and inform

In the event of an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor (a person under 18) by diocesan personnel, report the allegation to authorities, and inform the Victims Assistance Coordinator for the diocese.
Toll-free: 866-200-3004, local: 812-490-9565

To report allegations of sexual misconduct involving bishops of the United States, or to report their intentional interference in a sexual abuse investigation, contact the Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting service.

Toll-free: 800-276-1562, or report online at ReportBishopAbuse.org.

Denuncie e informe

En caso de una alegación de abuso sexual de un menor (una persona menor de 18 años) cometido por algún miembro del personal diocesano, reporte dicha alegación a las autoridades y también infórmele al coordinador diocesano de Asistencia para las Víctimas.

Puede llamar gratis al: 866-200-3004, o al número local: 812-490-9565.

Para reportar alegaciones de conducta sexual inapropiada cometida por obispos en los Estados Unidos, o para reportar su interferencia intencional en una investigación de abuso sexual, contacte al Servicio de Abuso de Obispos Católicos.

Puede llamar gratis al: 800-276-1562, o reportarlo en línea en ReportBishopAbuse.org.

The Message

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What is really taught in *Fiducia Supplicans*?

On December 18, 2023, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF) of the Vatican issued a document titled *Fiducia supplicans*, on blessings for people in irregular or same-sex relationships. It generated a great deal of attention in the media, giving rise to inaccurate headlines such as “Pope gives go ahead to bless same-sex marriages.” Public actions and comments by some clergy added to the confusion. I know many parishioners have spoken to their priests and deacons, seeking a clarification of what is included in *Fiducia supplicans*. Shortly after the release of the document, I sent a resource to our clergy to help them in addressing these concerns. Even with the clarification offered by the DDF on January 4, there still seems to be concern and confusion about what is being taught. For this reason, I would like to take the opportunity to lay out what the document actually says and what it does not say.

First, the DDF reaffirmed the Church’s teaching that marriage is between a man and a woman. This Divine truth is not within the capacity of the Church to change as it arises from the very essence of marriage as designed by God. As the document states, “Therefore, rites and prayers that could create confusion between what constitutes marriage — which is the ‘exclusive, stable, and indissoluble union between a man and a woman, naturally open to the generation of children’ — and what contradicts it are inadmissible.” Regrettably, some



THE BISHOP’S CORNER

MOST REV.
JOSEPH M. SIEGEL

have misread this document, believing it to give permission for priests and deacons to offer blessings to couples seeking to have their irregular or same-sex unions blessed. That is not the case.

Second, the document makes clear that the blessing is not a ritual meant to imitate a wedding nor is it imparted on the relationship of the persons, but on the persons themselves. It is meant to be a spontaneous blessing that calls upon God to bless those who “desire to entrust themselves to the Lord and his mercy, to invoke his help, and to be guided to a greater understanding of his plan of love and of truth.” There are many individuals who seek the blessing of a priest or deacon when they are traveling or when they are facing some difficulty in life; such spontaneous blessings, often requested after Mass, are envisioned by the document. There is not to be any prepared text or ritual, but simply the blessing of God to live well the call to be faithful to the Church and to seek to live a life of holiness.

Finally, blessings are at the service of a life oriented towards Christ, who is the fount of life. As

the document notes, “when one asks for a blessing, one is expressing a petition for God’s assistance, a plea to live better, and confidence in a Father who can help us live better.” All of God’s children, no matter their sexual orientation, are called to a life of grace that puts Christ at the center of everything. Thus, the document notes that blessings are for those who “do not claim a legitimization of their own status, but who beg that all that is true, good, and humanly valid in their lives and their relationships be enriched, healed, and elevated by the presence of the Holy Spirit.”

What this means is that for those who are authentically seeking union with Christ through a life of holiness, ministers of the Church offer the blessing of God for strength and perseverance. So in reality, *Fiducia supplicans* doesn’t change the pastoral practice of most priests and deacons. As mentioned above, clergy, myself included, are often asked for blessings after Mass or at other gatherings, and we offer the blessings to the individuals. These spontaneous blessings are simply an offering of God’s grace and help to them in their need, whatever it might be. They are not meant to be an affirmation or approval of an irregular or sinful situation. The DDF writes that with this “popular pastoral care,” Pope Francis “invites us to value the simple faith of the People of God who, even in the midst of their sins, emerge from their everyday lives and open their hearts to ask for God’s help.”

Bishop’s Schedule

- Retreat**, Diocese RCIA, Catholic Center, Evansville, 8:30 a.m. CST, Saturday, Jan. 27.
- Confirmation, Resurrection Parish**, Evansville, 5 p.m. CST, Saturday, Jan. 27.
- Confirmation, St. Boniface Parish**, Evansville, 10 a.m. CST, Sunday, Jan. 28.
- Mass**, Catholic Schools Week, St. Benedict Cathedral, Evansville, 9:30 a.m. CST, Tuesday, Jan. 30.
- Meeting**, Clergy Personnel Board, Catholic Center, Evansville, 1:30 p.m. CST, Tuesday, Jan. 30.
- Meeting**, Directors, Catholic Center, Evansville, 1 p.m. CST, Thursday, Feb. 1.

Gratitude

Continued from page 4

sand other times I had entered this church. This Extraordinary Holy Year was promulgated to remind us of the importance of asking for forgiveness, and the power of grace received in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

The Church is providing a great opportunity to celebrate a Eucharistic Revival. After three years of preparation, a celebration will be held in Indianapolis this summer of 2024. As you take advantage of this Eucharistic renewal, please continue to understand the importance of asking God for His mercy. We have offended Him, but His mercy is everlasting. Grace from all the sacraments heals the soul. In receiving the Body and Blood of Jesus at holy Mass we must be worthy to receive. Jesus takes the ordinary things of life and transforms them into occasions of grace! I give thanks to God for the grace bestowed on us through Jesus. Amen!

Zoe Cannon lives in Morgantown, Indiana, and is a member of Sts. Francis and Clare Parish in Greenwood, Indiana.

¿Qué se enseña realmente en *Fiducia Supplicans*?

El 18 de diciembre de 2023, el Dicasterio para la Doctrina de la Fe (DDF) del Vaticano emitió un documento titulado *Fiducia supplicans*, sobre bendiciones para gente en relaciones irregulares o del mismo sexo. Esto generó gran atención en los medios de comunicación, dando lugar a titulares imprecisos tales como “El Papa da el visto bueno para bendecir a los matrimonios del mismo sexo.” Acciones públicas y comentarios hechos por algunos miembros del clero agregaron a la confusión. Yo sé que muchos feligreses han hablado con sus sacerdotes y diáconos, buscando clarificación sobre qué se incluye *Fiducia supplicans*. Poco después de la emisión del documento, yo envié una fuente a nuestro clero para ayudarlos a que aborden estas cuestiones. Aun con la clarificación ofrecida por el DDF el 4 de enero, todavía parece haber preocupación y confusión sobre lo que se está enseñando. Por esta razón, a mí me gustaría aprovechar la oportunidad para exponer lo que el documento realmente dice y qué no dice.



EL RINCÓN DEL OBISPO

MÁS REV.
JOSEPH M. SIEGEL

Primero, el DDF reafirmó las enseñanzas de la Iglesia de que el matrimonio es entre un hombre y una mujer. La Iglesia no tiene la capacidad de cambiar esta verdad Divina ya que emerge de la misma esencia del matrimonio diseñado por Dios. Como el documento indica, “Por lo tanto, los ritos y las oraciones que puedan crear confusión entre lo que constituye el matrimonio — que es la ‘unión exclusiva, estable, e indisoluble entre un hombre y una mujer, naturalmente abierta a la generación de niños’ — y aquello que lo contradiga es inadmisibles.” Lamentablemente, algunos han malinterpretado este documento, creyendo que da permiso a sacerdotes y diáconos para que ofrezcan bendiciones a parejas que buscan bendecir su unión irregular o del mismo sexo. Ese no es el caso.

Segundo, el documento deja claro que la bendición no es un ritual concebido para imitar una boda ni tampoco para ser impartido en las relaciones de las personas, sino en las personas mismas. Su objetivo es la bendición espontánea que exhorta a Dios para que bendiga a quienes “deseen confiarse en el Señor y su misericordia, invocar su ayuda, y ser guiado hacia un mayor entendimiento de su plan de amor y de verdad.” Hay muchos individuos que buscan la bendición de un sacerdote o diácono cuando están

viajando o cuando están enfrentando alguna dificultad en la vida; esas bendiciones espontáneas, a menudo requeridas después de la Misa, están vislumbradas en el documento. No debe haber ningún texto o ritual preparado, sino simplemente la bendición de Dios de vivir bien el llamado de ser fieles a la Iglesia y de buscar vivir una vida de santidad.

Finalmente, las bendiciones están al servicio de una vida orientada hacia Cristo, quien es la fuente de vida. Como señala el documento, “cuando uno pide una bendición, uno está expresando una petición por la asistencia de Dios, una súplica para vivir mejor, y confianza en un Padre que nos puede ayudar a vivir mejor.” Todos los hijos de Dios, sin importar su orientación sexual, están llamados a una vida de gracia que pone a Cristo en el centro de todo. Por tanto, el documento señala que las bendiciones son para aquellos quienes “no reclaman una legitimización de su propio estado, sino para los que ruegan que todo lo que es verdadero, bueno, y humanamente válido en sus vidas y sus relaciones sea enriquecido, sanado, y elevado por la presencia del Espíritu Santo.

Lo que esto significa es que para quienes están buscando auténticamente una unión con Cristo a través de una vida de santidad, los ministros de la Iglesia ofrecen la bendición de Dios por fuerza y perseverancia. Así que, en realidad, *Fiducia supplicans* no cambia la práctica pastoral de la mayoría de los sacerdotes y diáconos. Como se menciona anteriormente, al clero, yo incluido, frecuentemente se nos piden bendiciones después de la Misa o en otros encuentros, y nosotros ofrecemos las bendiciones a los individuos. Estas bendiciones espontáneas son simplemente una ofrenda de la gracia y ayuda de Dios para ellos en su necesidad, cualquiera que fuera. No pretenden ser una afirmación o aprobación de una situación irregular o pecaminosa. En el DDF se escribe que con este “cuidado pastoral popular,” el Papa Francisco “nos invita a valorar la fe sencilla de la Gente de Dios que, aun en medio de sus pecados, emerge de sus vidas diarias y abre sus corazones para preguntar por la ayuda de Dios.”

— Translated by Dr. Daniela Abraham, St. Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology

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Special Olympics basketball

Special Olympian basketball athletes from Vanderburgh County, *in white*, and Gibson County, Indiana, compete Jan. 13 at the Diocese of Evansville Catholic Center. The Catholic Center hosts Special Olympics basketball games annually.

The Message photos by Megan Erbacher



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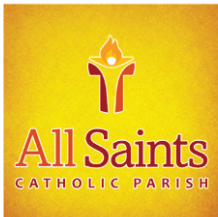
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Source + Summit is March 8-10 at Mater Dei

Special to The Message

The Source + Summit Retreat has made a life-changing difference in the lives of hundreds of youths in our Diocese! The 2024 Source + Summit retreat weekend (for ages 13-24) is March 8-10 at Mater Dei High School in Evansville. The theme for the retreat this year is “Blessed are Those Called to the Supper of the Lamb.”

This Eucharistic-centered retreat gives our youth a solid Catholic foundation, a real and deeper relationship with God and the grace to fight the counter-cultural issues that our young people face today. Participants spend time in the presence of Jesus in Eucharistic Adoration, in guided, small groups where peers help peers journey deeper into their faith. They experience the authentic, lived faith of over 75 young adult team members facilitating the weekend and engaging participants in fun activities, games and skits while serving as role models for the younger members of our Church. Through participation in the sacrament of reconciliation, the Holy Mass, praise and worship and Eucharistic Adoration, they encounter the real and living presence of Jesus among us.

Source + Summit’s outstanding speakers are energetic, passionate, engaging and spirit-filled. They will guide the participants of this retreat into the deeper meaning of what it means to participate in The Supper of the Lamb, Who the Lamb is, and will want to invite others to this great feast! Our youth will be immersed in an oasis of inspiration and learn how to protect the great gift of Faith that they are given.

Our speakers this year include NCYC, SEEK and Steubenville Youth Conference favorite, Paul J. Kim! He is one of the most sought-after Catholic speakers in America. He is a featured speaker at the National Eucharistic Congress. The way he presents is a rare gift to witness and has impacted people of all ages in 49 states and in 16 countries over the past decade. Moving his audiences from laughter in one moment, to deep reflection and prayer in another; Paul utilizes his many talents (including music, beatboxing, comedy and inspira-



tional talks) to communicate the Gospel message of Christ to young people in a way that is engaging, entertaining, and altogether life-changing.

Other presenters include Bishop Joseph M. Siegel; Father Tyler Tenbarger, Diocesan Director of Vocations; Father Sudhakar Bhastati, member of the Missionary Order of the Heralds of Good News and Source + Summit Chaplain; Father Giles Barrie, Franciscan Friars of the Renewal; Father Zachary Shallow, SOLT; the Apostolic Sisters of

St. John; Brother Damien Joseph and Father Giles Barrie, Franciscan Friars of the Renewal; the Nashville Dominican Sisters of St. Cecelia; Giancarlo Bernini, Catholic catechetical illusionist; as well as other diocesan priests, deacons and religious who will participate throughout the weekend, leading attendees in prayer and talks.

For more information, visit www.sourcesummit-evansville.org/ or call 812-453-1024.



Bishop Joseph Siegel
Bishop of Evansville



Paul J. Kim



The Sisters of St. John



Father Giles, CFR



Father Tyler
Vocation Director



Giancarlo Bernini



Br. Damien, CFR



Fr. Zachary, SOLT



The Nashville Dominicans



Fr. Sudhakar
Our Faithful Chaplain



SOURCE + SUMMIT
YOUTH RETREAT
MARCH 8, 9, 10, 2024



FRIENDS



FAITH



FUN

*“So Moses set out with Joshua, his assistant, and went up to the mountain of God”
Exodus 24:13*

“Blessed Are Those Called to the Supper of the Lamb.”



MATER DEI HIGH SCHOOL
AGES 13 - 24

Register Now!
WWW.SOURCESUMMIT-EVANSVILLE.ORG
Questions PHONE 812-453-1024

Ties, connections, passion

I find myself frequently attending funerals. There are several contributing factors for this phenomenon. I have reached the age where friends of my parents and parents of my friends are passing away; people my own age are dying; donors and donor family members are going to their eternal rest. Funeral liturgies can be both inspirational

REFLECTION
By IRENE MOSCHNER
Director of Philanthropy,
Catholic Foundation of Southwestern Indiana

and introspective. I love hearing eulogies from family members, they share thoughts, memories and stories that bring the rest of us into a deeper relationship with the deceased and their family. We hear what was important to them; they share funny stories; and they give us a glimpse into the soul of the one they have lost.

A friend who recently passed worked in a profession that required business attire, including the wearing of a tie. He also attended a Catholic High School that, you guessed it, required the wearing of a tie. Over his lifetime, Michael accumulated more than 300 ties. At his funeral, the ties were on display and the family invited everyone to take home a tie or two. There were so many to choose from: seasonal ties, plaid ties, paisley ties, ties with bright bold colors, and a limited number of more sedate ties. Ties that did more than fulfill the required dress code for Michael, they were a small way to express his large passion for life. His family intends to donate the remaining ties to his alma mater, so students who may have forgotten to wear one may borrow a Wittgen tie.

Michael’s family were very passionate about their Catholic faith and Catholic education. One way his parents, Richard “Dick” and Janice Wittgen, supported vocations was by having the parish priest over for dinner. All of their children attended Catholic school. They were actively involved in all aspects of the parish. Janice continues her faith through prayer. Michael’s passion for music meant that, even when he was not singing in the choir, his was the strong voice from the pew inspiring those around him to join in singing the praises of the Lord.

Herman and Lillian Wittgen were Michael’s grandparents. With a portion of their estate, his parents created the Herman and Lillian Wittgen Catholic Education Endowment to help provide a Catholic education for the children of Holy Redeemer Parish. The passion for learning continues with that endowment gift, a connection which forever ties the family to future generations who seek to learn about their faith through Catholic education.

If you would like more information about creating your own family legacy, please contact the Catholic Foundation, 812-424-5536, foundation@evdio.org.

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AT THE MOVIES

NEW YORK (OSV News) — The following are capsule reviews of movies recently reviewed by OSV News. Ratings are also given by the Motion Picture Association (MPA).

“The Beekeeper” (Amazon MGM)

Outraged by the online scamming and subsequent despair-driven suicide of the elderly widow (Phylicia Rashad) who was the closest thing to a friend he had, the honey harvester of the title (Jason Statham) deploys his skills as an ex-elite operative to go on a rampage of revenge during which he mows down anyone who stands between him and those responsible for the crime (ultimately Josh Hutcherson). Since that includes police and Army units, the deceased’s FBI agent daughter (Emmy Raver-Lampman) finds her loyalties divided as she tracks the unstoppable killer. As directed by David Ayer, this preposterous action flick shows such utter contempt for reality that it could be taken as an over-the-top joke. But there are moments in the dialogue upholding the protagonist’s crusade and falsely pitting obedience to the law against ultimate justice, thus requiring serious assessment of the story’s blatant immorality. Benignly viewed vigilantism, moments of extreme gore, several gruesome sights, drug use, about a half-dozen profanities, a few milder oaths, pervasive rough language, frequent crude expressions. The OSV News classification is O — morally offensive. The MPA rating is R — restricted. Under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian.

“Maestro” (Netflix)

The high-energy yet brittle personality of its subject sets the tone for this fact-based look back at the tangled personal life of composer and conductor Leonard Bernstein (Bradley Cooper, who also co-wrote and directed). Early on in his storied career, Bernstein meets and falls for actress Felicia Montealegre (Carey Mulligan). Although she is fully aware of his many dalliances with men, and resolves to tolerate them, these liaisons eventually strain their marriage. Cooper’s script, penned with Josh Singer, seems to suggest that, as long as Bernstein’s extramarital activities remained casual, his spouse was able to ignore or overlook them but that once he formed a more emotional bond, she felt threatened. While the film is sober in its approach to these matters, it takes no decided moral stance, making it

inappropriate for youthful viewers. Mature themes, including bisexuality and adultery, premarital and same-sex bedroom scenes, drug use, brief scatological humor, a couple of profanities, a few milder oaths, several rough terms, occasional crude and crass talk. The OSV News classification is A-III — adults. The MPA rating is R — restricted. Under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian.

“Mean Girls” (Paramount)

The sharp humor of Tina Fey’s screenplay for this adaptation of the Broadway musical version of the eponymous 2004 film, both of which she also wrote, offsets the sometimes over-the-top production numbers by which the movie’s more serious themes are conveyed, with varying effectiveness, under the direction of Samantha Jayne and Arturo Perez Jr. Fresh from the African bush, where she was home-schooled by her scientist mother (Jenna Fischer), an aspiring mathematician (Angourie Rice) is thrust into the social maelstrom of a typical public high school. Initially befriended by a pair of outcasts (Auli’i Cravalho and Jaquel Spivey) she later finds herself torn between loyalty to them and the popularity that comes when the student body’s reigning — and fiercely intimidating — queen bee (Renée Rapp) takes her up as a protegee. The fact that the newcomer has instantly fallen for her patroness’ ex-boyfriend (Christopher Briney)



OSV News photo/Daniel Smith, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Pictures
Jason Statham and Jeremy Irons are shown in a scene from the movie “The Beekeeper.”

presents a further complication. While the script’s anti-backstabbing and self-assertiveness messages might be valuable for teens, its dialogue is often unsuitable for them while the mostly extraneous but frequent presentation of the gay lifestyle as a perfectly valid alternative to heterosexuality requires mature discernment. Implicit approval of homosexual activity, a same-sex kiss, more than a dozen mild oaths, at least one rough term, several crude expressions, frequent crass talk, obscene gestures. The OSV News classification is A-III — adults. The MPA rating is PG-13 — parents strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH

Gospel for Sunday, January 28, 2024

Mark 1:21-28

Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for the Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

FAME	AUTHORITY	SPIRIT
GALILEE	SCRIBES	DESTROY
MAN	NAZARETH	OBEY
REBUKED	CAPERNAUM	QUIET
JESUS	SYNAGOGUE	GOD
HOLY	COMMANDS	AMAZED
SABBATH	TEACHING	UNCLEAN

S D N A M M O C S Q G E T O V
G A L I L E E Y Y F S M G W W
I S H D V N N X F N E A D I G
Y U I W N A L D A Q B F D C O
I T B L G K E M O D I F J T C
Y B I O B S C A P E R N A U M
U E G R T S P V U N C L E A N
C U B R O T A I L I S P O D A
E V O O E H P B R X Z F V E Z
C Y R I J M T S B I Z K G K A
W O U T E B D U Q A T J U U R
K Q E C S X O O A I T G H B E
J P W M U R A D G W A H S E T
T C R L S G N I H C A E T R H
Y L O H W L X C A M A Z E D N

CROSSWORD

- ACROSS
- 1 A city in this state (abbr.) is named after a New Testament author

5 Officiating priest of a mosque

9 The Diocese of Boise is here

14 On sheltered side

15 Mrs. Nick Charles

16 Japanese-American

17 Trim

18 Purim is described in this OT book.

19 Mortal

20 Nourishes

22 The domestic church

23 Acquiesces

24 Catholic dancer and movie star Kelly

25 601, to Julius Caesar

26 Noisy snake

30 Female members of religious orders (abbr.)

33 Jacob’s dream in Genesis

36 Continental money

37 Priest who offered his life for another’s in a Nazi prison camp

39 Own, in Dundee

40 Plait

41 “___, Sing America”

42 Dorothy Day’s “Catholic ___”

44 Exploit

45 The ___ of Faith

47 Crossed out

49 Former United Nations chief Annan

50 Gift used for the good of the Church

54 Blunder

57 One of the cardinal virtues

58 Catholic fitness guru, Charles ___

59 Composition in verse

60 Capital of Yemen

61 Drench

62 Tropical tree

63 Intellectual faculty

64 Made a mistake

65 Clarets

66 Coll. admissions requirements

DOWN

1 Food of the Exodus

2 Intestinal obstruction

3 Approaches

4 Brought in

5 Sluggishness

6 In Numbers it says he was the most humble man on earth

7 Skills

8 ___ Jongg

9 Prague statue

10 Distance across a circle

11 Sparkling white wine

12 Make healthy

13 Greasy

21 Ishmael, to Jacob

22 ___ of the Lord

24 Language of the New Testament

27 Feast in the Diocese of Honolulu

28 Greek goddess of strife

29 Traveled

30 Slip

31 Routine

32 Sponge target

34 Loincloth worn by Hindu men

35 US org. whose members can trace their roots back to colonial times

38 Where you might find a good murder mystery

40 This becomes the Body of Christ at the consecration

42 Leah, to Jacob

43 Disinters

46 Drunk

48 Joseph interpreted these

50 Apostles’ or Nicene

51 Tradition says Bartholomew preached here

52 Perfume

53 Repairs

54 “God is the Supreme Being who ___ all things and keeps them in existence.”

55 “Take ___ leave...”

56 Insult

57 Prod

59 Average
-
- www.wordgamesforcatholics.com
- See answers on page 19.

Finance Office reports results of diocesan operations through June 30, 2023

The annual audit of the financial statements of the Administrative Offices of the Catholic Diocese of Evansville has been completed and we have the opportunity to share with you the financial results of our Diocesan Operations for fiscal year ended 6/30/23.

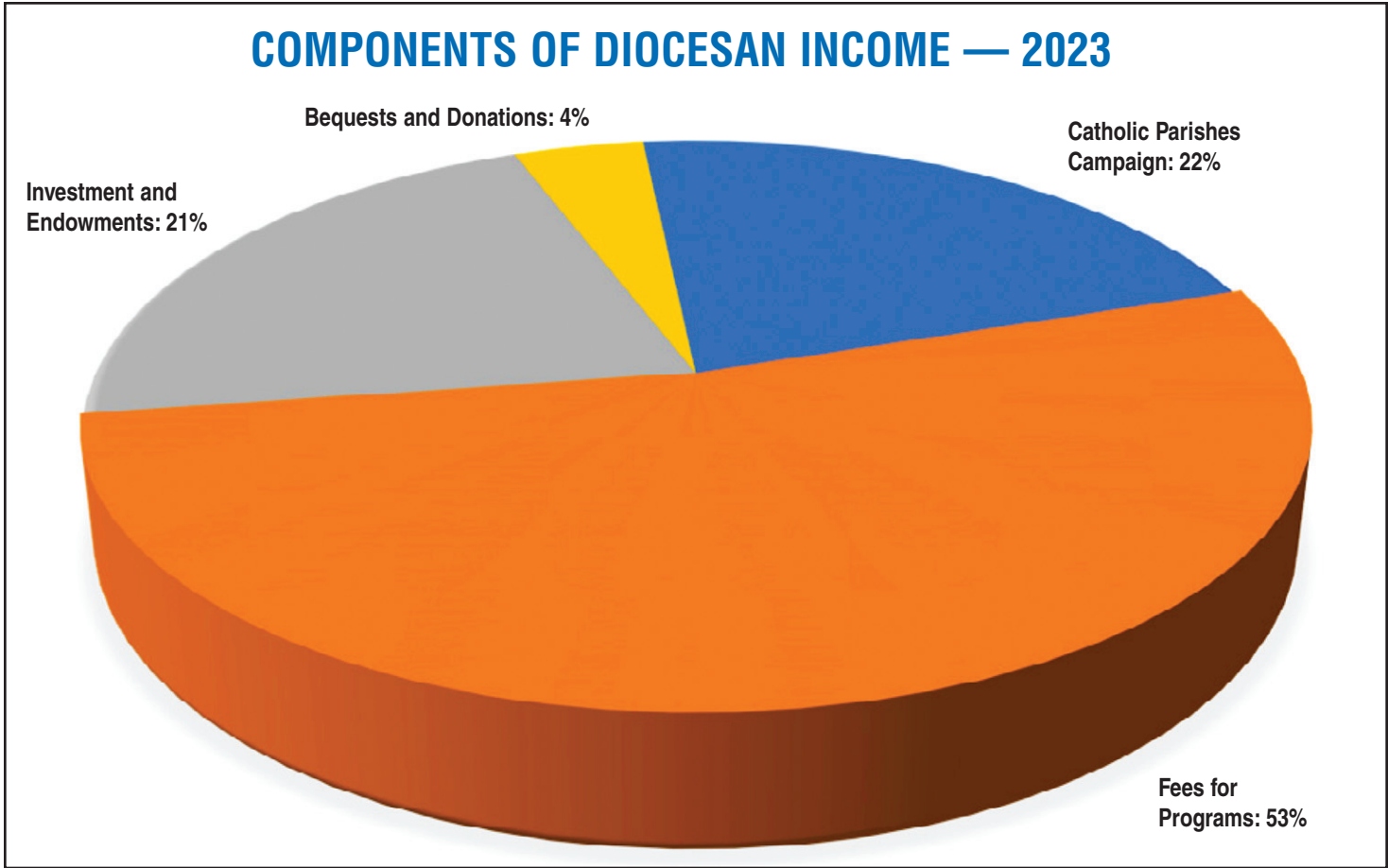
The full financial report, with auditor’s opinion, footnotes, and supplemental information can also be found on the diocesan website at evdio.org under Departments, Finance Office, Forms and Documents.

The required format of audited financial statements can be a little overwhelming when deciphering the results of the fiscal year. It can be difficult to decipher what’s “Good” and what’s “Bad.” As such, we have included some supplemental information that we hope will be helpful:

- Link/QR Code to a short video providing an Overview to how the Diocesan Offices are organized
- Chart showing the primary sources of revenue for the diocese
- Condensed Income and Expense Summary
- Audited Statement of Financial Position (Balance Sheet)
- Audited Statement of Activity (Income Statement)

ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW:

The past several years we have included within the article the details on how the Diocese is organized, the 3 primary “Lines of Business,” managed by the Administrative Offices, and how these “lines of businesses” are funded. This year, a short video has been developed providing an overview of how



the Diocese is structured, funded, and works with all of its parishes to carry out the ministry of the Catholic Church in Southwestern Indiana. I encourage you to make a little time to view this video at the link or QR code below:



www.evdio.org/3-d-communications.html

The Audited Financial Statements presented here represent the three “lines of business,” including 1.) Diocesan Ministries, 2.) The Deposit/ Loan Program, and 3.) The Self-Funded Insurance Program whereby these 3 “lines of business” rely on four primary sources of revenue in order to fund their operations as follows:

- **CPC (Now known as Catholic Ministries Appeal)**
Funds only used for lines of business 1 and 2)
- **Fees for Programs and Services**
(Including the Insurance Program)
- **Investment and Interest Income**
(Including Returns on Endowment holdings)

- **Bequests and Donations**
(Including cash distributions from Endowment holdings)

The pie chart, *above*, reflects each of these sources of revenue and their respective percentage of total revenue presented in the audited financial statements for 2023. (*Note:* The percentages in this chart include the Insurance Program whereas the percentages of revenue shared in the aforementioned overview video do not, therefore the percentages referenced in the video do not exactly match the chart above — both are accurate based on their specific application.)

FINANCIAL RESULTS SUMMARY:

The table, *below*, represents a condensed summary of the audited income statement. The fiscal year ended with solid financial results, on a normalized basis (eliminating extraordinary items — discussed later), just slightly better than break-even for normal operations of the Diocesan offices and the Deposit and Loan program (lines of business 1 and

2), and generated a prudent surplus in the Insurance Program (line of business 3) in order to maintain appropriate insurance reserves for the future. Additionally, unlike 2022, we were fortunate to experience a couple of extraordinary income items that created a more sizeable positive change in Net Assets. These extraordinary items consisted of a substantial uptick in the investment market which generated some significant unrealized gains in our investments

and endowment funds whereas 2022 resulted in significant unrealized losses and we enjoyed another nice reduction in our pension plan liability that further contributed to the sizeable positive change in Net Assets. Whether including or excluding the extraordinary items Net Income, Balance Sheet Liquidity, and overall Net Asset positions were solid and improved over prior year.

See **AUDIT**, page 10

Income and Expense Summary		
	6/30/2023	6/30/2022
Income:		
Catholic Parishes Campaign Income	\$ 6,348,771	\$ 6,285,911
Net Investment & Endowment Income	\$ 6,309,427	\$ (11,093,635)
Bequests & Donations - Contributions & Endowment Distributions	\$ 1,209,383	\$ 1,045,463
Fees for Programs - Insurance, Medical, & Service Fees	\$ 15,488,683	\$ 14,913,905
Total Revenue, Gains, & Support	\$ 29,356,264	\$ 11,151,644
Total Expenses	\$ 22,926,310	\$ 22,343,551
Change in Net Assets - i.e. Net Income/(Loss) - Operating	\$ 6,429,954	\$ (11,191,907)
Change in Pension Liability	\$ 6,843,717	\$ 3,961,165
Total Change in Net Assets - i.e. Net Income/(Loss)	\$ 13,273,671	\$ (7,230,742)

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Audit

Continued from page 9

INCOME:

The Income statement reflects a \$13.2M net income for the year (positive change in Net Assets), compared to a previous year net loss of \$7.2M, which is a substantial change and while the \$13.2M net income would appear excessively *Good*, just as the prior year \$7.2M net loss would appear excessively *Bad* it is important to note that the primary driver of each of those results are massive swings in the investment market. In 2022, the market was way down requiring that we lower the valuation of our investments (referred to as “*unrealized loss*”) which created a large net loss on the income statement and in 2023 the market was significantly up which required that we increase the valuation of our investments (referred to as “*unrealized gain*”) creating a large net income on the income statement. These are important elements of our financial results and stability but it is important to look beyond these large unrealized gains and losses and into the normalized results of the operations of the Diocese. The information that follows attempts to help you do just that.

So, as discussed above, the \$13.2M

net income is primarily driven by the unrealized gains on investments (\$6.3M) and a reduction in Lay Pension Liability (\$6.8M). *If those two extraordinary income items were eliminated, the results of the operation would be, as stated earlier, a little better than break even with net income of about \$120K.* Below is further explanation of these market-driven, extraordinary items:

1. Market performance over the course of the year was up and down with a lot of volatility in the market, however the fiscal year ended very strong which allowed us to record unrealized gains this year verses losses recorded last year. This drove significant increases in the value of our investment assets and in turn created substantial income on the Income Statement. Again, it should be noted that this is certainly beneficial, but the gains are primarily “unrealized” meaning the value of the investments increased creating income that is shown on the income statement, however did not drive actual cash receipts to fund operations. Our investment strategies are designed to smooth and protect against the

effects of market fluctuations in the long term but can swing significantly year to year as seen when we compare this year to last year’s results.

2. The pension liability was reduced by a material amount of \$6.8M. This reduction is driven by additional funds placed into the pension plan, as was the intention for the year, coupled with favorable investment returns on the plan assets, and an increase in the discount rate to 5 percent (up from 4.5 percent Prior Year) driving a significant benefit to the income statement. Both our balance sheet and Income statement were materially impacted in a positive way by these factors. While our strategies in managing the pension plan liability continue to produce favorable results, a number of the factors that create these large swings in the liability and then influence our income statement results are driven by the actuarial assessments of the plan and the discount rates dependent on the bond market, which are often beyond our direct control.

EXPENSE:

Normalized Operating Expenses, excluding extraordinary items and the insurance program, came in as expected, just slightly unfavorable to budget (\$113K) due to unexpected maintenance items that could not be deferred.

During the year, we did encounter two extraordinary expense items that involved utilizing a number of prior year, earmarked contributions, to construct a small chapel in the Catholic Center as well as to fund a short-term scholarship program for our Catholic schools. While these were planned items and funded from prior year contributions, they did create a slightly larger unfavorable variance to budget than the \$113K referenced above.

On the whole, the expenses of Diocesan Ministries and Operations and the Deposit and Loan Program (lines of business 1 and 1) were managed effectively compared to budget. The slight overage in those operating expenses were offset by much lower than planned expenses in the insurance program (line of business 3). The insurance program generated another

See **AUDIT**, page 11

Statements of Activities
Year Ended June 30, 2023 and 2022

	2023			2022		
	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	Total	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	Total
Revenue, Gains and Other Support						
Catholic Parishes Campaign	\$ 6,285,911	\$ -	\$ 6,285,911	\$ 6,348,771	\$ -	\$ 6,348,771
Contributions and other community support	80,924	286,209	367,133	166,690	290,079	456,769
Insurance and medical fees	14,724,957	-	14,724,957	15,254,139	-	15,254,139
Service fees	188,948	-	188,948	234,544	-	234,544
Net investment return	(8,641,327)	63,720	(8,577,607)	4,877,388	55,561	4,932,949
Change in beneficial interests in Foundation	-	(829,234)	(829,234)	-	466,731	466,731
Change in beneficial interests in Foundation – designated	(1,686,794)	-	(1,686,794)	909,747	-	909,747
Distributions from Foundation and other revenue	678,330	-	678,330	752,614	-	752,614
Net assets released from restrictions	634,070	(634,070)	-	567,707	(567,707)	-
Total revenues, gains and other support	12,265,019	(1,113,375)	11,151,644	29,111,600	244,664	29,356,264
Expenses						
Adult formation	179,725	-	179,725	179,725	-	179,725
Catholic Center and other operations	70,818	-	70,818	70,818	-	70,818
Chancery	770,385	-	770,385	770,385	-	770,385
Education	576,390	-	576,390	576,390	-	576,390
Insurance and medical programs	13,399,920	-	13,399,920	13,399,920	-	13,399,920
Spanish-speaking ministry	100,943	-	100,943	100,943	-	100,943
Ministry to priests and clergy assistance	344,495	-	344,495	344,495	-	344,495
Newspaper and communications	440,693	-	440,693	440,693	-	440,693
Office of Worship	118,572	-	118,572	118,572	-	118,572
Permanent diaconate	67,058	-	67,058	67,058	-	67,058
Subsidies	754,848	-	754,848	754,848	-	754,848
Tribunal	203,567	-	203,567	203,567	-	203,567
Vocation Office and House of Discernment	843,742	-	843,742	843,742	-	843,742
Safe Environment	23,852	-	23,852	23,852	-	23,852
Youth ministries, including Newman Centers	397,098	-	397,098	397,098	-	397,098
Lay employee retirement plan	732,438	-	732,438	732,438	-	732,438
Employee 403(b) benefits	1,123,506	-	1,123,506	1,123,506	-	1,123,506
Office of Family and Life	81,460	-	81,460	81,460	-	81,460
Total program services	20,229,510	-	20,229,510	20,229,510	-	20,229,510
Management and general	2,497,691	-	2,497,691	2,497,691	-	2,497,691
Fundraising	199,109	-	199,109	199,109	-	199,109
Total support services	2,696,800	-	2,696,800	2,696,800	-	2,696,800
Total expenses	22,926,310	-	22,926,310	22,926,310	-	22,926,310
Change in Net Assets from Operating and Investing Activities	6,185,290	244,664	6,429,954	6,185,290	244,664	6,429,954
Change in Minimum Pension Liability	6,843,717	-	6,843,717	6,843,717	-	6,843,717
Change in Net Assets	13,029,007	244,664	13,273,671	13,029,007	244,664	13,273,671
Net Assets, Beginning of Year	4,227,267	7,961,419	12,188,686	4,227,267	7,961,419	12,188,686
Net Assets, End of Year	\$ 17,256,274	\$ 8,206,083	\$ 25,462,357	\$ 17,256,274	\$ 8,206,083	\$ 25,462,357

Audit

Continued from page 10

stable year of controlled claim losses and closely managed administrative costs allowing the overall spend to be slightly below prior year and come in nicely favorable budget resulting in an overall favorable result in all expenses of the Diocese compared to budget.

NET RESULTS:

We have discussed both the normalized income and expense elements for the Diocese in this fiscal year as well as the extraordinary items including the sizeable, positive impact of unrealized gains on investments for the fiscal year. Those gains are a good thing, but again, do not provide cash to fund operations. If we remove those unrealized gains and net all these income and expense results together and look at more normalized operating results, excluding the exceptional unrealized gains on investments, the favorable pension liability adjustment, and the two projects funded from prior year contributions (Chapel and scholarships), our “normalized” consolidated results were a little better than breakeven and allow us to remain in a very stable financial position. *That’s Good!*

THE FINAL TAKE-AWAYS AND CLOSING COMMENTS:

- Whether extraordinary items are included or excluded from income and expense, the financial results are good and in line with expectations.
- Pension Liability reduction further boosted net income beyond normal expectations.
- The insurance program remains in strong position.
- Exceptionally strong Investment returns boosted net income beyond normal expectations.
- As we continue to make efforts to manage other income sources and are diligent in our expense management, we continue to show good results which assists in managing the burden on the Catholic Ministries Appeal (formerly known as CPC), averaging an annual increase of just .95 percent over the last 5 years while inflation during that same time period has averaged 3.6 percent.

Assets

	2023	2022
Cash	\$ 7,346,320	\$ 11,107,266
Receivables		
Catholic Parishes Campaign	532,555	403,567
Parishes and institutions, net of allowance;		
2023 and 2022 – \$2,060	1,576,197	1,095,748
Loans – parishes and institutions, net of allowance;		
2023 and 2022 – \$0	991,676	1,112,461
Interest receivable	23,271	20,061
Insurance services receivable	352,959	296,976
Other Diocesan operations	31,131	43,640
	3,507,789	2,972,453
Investments	56,580,830	51,784,113
Beneficial interests in Foundation	16,538,668	15,155,438
Prepaid expenses and other assets	2,255,872	1,893,252
Total assets	\$ 86,229,479	\$ 82,912,522

Liabilities and Net Assets

Liabilities

Accounts payable	\$ 273,835	\$ 177,639
Deposits held for parishes and other Diocesan operations	39,755,460	42,527,034
Due to related parties, net	-	23,220
Other accrued expenses and liabilities	2,320,811	1,987,997
Unearned service revenue	15,799	15,799
Accrued pension liability	18,401,217	25,992,147
Total liabilities	60,767,122	70,723,836

Net Assets

Without donor restrictions – undesignated	(19,275,628)	(28,216,725)
Without donor restrictions – designated	36,531,902	32,443,992
Total net assets without donor restrictions	17,256,274	4,227,267
With donor restrictions	8,206,083	7,961,419
Total net assets	25,462,357	12,188,686
Total liabilities and net assets	\$ 86,229,479	\$ 82,912,522

- All of this is Good!

It should be noted that while our normalized operating margins are stable, the market volatility will continue to drive unpredictable results in investment income, uncertainty of the bond market discount rates will continue to cause uncertainty in the pension liability status and other economic pressures will be important to monitor during this next year. Prudent fis-

cal management remains key.

I would be remiss if we didn’t once again thank all members of our diocese that give tirelessly of their time, talent and treasure within the parishes, schools, communities, and throughout the diocese, as one church. We are fortunate to have a great team of people helping to serve the faithful of our Diocese.

We continue to be blessed with the generosity of our Catholic faithful. We appreciate you, the Catholic faithful of the Diocese of Evansville and understand that you have entrusted us to safeguard the assets and funding for the Diocese. These financial results for 2023 reinforce our efforts for a strong financial plan, effective management of resources, and to continue to be good stewards of the resources in which you have entrusted us.



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Submitted photo courtesy of Melanie Seibert

Happy 50th class reunion!

The Magister Noster Latin School Class of 1973 recently met to celebrate their 50th class reunion. Nine of the fourteen class members attended. Pictured are Deacon Rocky Mattingly, far left, Father Ron Kreilein, Bob Seal, Mark Kurzendoerfer, Deacon Dave Seibert, Ken Werne, Tim Born, Dave Kern and Ed Schroeder. Those not able to attend were Mark Theising, Father Frank Renner, Dave Stratman and Tom Martin (deceased).



Photo by Mick Hetman, special to The Message

Received into the Catholic Church

Father Tyler Tenbarge, center, stands with Lisa Hetman, left, and Andrew Claridge at Sts. Peter and Paul Church in Petersburg. Lisa and Andrew were received into the Catholic Church during a Dec. 10 Mass at Sts. Peter and Paul. Pastor Father Frank Renner confirmed them, and they made their First Holy Communion. Father Tyler concelebrated the Mass. Congratulations Lisa and Andrew!



Submitted photo

Corpus Christi collects hundreds of items for SVdP Food Pantry

Family Groups at Corpus Christi School in Evansville collected food items to donate to the St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry. Students collected hundreds of the requested items, which included stuffing mix, canned pumpkin, cranberry sauce, yams and apple pie filling. Pictured are Jason Schnell, kneeling far left, Dallas Coomes, Sam Madsen, Cameron Stratman, teacher Stefanie Simmons, Henry Jankowski, standing at left, Knox Simmons, Caleb Keele, Eli Schaefer, Ethan Baumgartner, Andrew Ulrich, Michael Peacock, teacher Abby Coudret, Mason Sammet, Max Boehman, Cain Sims, Owen Baumgartner, Hank Wildeman, Zoe Hibbard and Ella Scheller.

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“In dialogue with Peter”

“En Dialogo con Pedro”



BECAUSE I
AM CATHOLIC!

FATHER MARTIN ESTRADA

From November 14 to 17, Father Juan Ramírez and myself were blessed to participate in the convention for priests in Rome, Italy, organized by the National Association of Hispanic Priests in the United States (ANSH).

During this visit to Rome, I had the opportunity to eat delicious pasta and drink delicious coffee. Visit historical and interesting places such as the Roman Coliseum, the Pantheon, among others. During the convention, we had several talks from priests, bishops and cardinals who motivated us to continue in our priestly calling and mission in a land far from ours. We celebrate masses in very spiritual places such as St. Peter’s Basilica in the Vatican, in the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls. We prayed in front of the tomb of St. Peter and sang the fisherman’s song together. Truly was an excellent time that has motivated me more in my priestly ministry.

However, I would like to share with you the strongest experience I had at this convention, which was the private audience with the Holy Father.

On Thursday the 16th at 5 a.m. we prepared to leave for the Vatican. I don’t usually consider myself a morning person, but that day I was so excited that I woke up earlier. Two buses took us, about a hundred priests, who with great enthusiasm, wanted to be among the first to enter and be next to Pope Francis.

After a long wait in St. Peter’s Square, the guard did not lead us down the stairs and hallways that would lead us to the meeting with the Pope. It was a long road, or at least that’s how I felt because of the emotion. Finally, we arrive at the Clementine Hall where the Pope usually receives medium-sized groups in audience, but also where he meets with cardinals. Sitting in the third row, I nervously contemplated the art in the room and thought about how many popes, cardinals and important people passed through that majestic and important place.

Suddenly the photographers and journalists came out, the side door opened and the figure of the Pope appeared using a cane and walking slowly. The room became completely silent until His Holiness sat down and smiled. At that moment the room burst into applause.

He began his speech by welcoming us:

Dear brothers, thank you for coming here: this is the house of Peter, it is your house, because the Church is a house with open doors, to which all come from east to west to sit at the table the Lord has prepared for us (cf. Mt 8:11). And when we want to make the Church refined, it is a house with closed doors, and this is not good. Beware of ecclesiastical refinement.

With an Argentinian accent, he urged us to pray and do ministry without abandoning one or the other, as can often happen to us with activism.

Do not leave those who suffer abandoned, do not leave the Lord of the Tabernacle abandoned, convince yourselves that you will not be able to do anything with your hands if you do not also do it with your knees. Adoration, Eucharistic silence and intercession before the Tabernacle. And then yes, service. But it’s like pingpong, one leads to the other, one leads to the other.

His words were very moving and encouraging, inviting us not to leave aside the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the Tabernacle in order to do what the ministry asks.

After the speech, we had the opportunity to greet the Pope one by one. As I walked towards him I thought about what I was going to say to him. But upon arriving and feeling a peace and spirituality that I had not experienced before, I could only say thank you and God bless you. He smiled at me and said thanks to you. He gave me a rosary and I went to sit down with the feeling of having greeted a holy, good and humble man who in his suffering never stops bearing witness of God’s love.

This convention really was a “Dialogue with Peter” for the opportunity to see the places and history of our Church, the tomb of St. Peter, to greet Pope Francis, but above all to know that Christ in the Blessed Sacrament continues to wait for us to have an experience of love greater than that of seeing the Pope. St. Peter, pray for us.

Father Martin serves as parochial vicar of Holy Rosary Parish in Evansville.



Submitted photos

Father Martin Estrada greets Pope Francis.



Father Juan Ramirez greets Pope Francis.

cardenales y personas importantes pasaron por aquel resinto tan magestuoso e importante.

De pronto salieron los fotografos y periodistas, se abrio la puerta lateral y aparecio la figura del Papa usando un baston y caminando lentamente. La sala se puso en completo silencio hasta que Su Santidad se sentó y sonrió. En ese momento la sala estallo en aplausos.

Comenso su discurso dandonos la bienvenida:

Queridos hermanos: Gracias por venir aquí, ésta es la casa de Pedro, la casa de ustedes, porque la Iglesia es una casa de puertas abiertas, a la que todos acuden desde oriente a occidente para sentarse en la mesa que el Señor nos ha preparado (cf. Mt 8,11). Y cuando queremos hacer exquisita la Iglesia, es una casa de puertas cerradas y eso no funciona. Cuidado con la exquisitez eclesiástica.

Con un español argentino nos exhorto a orar y obrar sin dejar una o la otra como muchas veces nos puede ocurrir con el activismo.

No dejen abandonados a los que sufren, no dejen abandonado al Señor del Sagrario, convénzanse que no van a poder hacer nada con las manos si no lo hacen también con las rodillas. Adoración, silencio eucarístico e intercesión ante el Sagrario. Y después sí, servicio. Pero es como el pingpong, una lleva a la otra, una lleva a la otra.

Sus palabras fueron muy conmovedoras y alentadoras que nos invitan a no dejar a un lado la adoración al Santísimo en el Sagrario para poder realizar lo que el ministerio pide.

Después del discurso tuvimos la oportunidad de saludar al Papa de uno en uno. Mientras caminaba hacia él pensaba que le iba a decir. Pero al llegar y sentir una paz y espiritualidad que no había experimentado solo le pude decir gracias, Dios le bendiga. Él me sonrió y me dijo gracias a ti. Me dio un rosario y me fui a sentar con una sensación de haber saludado a un hombre santo, bueno y humilde que en su sufrimiento no deja de dar testimonio.

Esta convención realmente fue un “Dialogo con Pedro” por la oportunidad de ver los lugares y la historia de nuestra Iglesia, la tumba de San Pedro, el saludar al Papa Francisco, pero sobre todo saber que Cristo en el Santísimo nos sigue esperando para tener una experiencia de amor mayor que la de ver al Papa. San Pedro, ruega por nosotros.

El Padre Martin se desempeña como vicario parroquial de la Parroquia del Santo Rosario en Evansville.



¡PORQUE SOY
CATÓLICA!

EL PADRE MARTIN ESTRADA

Del 14 al 17 de noviembre el padre Juan Ramírez y un servidor tuvimos la bendición de participar en la convención para sacerdotes en Roma, Italia organizada por la Asociación Nacional de Sacerdotes Hispanos en los Estados Unidos (ANSH).

Durante esta visita a Roma tuve la oportunidad de comer deliciosa pasta y tomar rico café. Visite lugares historicos e interesantes como el Coliseo Romano, el Panteon, entre otros. Pero lo mas enriquecedor e interesante fue la conferencia. Tuvimos varias charlas de sacerdotes, obispos y cardenales que nos motivaban a continuar en nuestro llamado y mision sacerdotal en una tierra lejana a la nuestra.

Celebramos misas en lugares muy espirituales como la Basilica de San Pedro en el Vaticano, en la Basilica de San Pablo Extramuros. Rezamos frente a la tumba de san Pedro y cantamos juntos el canto del pescador. Realmente un excenlente tiempo que me ha motivado más en mi ministerio sacerdotal.

Sin emabrgo, me gustaria compartirles la experiencia más fuerte que tube en esta convencion que fue la de la audiencia privada con el Santo Padre.

El jueves 16 a las 5:00 am nos preparamos para partir al Vaticano. Por lo genera no me considero una persona que le gusta madrugar pero ese dia estaba tan emocionado que me desperte antes. Dos autobuses nos llevaron cerca de un centenar de sacerdotes, que con mucho entucismo, queriamos ser de los primeros en entrar y estar junto al Papa Francisco.

Despues de una larga espera en la Plaza de San Pedro el guardia no condujó por las escaleras y pasillos que nos conducirian al encuentro con el Papa. Fue un largo camino, o al menos asi lo sentí por la emocion. Finalmente llegamos a la Sala Clemantina donde usualmente el Papa recibe en audiencia grupos medianos, pero tambien donde se reune con carnedales. Sentado en la tercera fila contaplaba con nervios el arte de la sala y pensaba cuantos papas,

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NFP allows couple to remain true to Catholic teaching, natural health

For Dominic and Nicole Plutino, coming to the decision to use Natural Family Planning (NFP) in their marriage has been a win-win proposition. The couple met online through CatholicMatch, and Dominic proposed at St. Benedict Cathedral in December 2019, where they were married and remain active members of the parish. Doing marriage prep at the parish during COVID had its challenges.

NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING
By **KELLIE LOVELL**
Special to The Message

“Unfortunately for us, we got married in October 2020 and our marriage preparation had to be done through an online program,” the couple said. “Since we felt strongly about utilizing NFP in our marriage, we also sought to educate ourselves on the different types of NFP to better prepare ourselves and make an informed choice about what method we wanted to follow in our marriage. This included taking the free introductory course, Truth about NFP, offered through the Diocese.”

Nicole, a board-certified pediatric occupational therapist, is opposed to the use of artificial contraceptives because she and her husband see the value in maintaining her natural reproductive health.

“By avoiding artificial chemicals and hormones that do the same functions that occur in natural cycles within the female body, NFP promotes not only mental but also physical health for both husband and wife,” Nicole said.

Dominic, a surgical nurse, had already had a basic exposure to the NFP lifestyle through his parents’ use of the Creighton model of NFP as he was growing up and agreed with the value of avoiding the common side effects associated with artificial contraception.

In addition to the obvious health benefits of practicing NFP instead of artificial contraception,

Dominic and Nicole agree that a value that holds priority for both in marriage is remaining true to their Catholic faith and embracing even the difficult teachings of the Catholic Church. They were aware that NFP can be controversial for some and will admit it has its difficulties.

“Observed periods of abstinence in each cycle are definitely difficult,” the couple said. “These periods can sometimes fall at inconvenient times on the social calendar of life which makes it challenging.”

However, for them, communication is key and allows them to learn to express love and affection through other modes.

As they continue to develop their respective careers in medicine, the couple has used the Marquette method of NFP successfully for three years to postpone pregnancy.

“We are currently waiting to have children as we become more established as a married couple and Dominic pursues his master’s degree and I pursue my doctorate degree,” Nicole explained.

The Plutinos have found the Marquette method of NFP to be highly trustworthy and effective.

“We are very thankful we chose specifically the Marquette Method for NFP,” they said. “As healthcare professionals, it really resonated with us on an objective, scientific level and is a minimally time-consuming method to use daily.”

When given the opportunity to spread their experience about the benefits of NFP, the Plutinos emphasize a few specific points.

“First, utilizing NFP is not a ‘one method fits all’ mentality and there are several different methods under the umbrella term of NFP that may work better or worse for different couples depending on their lifestyles,” they said. “Take the time to look



DOMINIC AND NICOLE PLUTINO

into different ones and find what works for you as a couple best. Second, utilizing NFP is not synonymous with having a large, Catholic family. Though openness to life is key while practicing NFP and is fundamental to the Church’s teaching on marriage, NFP allows a couple to discern, in conjunction with the Holy Spirit, when starting or expanding their family is most prudent while weighing the very real-life aspects of the modern world. Therefore, a small, but still equally as Catholic family can exist. Third, we would encourage those who are skeptical to look into the research behind modern-day NFP methods and not rely on word of mouth from decades past about the effectiveness of NFP. As medical professionals, we were very drawn to the recent research and evidence that supports the use of NFP for both physical and mental health benefits and its extremely high effectiveness for both avoiding and achieving pregnancy when compared to other medical interventions.”

Honoring the lives lost to abortion

January 22 is a Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children. This day commemorates the date in 1973 that established elective abortion as a constitutional right in the infamous Roe v. Wade decision. This article is in honor of those lives lost in the last 51 years. I wish to share three recent experiences.

First, at a November ethics conference at the University of Southern Indiana, a pro-abortion OB/GYN (pray for her conversion) shared current statistics about elective abortion. Most readers are likely aware that the Supreme Court’s decision in Dobbs v. Jackson (released in June 2022) reversed a constitutional right and returned abortion law decision-making to each state.

Indiana passed laws not long after, and after more than a year of court challenges, these laws are being enforced. The number of abortions in Indiana have plummeted. Praise Jesus! On the other hand, there are many states that are “abortion friendly.” I was startled to learn that since June 2022, the number of abortions in America has actually *increased* rather than decreased. Currently, more than half of abortions are from RU-486, the combination of medications commonly referred to as “the abortion pill.” A woman in any state is able to be “seen” by a virtual clinic in an abortion-friendly state and receive RU-486 by mail. One such website I visited to verify this information states, “At-home medication abortion care is safer than Tylenol.” Really? The website forgot to include “except if you are the baby about to be aborted.”

Secondly, during Advent, a young woman took RU-486 to abort her pregnancy but then regretted her decision. She contacted the Abortion Pill Reversal Network who got her in touch with me. With RU-486 more commonly used, it is important to know that there is a medication protocol to attempt to reverse the effects of RU-486. The Abortion Pill Reversal Network has a nationwide listing of medical providers who are willing to prescribe progesterone. The mechanism of action of RU-486 and reversal



CATHOLIC HEALTHCARE
DR. BILL BLANKE

with progesterone is beyond the scope of this article, I just want you to be aware that this network exists. At the time of this writing, the effect of progesterone has been effective and this young mom had an ultrasound earlier this month that showed a healthy baby’s heartbeat. Again, praise Jesus! Please pray for both this mom and her baby.

Finally, in preparation for a Jan. 11 Theology on Tap discussion in Evansville, I read a new book by Stephanie Gray Connors, “My Body For You,” published by Emmaus Road. Stephanie is a seasoned and international speaker who began presenting at the age of 18. She has given over 1,000 pro-life presentations over two decades. Her perspective has broadened as she recently married, has given birth to one daughter, has lost four children by miscarriage, and is pregnant with her sixth child.

She acknowledges that Dobbs v. Jackson was a step in the right direction of defending life in the womb, but “the culture war is far from over. A new declaration from a court or a change in law does not, by itself, change the hearts of the people. There’s still much work to be done to convince the public that preborn children are worth protecting.”

The part of the book that blew me away, however, is directly linked to our Diocese’s fantastic Eucharistic Congress held on Jan. 13. Dobbs v. Jackson was released on June 24, 2022. Any guesses what began five days before that? The

three-year Eucharistic Revival started on June 19, 2022, on the Feast of Corpus Christi.

Stephanie shares this quote from Catholic apologist and philosophy professor Peter Kreeft: “Abortion is the antichrist’s demonic parody of the Eucharist. That is why it uses the same words, ‘this is my body’ with the blasphemously opposite meaning.”

Let us pray and assist the continued efforts of the culture of life, pray for the conversion of those involved in the culture of death, and ask Jesus that we all grow in understanding and awe of He who said, “This is my body which is given for you.”

Dr. Bill Blanke practices family medicine in Evansville, and he serves as medical director for Heritage Hospice. He is a member of Evansville’s Good Shepherd Parish.



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The ethics of Neuroimplants and Brain-Computer Interfaces

Neuralink, a company run by Elon Musk, announced in September that it had received approval to implant wireless brain-computer interfaces (BCI) into human volunteers.

A BCI is a neural device that translates a person’s brain activity into external responses, enabling, for example, the movement of a prosthetic limb via brain signals.

The goal of Musk’s study is to enable people with paralysis to use their thoughts to control external devices, especially computers, through the BCI.

While this end is clearly worthwhile, some future uses of BCI technology will probably not be equally praiseworthy, and some foreseeable applications of this technology will likely be unethical.

In an “MIT Technology Review” article, Professor John Donoghue at Brown University mentions how as a child he spent time in a wheelchair, which later motivated him to try to help individuals who were paralyzed.

One time after he delivered a speech at Google, he was surprised to encounter an engineer who was an avid gamer who wanted to know if it would be possible to have a “third thumb.”

“That’s taking things to an extreme,” commented Donoghue. “I don’t want to implant electrodes into people so they can be better gamers. I always challenge all of these ideas because I don’t see what it gets you. But I don’t dismiss it, either . . . that is what is driving people. It’s the cool factor, that you could have this new interface.”

Restoring lost function offers an obvious benefit, but enhancing people’s abilities beyond their typical talents raises ethical concerns. When it comes to “therapies” vs. “enhancements,” the former will generally be OK, but the latter will often be problematic.

Yet such a distinction, for all its usefulness, still falls short.

For example, consider a hypothetical device that, when implanted into the brain of a person with advanced dementia, would improve his or her ability



MAKING SENSE OF BIOETHICS
REV. TAD PACHOLCZYK, PH.D.

to remember and recall facts at a level similar to pre-dementia times. Suppose further that in a healthy person, the same device would confer a new ability, the power of a photographic memory. Would this mean it would be ethical to use it for the dementia patient, but not for the healthy one?

Suppose there were a BCI that not only improved hand-to-eye coordination and motor control for Parkinson’s patients having movement deficits, but also improved the acuity and coordination of healthy athletes, so a professional pitcher could now throw a baseball even more accurately. Would it be OK to use the BCI for the Parkinson’s patient but not for the athlete?

What if the therapeutic implant for the Parkinson’s patient not only restored his ability to move in a coordinated way, but also gave him the ability to play baseball essentially as a professional, something he had never been able to do at any point prior in his life?

The apparent blurring of the distinction between therapy and enhancement by BCIs can become complicated to sort out.

As BCIs become more sophisticated, they may be able to capture and interpret more and more intimate aspects of a person’s thoughts. When it comes to the collection of brain data from sensors, it seems fitting to require that such data be protected like other medical information. The confidentiality of our neurodata will need to be assured, even as we seek to safeguard and expand the notion of mental privacy.

What if students in the future had BCIs that allowed for the monitoring of the pupils’ attention in class by scanning or recording their brain activity? What if workers in a factory could be monitored in this way for lapses of attention? Could BCIs enable

the modulation of sleep patterns, so employees could be made to put in extra hours of work time?

It seems that coercive scenarios involving BCIs might arise relatively easily.

What about the non-voluntary implantation of BCIs, enabling control of some individuals by others without their consent? One could envision forced implantation of chips to “neuter” a criminal’s bad behavior, for example.

Furthermore, the degree to which a neuroimplant would interfere with human autonomy would be vital to assessing its morality. A BCI might serve to increase or decrease human autonomy. If someone addicted to drugs, for example, received a brain implant that generated specific stimulation patterns to break his addiction, this could be therapeutic and helpful. But what if the setting were adjusted, and it instead became possible to dial in an electrically-induced “high” that provided an experience far more intense than any illegal drug?

Using BCIs to mimic the effects of recreational drugs, or to pursue more intense erotic experiences, for example, by directed neural stimulation, could contribute to the enslaving of future generations through novel addictive behaviors, generating a raft of new concerns. Moral objections invariably arise any time men and women experience a loss of freedom or “personal agency” on account of addictions or other compulsive behaviors.

In sum, while BCIs could offer important medical and therapeutic uses in the future, they also are poised for dubious or clearly immoral uses. Careful ethical discernment around selective deployment of this technology, therefore, will be essential going forward.

Rev. Tadeusz Pacholczyk, Ph.D. earned his doctorate in neuroscience from Yale and did post-doctoral work at Harvard. He is a priest of the diocese of Fall River, Massachusetts, and serves as Senior Ethicist at The National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia. See www.ncbcenter.org and www.fathertad.com.

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Advent Family Adventures at St. Joseph in Jasper

St. Joseph Parish in Jasper recently celebrated Advent Family Adventures with a large group of parish families. Father John Brosmer, pastor of St. Joseph, narrated the Christmas story with the children playing the parts. After the story and songs, everyone enjoyed a pot luck dinner and crafts for the kids. God bless our growing parish families!

Submitted photo



Sarto

Continued from page 2

- Conducted Building Inspection by engineer and architect
- Prepared a report of existing facility issues
- Prepared preliminary drawings and proposals that might address existing facility issues
- Commissioned a Geo-Technical Land Survey across the campus to determine feasibility of building on campus
- Developed multiple potential drawings/models and high-level budgetary estimates associated with a remodel and a new-build
- Discussed off-campus retreat facility options

Findings

The Ad Hoc Committee determined the following:

- Maintaining a Retreat facility is a priority — The facility is currently used 85-90 percent of the available weekends of the year (42-45 events per year).
- Due to age, frequent on-call plumbing, HVAC, and other service calls are needed during retreat weekends to address issues while retreats are in progress.
- The facility needs to be more functional and welcoming.
- Top Priorities include:
 - Providing a dependable and functioning facility
 - Enhanced Entrance/Welcome space
 - Larger Guest rooms with improved bathrooms
 - More meeting space
 - More private reflection space — indoors and outdoors
 - Enhanced kitchen and dining space
- An On-Campus Facility is preferred
 - Leverages the Catholic Center presence and the natural surroundings of the campus
 - Leverages facility and maintenance staff to prepare and maintain facilities and serve

- retreatants without requiring additional staff in a location off-campus at additional labor costs
- Any retreat location would require travel for some portion of the diocese and travel is generally a component of “going on retreat”
- The Geo-Technical Land survey was favorable for maintaining or building facilities on the campus
- High-level budgetary estimate for remodel and expansion of existing space represents at least 70 percent or more of the budgetary estimates of a new-build
- While there is a strong connection by our Catholic faithful to the existing facility, especially the Sarto Chapel (and we must be respectful of that history and connection), a remodel and expansion of the existing space has a number of significant drawbacks:
 - It does not fully address the issues, needs, wants;
 - A general estimate of life expectancy of a remodel/expansion is at best half of the useful life of a new-build;
 - The estimated, ongoing maintenance costs on the existing building (60+ years old), even after remodel, is anticipated to greatly exceed the ongoing, annual maintenance costs of a new build;
 - There are a number of unknown, contingent building issues and potential costs of a remodel for a building of this age and this construction style that can’t be known until the remodel begins making it not just an estimated 70 percent of a new-build cost, but possibly more.

Recommendations

- When deemed appropriate and feasible, construct a new retreat facility on the Catholic Center campus.
- Locate the facility northwest of existing facility, adjacent to the athletic field.

- Continue use of existing facility until new build is complete
- Upon completion of the new building, demolish the current facility for parking and outdoor retreat and reflection space
- Consider methods to preserve or utilize elements of the existing building in the new building

Next steps

- Following consultation with and reception of a positive response from the Diocesan Finance Council, Council of Priests, Presbyterate and Diocesan Pastoral Council and sharing information with the Catholic faithful of the Diocese, the following are possible next steps:
- Consideration of a firm to provide formal design and renderings of a proposed new building;
 - Consideration of a capital campaign feasibility study.

Bishop Siegel and his advisory groups will continue to study the Ad Hoc Committee report and feedback in determining what next steps would be most appropriate. We recognize the working of the Holy Spirit in our Diocese that prompts the many opportunities for faith formation, prayer, community, and fellowship activities hosted at the Sarto Retreat House each year and ask His guidance on how we can most prudently provide a welcoming and sustainable facility for that ongoing spiritual growth in our Diocese.

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Adjusting expectations

On a trip in Maine, my friend Katherine asked me a curious question: “What is the most recent time your expectations have been disappointed?” She specified that she meant my expectations of something outside of my control, not my expectations for myself to accomplish something like writing a good paper.

People often think of expectations as standards that either impose a dull duty upon us or set us up to be disappointed by reality. We speak of “expectations versus reality” so much that it is a meme in popular culture, and it is born from the sense that high expectations — and in a more cynical view, any expectations at all — result in disappointment. The common view is that it is better to have low expectations and possibly to be pleasantly surprised than to have high hopes dashed.

However, Katherine and I agree that people should have high expectations without fear of disappointment. It wasn’t until this trip to Maine, though, that I discovered the best way to articulate our high expectations: Christians should have high expectations in the sense that we expect the mysterious providence of God to be active in every event. We expect (in faith, hope and love) that “God works all things to the good for those who love him” (Rom 8:28). We expect this indefinite goodness, even if we sometimes have trouble identifying it. I realized this in Maine



**MEDITATION
IGNIS**
MARIA SERMERSHEIM

because the friend who hosted us provided the perfect inflection point. My previous expectations of him had been too rigid and narrow, so through understanding him better and adjusting my expectations of him, I could see that our high expectations in the Christian life are an expectation of mystery — and expectations of mystery will never be disappointed.

This friend from Maine and I knew each other mostly through academic quibbles as classmates, and his New England callousness made it difficult for me to follow wholeheartedly in conversation with him. But when he and his family hosted several of us friends, I saw much more of who he is, and I understood much better his particular concerns. Now, rather than expecting coarse, insufferable comments with a funny flair, I expect the witty quips which have many layers of personal investment. It is highly unlikely that the substance or style of his comments have changed, but it is certain that I have adjusted my expectations, not only according to what I have seen, but also according to the

reality that people are mysteries, too. Now, thankfully, I have taken one small step toward the vision of God: “Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance, but the Lord looks into the heart” (1 Sam 16:7). By seeing more of his heart by seeing him at home with his family (and by not always talking about school), I have a truer vision and expectation.

I did have an answer to Katherine’s question. My expectations were disappointed for a roadtrip for which I had high hopes of fun and stimulating conversation in the car, but my passengers were disengaged and dozed off. And yet, there was the gift of prayer in those hours of driving, so I couldn’t be entirely disappointed. My expectations for my friend from Maine have been elevated, and the transformation of these expectations have shown me the error of my narrow-mindedness regarding him. I was disappointing myself by not expecting mystery.

In everything and in everyone, let us expect the mysterious providence of God. With this expectation, we will constantly discover God’s goodness anew, and that is no disappointment.

Maria Sermersheim is a 2018 alumna of Reitz Memorial High School and a 2022 graduate of the University of Notre Dame. She welcomes emails at msermersheim@evdio.org.

Moving forward and celebrating success

Over the years, you may have heard the saying about taking one step forward, only to experience two steps back. According to Cambridge Dictionary, this saying means you make progress but then experience events that cause you to be further behind than you were when you made the progress. I have occasionally used this phrase when I am frustrated with a task or plan that did not advance the way I had hoped.

However, I try to remain optimistic and persistent when things do not go as expected. I thought of the importance of remaining focused when things do not go as planned, when I read the following scripture:

“Let us not grow tired of doing good, for in due time we shall reap our harvest, if we do not give up” (Galatians 6:9).

Catholic Charities provides services that enhance the mental health, and family, life, and work skills of those we serve. The goal of our services is to reduce poverty, improve self-sufficiency, and strengthen mental health so individuals can participate fully in family and community life. Our programs allow us to walk with those we serve, giving them tools they need to thrive, supporting them through the challenges they face, and instilling hope and confidence.

I reflected on this scripture from Galatians and how it related to our work at Catholic Charities.



CATHOLIC CHARITIES
DENISE SEIBERT TOWNSEND

Often, those who we are working with may experience setbacks in their journey toward improved financial stability and self-sufficiency. These obstacles can be unsettling and frustrating for the person. However, this is where the services provided by Catholic Charities can be a source of comfort and support.

A few weeks ago, I seemed to be having one of those days where things were not going as planned. I recall feeling that I was taking one step forward to only experience two steps back. This feeling was short-lived once I received an update about Lisa.*

Lisa had been working with Catholic Charities for a few months. Initially, she reached out for emergency assistance with a utility bill that she was unable to pay. As she worked with Catholic Charities to move forward from this urgent need, we introduced her to our Neighbor to Neighbor program. Through this faith-based, intensive life skills education program, Lisa focused on goal setting, individual growth, and financial literacy. Neighbor to Neighbor supports participants as they set goals in the areas of finance and education, faith and family, health and community. Upon

successful completion of the program, participants earn stipends toward their rent, utilities or other appropriate expense, helping move them forward to help achieve their goals. Lisa wanted to make changes in her life to provide more stability for her and her children. As she participated in the Neighbor to Neighbor program, Lisa and her children were living in a homeless shelter. With the skills gained through the Neighbor to Neighbor program, she remained focused on moving forward; including the goal of obtaining housing. Our team at Catholic Charities was thrilled when Lisa called our office to share that she and her children were moving into their own apartment, just in time for Christmas. She also shared that her hours at work had increased, which resulted in an increase in her monthly income. Lisa was making great strides forward and shared she now has hope for the future.

As I thought about Lisa’s story, I recalled that it was not long ago that she was experiencing setbacks, but she remained focused and faithful in her journey to move forward. Just as the scripture reminded us, we may not immediately see the reward for our good acts, but when we are faithful and focused, good things will happen.

**Name changed for privacy*

Denise Seibert Townsend is director of Catholic Charities for the Diocese of Evansville.

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Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

First Reading: Deuteronomy 18:15-20; Response: Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7, 7-9; Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 7:32-35; Gospel: Mark 1:21-28

The Book of Deuteronomy depicts a specific occasion: the people of Israel were finally ready to enter into the land that God had promised them through Abraham their father. The Israelites had been wandering in the desert for forty years after their exodus from slavery in Egypt — freed by God’s powerful hand. God determined that the Israelites needed forty years of purification in the desert, because the Israelites had rebelled against him — even after they had seen God’s powerful deeds which freed them from Egypt and its Pharaoh (Numbers 14:21-39).

Even Moses had been forbidden by God from entering the promised land (Num 20:12) — because Moses had not trusted God’s instruction that he should “command the rock before their eyes to yield its water” (Num 20:8). Instead, Moses had disobeyed God’s command by striking the rock twice with his staff — after which the water flowed out from the rock for the thirsty Israelites to drink (Num 20:11).

In our reading today (Deut 18), Moses has led the Israelites to the very border of the land which God had promised them. This border was the Jordan River. Moses knew that his mission was ending since he could not enter the promised land with them. But before the Israelites entered the promised land without him, Moses reminded them of God’s mighty deeds in freeing them from slavery in Egypt, and Moses reminded them of the covenant that they had made with God on Mount Sinai. By reminding the Israelites in this way, Moses implored them to keep God’s covenant law.

The large majority of the Book of Deuteronomy consists of a speech by Moses — in which Moses presents God’s covenant law to the Israelites a second time. The first time was when they had received the law on Mount Sinai forty years before. Moses is thus renewing the Israelites’ commitment to living the covenant law. All of this is a preparation for them entering the promised land. They must be worthy of the land that God is about to finally give them.

In our reading today, Moses tells the people: “A prophet like me will the LORD, your God, raise up for you from among your own kin; to him you shall listen” (Deut 18:15). This is an acknowledgement by Moses that he will soon die and that his prophetic leadership is ending. Moses’ words here became a source of hopeful anticipation for later generations of Israelites. They awaited God’s fulfillment of this prophecy of Moses. They deeply longed for God to give them a new prophet like Moses. The first Christians recognized Jesus as the fulfillment of this prophecy, as asserted in Acts 3:18-26.

Moses’ speech mentions “Horeb” in today’s reading. Most biblical scholars consider “Horeb” to be another name for Mount Sinai — where God had established the covenant with his people. The name “Horeb” appears in several Old Testament books. It is repeatedly described in a way consistent with the conclusion that Horeb and Mount Sinai are the same place.



SUNDAY SCRIPTURE

FATHER PAUL NORD

In our second reading, St. Paul states his goal clearly: “I should like you to be free of anxieties.” At the end of our reading, Paul restates the same goal in similar words: “adherence to the Lord without distraction.” Paul wants the Corinthians to live the Gospel of Christ without anxiety or distraction. For this purpose, Paul suggests that unmarried men and unmarried women can be “anxious about the things of the Lord, how [they] may please the Lord.”

Paul describes both married men and married women as being “anxious about the things of the world.” Paul sees “the things of the world” as a distraction from devotion to the Lord Jesus. Despite his advice, Paul insists that he does not say this “to impose a restraint upon you.” Indeed, in the verses following today’s section, Paul describes how someone faithful to the Lord might determine that marriage is a good life choice for themselves (1 Cor 7:36-40). This whole section needs to be understood with the context of Paul’s words in 7:29: “I tell you . . . the time is running out.” Paul’s advice in today’s reading is motivated by an ardent desire that both he and the Corinthians urgently prepare for Christ’s second coming. Paul is trying to help the Corinthians eliminate distractions from living the Gospel.

In today’s gospel, Jesus begins his public ministry — he enters the Capernaum synagogue and he begins to teach. “The people were astonished at his

teaching” because “he taught them as one having authority.” Next, Jesus makes a powerful demonstration of God’s power over evil by forcing an unclean spirit to leave a man who had been oppressed by it. Notice that — like with Jesus’ teaching — when Jesus casts out the spirit, the people recognize that Jesus is giving “a new teaching with authority.” They recognize that Jesus has demonstrated that he has authority over unclean spirits — because “they obey him.”

Therefore in both his teaching and his power over unclean spirits, Jesus is demonstrating his authority as “the Holy One of God.” Jesus’ actions demonstrate the truth of what he said in Mark 1:15: “The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.” God’s kingdom requires the defeat of evil so that God might rule completely over all creation — heaven and earth. In Jesus’ dialogue with the unclean spirit, Jesus demonstrates his authority over evil by rebuking the unclean spirit and making it be silent.

It is remarkable that the unclean spirit declares Jesus to be “the Holy One of God” because Jesus’ new closest followers will need much more time to come to that spiritual insight. Note that Jesus confronts the unclean spirit only after the man with the unclean spirit cries out, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are — the Holy One of God!” Until the unclean spirit creates this conflict, Jesus was focused on teaching the people in the synagogue — but with authority.

Benedictine Father Paul Nord is a monk of St. Meinrad Archabbey, and teaches at St. Meinrad Seminary. His Sunday Scripture columns are © Father Paul Nord, O.S.B.

Heating advice to help you stay safe and snug, and save money

Special to The Message

Staying warm and safe can be a breeze when the cold wind blows.

Fuel to heat our homes can mean high bills. And heating increases the risks of fire, explosion and carbon monoxide poisoning. But a heating system that works efficiently can mean more warmth, more safety and more money left for other things.

The Evansville-Vanderburgh County Building Commission, Evansville Fire Department, Vanderburgh County township fire departments, American Red Cross, CenterPoint Energy and your local heating and air conditioning contractors want to alert the citizens of Evansville and Southwestern Indiana to the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning, fire and explosion from a malfunctioning furnace, a blocked flue or chimney, a broken gas line or inadequate air for combustion.

There may be hidden damage to your furnace, gas piping, flue or chimney. All citizens should have their furnaces, space heaters, ranges, water heaters, gas lines, chimneys, flues and other heating equipment checked by a licensed heating contractor without delay. You should do this every year. You will protect yourself and your family this winter and save on heating bills.

Carbon monoxide replaces the oxygen in the air we breathe

when fuel-burning equipment is operating and the vent or chimney is obstructed or there is not enough air to let the equipment burn fuel efficiently. Carbon monoxide is odorless, colorless and tasteless and catches its victims unaware, sometimes as they sleep. If you suspect a carbon monoxide problem, leave your home and call 911 or your local fire department.

Families have been killed by carbon monoxide poisoning, and many others have become seriously ill. Symptoms may be similar to the flu, including headache, dizziness, nausea and shortness of breath, as well as chest pain, fatigue and confusion. You may go to sleep and never wake up.

Always use portable generators outdoors, at least 20 feet

from the house, and direct the engine exhaust away from windows and doors. Don’t use a range or oven for heat.

Be careful using candles during power outages and at other times. Make a family fire escape plan.

The American Red Cross reminds you to use supplemental heating sources according to directions. Don’t use extension cords or power strips with space heaters.

Help alert your family with working smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms. Consider installing gas leak alarms. Regularly test the alarms and change any batteries, and replace the alarms as directed. Your local fire department may be able to check your alarms and replace them free.

If you need assistance

Editor’s note: For a complete list of resources, look online.

- American Red Cross will provide in-home disaster and home fire safety education, test your smoke alarms and replace up to three if needed, and supply specialty alarms for the deaf and hard of hearing. Call 888-684-1441.
- CenterPoint Energy has details on energy-saving products, income-qualified weatherization and energy assessments, and rebates for purchases of qualifying furnaces, programmable thermostats and insulation. Call 866-240-8476 or visit centerpointenergy.com/saveenergy.
- Faith-based organizations, social agencies and township trustees may help with heating bills and other needs. Call 211 to find resources.

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Why so much incense at Mass; and isn't devotion better than obedience?

Question: Our daughter has totally given up going to church because of the relentless use of incense at each Mass. It doesn't bother me, but I do notice a lot of people in the congregation who obviously have problems with it. Since it causes breathing difficulties for many people, is it really appropriate to use at Mass when it excludes attendance by many?

Answer: In principle, incense is indeed appropriate for Mass. The smoke that rises from the burning of incense has for millennia been understood by the Christian community as a symbol of the prayers of the faithful rising up to God. Even beyond this, Catholicism in general and Catholic worship in particular has a strong "incarnational" dimension. Among other things, this means that the church understands that we are both body and soul, and that the engagement of our five senses — including our sense of smell — can help us enter more deeply into prayer. I can understand how the overuse of incense might be a health issue for some people, and it's unfortunate that your daughter is struggling with this. If you sincerely believe that the parish's use of incense is excessive, perhaps it would be worth hav-



QUESTION CORNER

JENNA MARIE COOPER

ing a respectful conversation with the pastor. Also, most parishes do have at least one Sunday or vigil Mass that is celebrated in a less elaborate fashion, so perhaps your daughter could inquire as to whether there may be at least one incense-free Mass for Sundays or the vigil and holy days. If worse comes to worst, it would also be legitimate for your daughter to attend Mass at another nearby parish which might not use as much incense. If the conversation with her pastor is unsuccessful, she should seek out another parish to fulfill her obligation to attend Mass on Sundays or the vigil as well as holy days and to continue to receive the sacraments.

Question: I was very disappointed in your Q&A about why someone can't just attend Mass on Sunday and "count" it for both Christmas and the 4th Sunday of Advent. There seems to be a genuine question of why we go to Mass in the first place. There is a real person, Jesus, who waits for us and wishes to hear all about our day, our dreams, our frustrations. How many Catholics are happy to give just the bare minimum? Unfortunately, there is a trend in the Catholic Church to become theologians at the expense of a relationship with our Lord.

Answer: First of all, I do agree with you in principle — as Catholics, we should

genuinely want a vibrant prayer life, and ideally we should all look forward to going to Mass, understanding it as a privilege and a joy, and not a chore to check off our list.

But like so many things in Catholicism, this isn't a matter of "either/or" but of "both/and." That is, we can both attend Mass out of sincere love for God while at the same time also taking care to understand the extent of our actual obligation.

Logically, it would be silly for the church to articulate laws and obligations if paying attention to such laws was meant to be discouraged. One of the main reasons why the church spells out obligations in the first place is to help us to better love and serve our Lord. So even if we as Catholics just do "the bare minimum" required of us by our state in life, this should be enough to help us grow in holiness if we fulfill these obligations with the correct disposition. Furthermore, reception of Holy Communion, which is our Lord's very Body and Blood and is not merely symbolic, provides us with the grace of the sacrament so as to do His holy will and avoid sin.

A healthy spiritual life is marked by a sense of balance and serenity. For those who struggle with any level of scrupulosity, stated obligations can be helpful insofar as they allow for objective knowledge of when one has fulfilled God's expectations. If the only guidance available on how often to attend Mass was something along the lines of: "Let your love for Jesus determine how often you go," this could set many Catholics up for a vain chasing of an impossible standard.

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

THIS WEEK'S ANSWERS

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The Diocese of Evansville announces search for principal of Resurrection Catholic School in Evansville, Indiana



In partnership with our families and our parish community, Resurrection School provides an outstanding education inspired by Catholic values and built on academic excellence. We are committed to empowering today's children to become tomorrow's leaders.

The school holds accreditation by Cognia, as well as the Indiana State Board of Education. Resurrection School is a member in good standing with the Indiana Non-Public Education Association and the National Catholic Education Association. The current enrollment is 425 students in PK – 8th grade.

Please send a cover letter and current resumé to:

Michelle Priar, Superintendent of Schools
Diocese of Evansville, Catholic Schools Office
4200 North Kentucky Avenue, PO Box 4169
Evansville, IN 47724-0169

or
cso@evdio.org

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Submitted photo

Annual Jesuit retreat in St. Louis, Missouri

On Dec. 7, 47 men from the Diocese of Evansville attended their annual Jesuit retreat at White House Retreat in St. Louis, Missouri. Pictured are some of the attendees. The semi-silent retreat is a three-and-a-half day experience where participants are guided by a retreat director through an abbreviated version of the four weeks of the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises. The retreat date for this year is Dec. 12. If you are interested in more information for this particular retreat, contact Diocesan Director of Family and Life Eric Girten at egirten@evdio.org.



Submitted photo

Washington Catholic students compete in robotics

Robotics teams from Washington Catholic elementary and middle schools recently competed in their first robotics competition of the year. Team A, consisting of Alicia Murfee, Ava Talbert and Max Voges, received the Energy Award. Team E, consisting of Fran Becerra, Tony Lagrange, Maddie Sidebottom and Kieran Cox received the Judges Award. Congratulations to all the teams, and good luck at your next competition!

St. John, Newburgh, teachers earn Mother Bear grants

Two teachers in the Exceptional Learning Program at St. John the Baptist School in Newburgh, under the leadership of Principal Elizabeth Flatt, recently received grants totaling nearly \$6,500 from the Mother Bear Charitable Foundation. Shown in the picture are grant recipient Katie Whetstine, left, resource teacher; grant recipient Maria Janney, high ability language arts teacher and high ability program coordinator; and principal Elizabeth Flatt.

Whetstine received a grant that will fund multi-use furniture for the elementary resource room. This student-friendly furniture will allow for flexibility for small group as well as individual instruction. Janney wrote her grant for materials and resources for the high ability classrooms. This is Janney's 10th year to earn a Mother Bear grant for the high ability program with total funds received at \$34,000.

The mission of the Mother Bear Charitable Foundation is to enrich the lives of exceptional children in Vanderburgh and Warrick counties in southwestern Indiana. St. John teachers are proud to have Mother Bear Charitable Foundation's support as they work together to meet the unique needs of all their learners.



Submitted photo

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