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Day, weekend passes now options for National Eucharistic Congress, page 10A.

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National Catholic Youth Conference **NCYC**

Bishops' meeting shows united front on living the faith, serving the Church



BALTIMORE (OSV News)—For two days, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) met in plenary assembly in Baltimore advancing key issues related to liturgy, living out the faith, including



Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio

in the public square, and retooling the conference to better serve the Church's mission.

However, the bishops' Nov. 13-16 meeting, which took place nearly three weeks following the conclusion of the global Synod on Synodality, also concluded without a common game plan for how bishops could get consultative feedback from their local parishes with respect to the synod's "halftime" report before it reconvenes in 11 months.

At the assembly's opening Mass on Nov. 13, the bishops prayed for peace. In the homily given by USCCB president Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio of the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services, he said they also asked for wisdom to help others embrace Jesus Christ. And he noted the feast day of St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, the first American saint, herself an immigrant who championed care for immigrants.

The public portions of the bishops' plenary assembly on Nov. 14-15 were marked with extraordinary unanimity as the bishops' closed-door "fraternal dialogues" gave them time for face-to-face group discussions to work out contentious issues in advance of presentations and votes.

The bishops approved a letter to Pope Francis, affirming their shared concern over global conflicts, his teaching on "ecological conversion," and their commitment to prayerfully reflect on the Synod on Synodality synthesis report.

In their addresses, Cardinal Christophe Pierre, the apostolic nuncio to the U.S., and Archbishop Broglio offered contrasting viewpoints on synodality. Cardinal Pierre focused on Luke's Gospel

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See our special NCYC Supplement, pages 1B-12B



Above: In the foreground, Grace Stecker of the Diocese of Helena, Mont., smiles with joy as she calls her dad to tell her she loves him. She and the more than 12,000 National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) participants were asked by a speaker to call someone with a message of love during the NCYC opening session in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis on Nov. 16. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)

Bishop Rhoades experienced 'deep sense of communion' at October synod meeting at the Vatican

First of two parts

By Sean Gallagher

Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend was the only person from Indiana to participate in the first session of the meeting of the Synod of Bishops on synodality, which took place on Oct. 4-29 at the Vatican.

He recently spoke with *The Criterion* about his experience of the synod meeting, the spiritual approach to its discussions, and its possible effects for the Church in Indiana.

Bishop Rhoades also reflected on the relationship of synodality to the three-year National Eucharistic Revival the Church in the U.S. is currently taking part in and

the National Eucharistic Congress that will happen next July in Indianapolis.

The interview took place days before Bishop Rhoades participated in the fall general assembly meeting of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in which the bishops discussed how the Church in the U.S. will contribute during the next 11 months in preparation for the final meeting on the synod on synodality.

'A sense of deep communion'

He came to the synod with other delegates from the U.S. that included bishops, religious and lay Catholics. At the synod, getting to know bishops and other delegates from around

the world made an impression on Bishop Rhoades.

He called the experience "very positive," but admitted that "the schedule was a bit grueling. I think we would have unanimity on the part of the delegates if we voted on that."

He said the highlight of the experience for him "was the opportunity to meet and get to know so many bishops and other delegates from around the world. It is enlightening to learn about the life of the Church, the challenges and the positive aspects of the Church in other parts of the world from which we can learn."



Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades

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RHOADES

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Getting to know Catholics from around the world in the midst of a weeks-long, Spirit-led discussion and discernment process intensified Bishop Rhoades' ties to his fellow synod delegates.

"I felt a sense of deep communion with the other bishops and other people from the Church in other countries," he said. "That was especially the case where the Church is suffering—places of war and conflict, extreme poverty, persecution, a lot of places where they do not have the religious liberty that we so often take for granted, although we have some erosion of that here, but nothing like what some of them experience."

Bishop Rhoades' fluency in Spanish and long experience in Hispanic ministry opened the door to him to get to know a wider variety of synod delegates.

"I was the only U.S. bishop who was in Spanish-speaking working groups," he noted. "Three of the five working groups that I was a part of were Spanish-speaking. So, I especially developed some good relationships with bishops from Spain and Latin America. The two English-speaking working groups were extremely diverse with bishops and delegates from Africa, Asia and Europe. So, I pretty much covered the world in the bishops that I got to know."

'The context of spiritual discernment'

Bishop Rhoades has led the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend for more than 13 years. As the current longest serving bishop in the state, he reflected on his experience of the Church in Indiana in light of recommendations that came out of the synod meeting.

"There's a good communion among the bishops of Indiana," Bishop Rhoades said. "We get together twice a year. In a sense, that's a sense of synodality. We also meet with people from the Indiana Catholic Conference.

"One thing that came out of the synod was that we should strengthen the communion of the Church within a province." An ecclesiastical province is a group of dioceses in one geographic region with one archdiocese in it. The five dioceses of Indiana make up the Province of Indianapolis.



Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Ind., answers a reporter's question during a news conference on Nov. 14 at the fall general assembly of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in Baltimore. (OSV News photo/Bob Roller)

"They said that we need to do more on that [provincial] level," said Bishop Rhoades of the synod delegates. "Coming from Indiana and the positive experiences I've had with my brother bishops in Indiana in some of our joint ventures, that was not only affirmed, but there was a call for more of that."

Bishop Rhoades also reflected on how his experience of the synod meeting might affect the leadership of his diocese going forward.

"Within my diocese, the methodology of the conversations in the Spirit is something that I would like to implement in particular situations and to share that with my priests," he said. "We face a lot of polarization in our country. It's even seeped into the Church. I thought this was a method where you might have people who disagree but who, together, [share] a real mutual respect in how this works.

"It's always in the context of spiritual discernment. It's a much more positive way to move forward in communion even when there are disagreements. We're still Christians. We're still brothers and sisters in Christ. That's something that I would like to see [in my diocese]."

'Done respectfully and prayerfully'

The methodology of the meeting was a model of the synodality Pope Francis is encouraging. Bishop Rhoades explained how the "conversations in the Spirit" methodology worked during the synod meeting.

The more than 300 delegates in the synod took part in a three-day retreat before the meeting began.

The meeting itself was broken up into four modules on the themes of synodality, communion, participation and mission.

About 25% of the delegates were priests, religious and lay Catholics. The rest were bishops. During the meeting, they gathered in working groups of 10 at round tables to speak about specific questions related to the themes and listened to what the others at the table had to say.

The process at each table was led by a facilitator who was not a delegate to the synod.

"Every one of the 10 people around the table spoke from their own experience and prayer," Bishop Rhoades said. "You had a limit of around three or four minutes. We were to listen carefully to what everyone said. After about three people gave their reflections, there would be about five minutes of silence, just prayerfully considering what you just heard."

After every person at the table spoke, there was another period of silent prayer.

"Then we went around again and shared what resonated with us," Bishop Rhoades said. "It could have been something that really moved me, or it could have been something that maybe didn't resonate with me, something I might have disagreed with."

Bishop Rhoades emphasized that during the rounds of sharing experiences and responses by the delegates at the table, there wasn't a discussion. When delegates spoke, they did not respond specifically to what others had to say.

That happened later, after more prayer. "Then we had the dialogue," Bishop Rhoades said. "We've listened to each



Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

November 27–December 6, 2023

<p>November 27 – 10 a.m. Clergy Advent Day of Prayer at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, Indianapolis</p> <p>November 28 – 1 p.m. Council of Priests meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center, Indianapolis</p> <p>November 29 – 10:30 a.m. Mass for archdiocesan high school seniors at St. Malachy Church, Brownsburg</p> <p>November 30 – 10 a.m. Leadership Team meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center</p>	<p>November 30 – 3 p.m. Finance Council meeting, at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center, followed by Mass and dinner at Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary, Indianapolis</p> <p>December 3 – 10:30 a.m. St. Maurice Parish 175th Anniversary Mass at St. Maurice Church, Napoleon</p> <p>December 5 – 3:30 p.m. Indiana Bishops' Province meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center</p> <p>December 6 – 9 a.m. Indiana Catholic Conference meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center</p>
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other. So, what are the convergences here? Where is there consensus where we all kind of agree in answer to the question? Then where are there some divergences? Or maybe new questions or things we weren't in agreement with? So, we discuss that.

"At that point, there's more typical discussion, but always done respectfully and prayerfully again. Then we had to come up with and agree on a report to the whole body. So, the written report was to list the convergences, divergences and maybe proposals for further study."

Bishop Rhoades said this process took about two hours. Once done, a representative from each table would give a report of what happened at that table to all the delegates, with about 32 reports in all given.

These reports were given at what were called general congregations.

"After that, the mic is open for anyone to make an intervention to the whole body," Bishop Rhoades said. "Now, the pope was at most of the general congregations ... when the reports were being given. He wasn't there when we had the small working groups.

"You might have 50 of us who want to make an intervention and speak. Obviously, there wasn't enough time. And you were limited to, I think, a couple of minutes at that point. So, if you didn't get called on, then you would be able to submit your intervention—what you were going to say—in written form to the synod secretariat."

'Focus on the major things'

The preparation for the synod meeting took place during the course of about two years at local to continental levels. How the preparation for next year's meeting, which will start in 11 months, was something that Bishop Rhoades had questions about.

"It's really left in the hands of the episcopal conferences," Bishop Rhoades told *The Criterion* a few days before the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops'

(USCCB) semi-annual meeting in Baltimore on Nov. 13-16. "So, I think at the U.S. bishops meeting, we will probably hammer out how the next level of consultation. Certainly, it would be local again. But it's not going to be able to go through all those stages followed before. There's just not enough time."

The bishops in Baltimore did not determine any detailed guidance for dioceses on how to contribute to the preparation for next year's meeting, in part, because they would like to have time to review "A Synodal Church in Mission: Synthesis Report," the document that the synod issued at the end of the meeting.

"I can't say for sure, but I would guess that all of the dioceses would submit to the episcopal conference the results of further consultation," Bishop Rhoades said. "It may be left to individual bishops how they're going to do that consultation in their own dioceses.

"One of the challenges is that we have a 41-page document to reflect on," Bishop Rhoades said. "How are we going to do that? ... I think we're going to have to kind of focus on the major things for this consultation."

(To read "A Synodal Church in Mission: Synthesis Report," visit bit.ly/SynodalChurch. In the second part of this interview to be published in the December 1 issue of *The Criterion*, Bishop Rhoades will reflect on the spiritual aspects of synodality, the role of the teaching charism of bishops and the synod and the synod's relationship to the National Eucharistic Revival and National Eucharistic Congress.) †

Corrections

The names of two archdiocesan deacon aspirants, Peter Majeski and Agustin Torres-Lozano, were misspelled in a graphic showing the aspirants in the Vocations Awareness Supplement in the Nov. 3 issue of *The Criterion*. †



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Spiritual adviser to synod to give presentation on Dec. 6 at cathedral

Criterion staff report

Dominican Father Timothy Radcliffe, spiritual advisor to the recent assembly of the Synod of Bishops on synodality at the Vatican, will speak on his experience of the synod meeting at 4 p.m. on Dec. 6 at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis. The public is invited to attend.

A scripture scholar and former master of the Order of Preachers, the British priest led synod delegates in a three-day retreat prior to the Oct. 4-29 meeting and gave reflections during the gathering.

During the retreat, Father Timothy cited several religious order leaders as examples that synod participants

could look to “about the art of conversation.”

“St. Benedict teaches us to seek consensus; St. Dominic to love debate; St. Catherine of Siena to delight in conversation; and St. Ignatius of Loyola, the art of discernment,” he told his listeners.

Reflecting on the synod during a press briefing on Oct. 27 at the Vatican, Father Timothy said he appreciated bishops allowing greater participation of non-bishops as voting members, particularly lay women and men. That, he noted, clearly expresses what it really means to be a bishop.

By having leaders of the Roman Curia, young women from Latin America or Asia and bishops all



Fr. Timothy Radcliffe, O.P.

sitting together, this also “shows the bishop not as a solitary individual but immersed in the conversation of his people, listening, talking, learning together,” Father Timothy noted in a story on OSV News.

“I think this way of holding a synod reveals much more clearly than any previous synod I’ve been to what it means to be a bishop,” he said.

“It is a synod that gathers to see how we can be Church in a new way, rather than what decisions need to be taken,” to see “how we can be a Church that listens to each other across cultures and listens to the tradition across time,” Father Timothy added. †

BISHOPS

continued from page 1A

account of the risen Jesus revealing himself to his disciples on the road to Emmaus as illustrating “precisely the synodal path in its essential elements: encountering, accompanying, listening, discerning and rejoicing at what the Holy Spirit reveals.” Archbishop Broglio shared his view that current advisory structures in the U.S. Church, both at the diocesan and national level, are examples of existing synodal realities to “recognize and build on” while remaining open to “new possibilities.”

On Nov. 14-15, the bishops voted with overwhelming majorities on every issue: U.S. adaptations to the Liturgy of the Hours and liturgical drafts related to religious life, and national revised statutes for Christian initiation. It also approved without controversy supplements to its teaching on faithful citizenship that references Pope Francis’ 2020 encyclical letter “*Fratelli Tutti*: On Fraternity and Social Friendship” while naming abortion as “our pre-eminent priority” among other threats to human life and dignity.

The bishops voted to support the sainthood cause launched by the Archdiocese of New York for Father Isaac Hecker (1819-1888), founder of the Paulist Fathers. They also endorsed an effort to declare St. John Henry Newman a doctor of the Church.

They voted to reauthorize their Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism for two more years and discern its future place in the conference structure, while also changing rules so retired Chicago Auxiliary Bishop Joseph N. Perry could continue leading that committee.

The bishops elected Archbishop Paul

S. Coakley of Oklahoma City as secretary-elect of the USCCB, and also elected chairmen-elect for six committees—education, communications, cultural diversity, doctrine, national collections and pro-life activities—as well as bishops for the boards of Catholic Legal Immigration Network Inc., or CLINIC, and Catholic Relief Services, the U.S. Church’s overseas relief and development agency.

A surprise came when the bishops decided to punt approval of a pastoral framework for Indigenous Catholic ministry that they had commissioned four years ago in order to revise and revisit the plan at their June 2024 assembly.

Outside the hotel where the bishops’ assembly was held, the Baltimore-based Defend Life organization held a rosary rally led by Bishop Joseph E. Strickland. The event, however, was planned in advance of the bishop learning on Nov. 11, just days before the assembly, that Pope Francis had removed him from pastoral governance of the Diocese of Tyler, Texas. About 125 participants, including some clergy and religious, participated.

Bishop Strickland told reporters, including OSV News, that he was told by “the nuncio”—indicating Cardinal Christophe Pierre—not to attend the fall plenary meeting. He said he “respected the decision,” as well as his “commitment to be here for this prayer.”

The bishops also heard an update on the newly launched Institute on the Catechism. Some bishops advocated that instituting lay men and women to the new ministry of catechist would fill a need for authentic, well-formed witnesses to bring that “evangelizing catechesis” to others.

The bishops’ most-sustained public dialogue took place regarding the USCCB’s mental health campaign launched in response to the “dire mental

health crisis” in the U.S., with some bishops calling for more Catholics to enter the mental health field and education for seminarians and priests in properly referring people for counseling, or connecting people with mental health resources similar to the “Walking with Moms In Need” initiative.

With respect to the Oct. 4-29 Synod on Synodality, the bishops heard about positive experiences from some of their delegates, particularly the value of the synod’s “conversations in the Spirit” as a model for carrying out regular conversational interaction among the Church’s members for the sake of its mission.

However, by the time the plenary assembly concluded, the bishops did not seem to have any definite process or task force to help them engage the faithful in consultation on the synod’s 41-page report summarizing the body’s consensus, matters for consideration and priority actions.

During a Nov. 14 press conference, Bishop Flores of Brownsville, Texas, who participated in the synod, told OSV News he anticipates the report will be discussed in June once bishops have taken the time to “let it sink in and read it carefully.” He said what the USCCB could do immediately was request guidance from

the Synod Secretariat in Rome on how to engage their local churches in a focused and relevant way, “because the first responsibility of the bishops is to go back to their own people and to say these are some issues that impact us in particular.”

He indicated a synodal culture needs to take root in the local Church first—noting parish or diocesan pastoral councils are not used in some places since they are not mandatory—in order to discern what structures are needed to support it at all levels of the Church.

The bishops showed a move toward deepening that kind of engagement by replacing the USCCB’s current strategic planning cycle with a mission planning process that would allow the conference to have defined regular responsibilities and the flexibility to focus on “mission directives that evolve after a process of discernment” that can be informed by bishops engaging in local and regional consultation.

“I think it is more synodal,” Archbishop Broglio said in an interview with OSV News, “and I think that will be something that will make a difference in how we address issues and concerns of the Church in the United States in a different way, in a new way.” †

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Editorial



Teens from the Diocese of Lansing, Mich., pray the Our Father during the closing Mass of the National Catholic Youth Conference on Nov. 18 in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis. (Photo by Mike Krokos).

May our faith of hope and joy continue to burn brightly in the hearts of the youths at NCYC—and in our hearts, too

“Hope is the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ’s presence and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1817).

If you or someone you know attended the recent gathering of the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) in Indianapolis on Nov. 16-18, you or they are no doubt filled with hope—and a strong conviction that the Holy Spirit is alive and well in today’s young people.

We are filled with hope because we believe that the estimated 12,000 teenagers who took part in the annual gathering, held every other year in Indianapolis, left “fully alive” (the theme of the conference) as they headed home to their parishes in Indiana, New York, Florida, California, Hawaii—and many states in between—eager to let Christ’s light shine through them as they fulfill their vocations as sons and daughters of God.

Please hope and pray with us that they keep enflamed the fire that was burning in hearts as they took part in eucharistic adoration, waited in long lines for the sacrament of reconciliation, prayed the rosary, listened to speakers plant seeds of wisdom and celebrated a closing Mass where participants’ hearts were moved to tears in some cases as they received the greatest gift of our Catholic faith, the Eucharist.

We were also filled with hope as we watched these young people spend time in an interactive exhibit hall inside the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis, where they became the hands and feet of Christ for the less fortunate by packing meals, decorating tote bags and T-shirts and spreading holiday cheer by making heartfelt Christmas cards. They also listened attentively as members of various religious orders shared beautiful witnesses of how their vocations have shaped their lives of missionary discipleship.

God willing, the seeds planted last weekend will lead to more vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life across the U.S., along with vocations to the sacred single life and to happy and holy marriages.

Hope fills our hearts because this three-day pilgrimage of faith proves to

us again, as Catholics, that many of our teenagers are hungry to learn more about God and what our Church teaches and why, and why we need to continue to make it a priority to provide them catechetical opportunities that will bear fruit.

As we celebrate the Thanksgiving holiday with family and friends this extended weekend, let us remember to thank our Creator for the gift of faith that so many in the world, sadly, live without. Let us pray for those who desperately need to know that there is a God who loves them and wants to be an integral part of their lives.

And in our prayers, let’s remember those who participated in NCYC, asking our Lord to continue to let his light shine brightly through their witness.

As Pope Francis said in his weekly audience on Nov. 15, reflecting on his 2013 apostolic exhortation, “The Joy of the Gospel,” joy must be a part of our lives as Christians as we share the Gospel with others.

“All ideologies are cold, but the Gospel has the warmth of joy,” the pope said. “Ideologies don’t make people smile, but the Gospel is a smile. It makes you smile because it touches your soul with the good news.”

Departing from his prepared text, Pope Francis added, “Today each one of us should take a bit of time and think: Jesus, you are within me. I want to encounter you each day. You are a person, not an idea. You are a companion on the journey, not a program. You are love that resolves so many problems. You are the starting point of evangelization. You, Jesus, are the source of joy.”

Our faith teaches us that our great Christian hope is eternal life. We pray the young people who participated in NCYC let joy be central to their lives and serve as beacons of light in a world so often enveloped in darkness.

Abraham Wolf, a youth from the Diocese of Erie, Pa., was ready to continue his journey of faith after NCYC.

“I know this experience will truly light my faith on fire again, even though it has already been on fire,” he said. “It will be further engulfed in flames, even brighter, better than ever.”

—Mike Krokos

Be Our Guest/Gretchen R. Crowe

Jump start your Eucharistic Revival

It’s been almost a year and a half since Corpus Christi Sunday 2022—June 19—the launch date of the ongoing National Eucharistic Revival.



At the time of the revival’s start, Bishop Andrew H. Cozzens of Crookston, Minn., who is leading the initiative, said the following: “It’s our mission to renew the Church by enkindling in God’s people a living relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ in the holy Eucharist. We want everyone to encounter the love of Jesus Christ truly present in the Eucharist and to experience the life-changing effects of that love. We want to see a movement of Catholics across the United States who are healed, converted, formed and unified by an encounter with Jesus Christ in the Eucharist and sent out on mission for the life of the world.”

I’m not sure there’s a better mission than that. I’m also not sure there’s a bigger one. Following the timeline of the revival, we are currently in its second year—what is called a time for “fostering eucharistic devotion at the parish level, strengthening our liturgical life through the faithful celebration of the Mass, eucharistic adoration, missions, resources, preaching and organic movements of the Holy Spirit.”

At my parish, we are having a 40 Hours Devotion at the start of Advent, where parishioners can come and spend time intimately with the Lord. I’d imagine most parishes around the country are doing something similar to foster devotion to our Lord in the Eucharist.

Then, of course, in just eight short months, there will be the National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis on July 17-21. “Every movement needs a moment,” the website says. “This is ours.” A lot of time and money and planning are going into this national event, and it’s exciting. We’re going, and I hope you go, too.

But it’s also one event. What about the in-between times? What about the times when our parishes are not bringing in a speaker, or facilitating small group discussions, or coordinating special devotions? What about the times when we will not be gathered together by the thousands, being affirmed in our faith and encountering the Lord together? It’s in these

in-between times that the habits of daily life are formed and where virtue is born.

Four eucharistic tips

This time of year offers us a prime opportunity for getting serious about our own personal revival in the Eucharist. With the start of Advent in a few weeks, we will begin preparations to welcome the Prince of Peace into our homes. Here are a few things we could do to draw closer to him in the Eucharist:

—Make time for some spiritual reading on the Eucharist. In particular, sit and pray with the treasure that is St. John Paul II’s 2003 encyclical on the Eucharist, “*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*,” available from Our Sunday Visitor for purchase or on the Vatican’s website for free. If you’ve never read it, or read it 100 times, there’s always more to glean from it—if we make the time.

—Speaking of making time, any personal eucharistic revival has to start with our own commitment of time spent in the presence of the Eucharist. Maybe we’re being called to attend daily Mass during Advent, or perhaps make a weekly holy hour. Or maybe you do both of those things, and the Lord is asking you to up the ante and make a daily holy hour! Pick something and commit to it.

—Try really paying attention to the words of the eucharistic prayer during Mass. I’ll be the first to admit, it can be easy or tempting to lose focus during this part of the liturgy. But try to really focus. Read along if it helps. Ask Jesus to quiet your mind and center your heart on him.

—Once you learn more about Christ, spend more time with him and seek to better understand his saving love for us in the Mass, the natural next step is to resolve to bring Christ to others. Perhaps there’s an opportunity to bring your kids to adoration—or your parents, a friend or a sibling. Maybe, once you’ve read and enjoyed a book on the Eucharist, you could share it with others. Most importantly, we bring our eucharistic Lord to the world through our love and sacrifice for others.

We’re just about halfway through with the revival, which wraps up on Pentecost 2025. Let’s embrace the opportunity for renewal this Advent.

(Gretchen R. Crowe is the editor-in-chief of OSV News.) †

Letter to the Editor

Reader: Use holiday season to give “thanks generously and joyfully”

A big “thanks” to editorial writer Daniel Conway for his piece in the Nov. 17 issue of *The Criterion* on “Living like Jesus, giving thanks generously and joyfully.”

Conway likened Catholic life to being like “stewards,” with Jesus being our perfect example.

The key factors in all of this are to be grateful, responsible, caring, sharing, and to not be consumed with self.

His best line of the editorial to me

though, was when he quoted Pope Francis as saying that we all ought to try harder at not being “sourpusses.”

Yes! I agree! And with the holidays now here and us all having shopping and travelling and guests in our home, let’s accept the challenge to up our game and be happy and grateful this holiday season—and not sourpusses!

Sonny Shanks
Corydon

Letters Policy

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

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

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

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

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

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

ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO CHARLES C. THOMPSON



Christ the Cornerstone

Giving thanks to God in the holy Eucharist

The publication date for this column is Friday, Nov. 24, the day after Thanksgiving. I pray that you had a blessed Thanksgiving celebration. I also pray that yesterday was a day of respite for those who are suffering from hunger, homelessness and all forms of spiritual and material poverty.

Thanksgiving Day is a secular holiday, but those of us who believe in a generous and loving God can't help but use this opportunity to give thanks for all the gifts we have received from him. For Catholics, there is no greater way to express our gratitude than to participate fully in the holy Eucharist whose very name means "to give thanks."

Many pastors say that Mass on Thanksgiving morning is one of their favorite celebrations. Although it's not a holy day and no one is obliged to attend, there is a great sense of gratitude that fills the Church because those who are present truly want to be there and to give thanks to God.

The Eucharist is the incomparable gift of our Lord's body and blood, soul and divinity, to us. When we receive the Eucharist, we accept into our minds, hearts and bodies the person of Jesus Christ. We praise him and give him

thanks for this most intimate gift-of-self to us who are in no way deserving of such a precious gift.

Even the most devout Catholics are sometimes tempted to neglect their responsibilities to participate actively in the eucharistic liturgy or to adore the Blessed Sacrament outside of Mass. We are busy with many things, and we too easily forget (or fail to appreciate as we should) that Christ's gift of himself to us is the source and summit of our lives as missionary disciples of Jesus.

As I trust many of you know, we are now in the midst of a three-year revival of eucharistic devotion sponsored by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. This special initiative was launched on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (*Corpus Christi*) in 2022. Dioceses throughout the United States are conducting local events to celebrate the holy Eucharist and promote the objectives of the National Eucharistic Revival. These local events will culminate in the National Eucharistic Congress, which will be held on July 17-21, 2024, in Indianapolis.

At this historic gathering, Catholics of all ages will come together to

worship our Lord with a joyful, expectant faith. There, the Holy Spirit promises to enkindle a missionary fire in the heart of our nation as we reconsecrate ourselves to the source and summit of our faith.

Just over a year ago, at the Italian Eucharistic Congress on Sept. 26, 2022, Pope Francis said to the clergy, religious and lay faithful in attendance:

I would like to tell you: Let us return to Jesus! Let us return to the Eucharist! While we are broken by the travails and sufferings of life, Jesus becomes food that feeds us and heals us.

Especially during the eucharistic revival, we are invited, and challenged, to develop a deeper awareness of the significance of this great sacrament. "Returning to the Eucharist" is not just for those who have stopped practicing their faith, although one of the primary objectives of this revival is to encourage and support those who have either rejected their Catholic faith or have simply drifted away. Returning to the Eucharist—in the sense of making a deliberate decision to center our lives on the great mystery of Christ's real presence—is something that all of us are urged to do.

Turning back to Jesus—conversion—means allowing him to show us the way to give thanks to the Father by surrendering our minds and hearts to God's will for us. Returning to the Eucharist allows Jesus to feed our hungry hearts and heal our brokenness.

It is a great privilege for us to host the National Eucharistic Congress here in our archdiocese next summer. It's also a serious responsibility. The official purpose of the revival is: "To inspire and prepare the people of God to be formed, healed, converted, united, and sent out to a hurting and hungry world through a renewed encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist—the source and summit of our Catholic faith."

As the host archdiocese, we must be prepared—spiritually as well as organizationally—to accomplish this ambitious objective by welcoming pilgrims from all regions of our nation as we celebrate the Lord's great gift of himself to us in the Eucharist.

During this special time of Thanksgiving, let's return to the Eucharist. Let's give thanks to God for the wonderful gift of Christ's presence among us in this Most Blessed Sacrament. †



Cristo, la piedra angular

Demos gracias a Dios en la Sagrada Eucaristía

La fecha de publicación de esta columna es el viernes 24 de noviembre, el día después del Día de Acción de Gracias. Rezo para que hayan tenido una celebración de Acción de Gracias bendecida. También rezo para que ayer fuera un día de alivio para los que sufren hambre, falta de vivienda y todas las formas de pobreza espiritual y material.

Aunque el Día de Acción de Gracias es una fiesta secular, los que creemos en un Dios generoso y amoroso no podemos dejar de aprovechar esta oportunidad para dar gracias por todos los dones que hemos recibido de Él. Para los católicos, no hay mejor forma de expresar nuestro agradecimiento que participar plenamente en la sagrada Eucaristía, cuyo propio nombre significa "dar gracias."

Muchos pastores afirman que la misa de la mañana del Día de Acción de Gracias es una de sus celebraciones predilectas. Si bien no es un día de precepto y nadie está obligado a asistir, la Iglesia rebosa con el sentimiento de gratitud de los fieles presentes que realmente quieren estar allí y dar gracias a Dios.

La Eucaristía es el don incomparable del Cuerpo y la Sangre, el Alma y la Divinidad de nuestro Señor para nosotros. Cuando recibimos la Eucaristía, aceptamos en nuestras mentes, corazones y cuerpos a la persona de Jesucristo. Lo alabamos y le damos

las gracias por este don tan íntimo que nos hace a nosotros, que no merecemos en absoluto un regalo tan precioso.

Incluso los católicos más devotos sienten a veces la tentación de descuidar su responsabilidad de participar activamente en la liturgia eucarística o de adorar al Santísimo Sacramento fuera de la misa. Estamos ocupados con muchas cosas y olvidamos con demasiada facilidad (o no apreciamos como deberíamos) que la entrega de Cristo a nosotros es la "fuente y cumbre" de nuestras vidas como discípulos misioneros de Jesús.

Como confío en que muchos de ustedes sepan, nos encontramos en medio de un "renacimiento" de tres años de la devoción eucarística patrocinado por la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Estados Unidos. Esta iniciativa especial se puso en marcha en la solemnidad del Cuerpo y la Sangre de Cristo (*Corpus Christi*) de 2022. Las diócesis de todo Estados Unidos están llevando a cabo iniciativas locales para celebrar la Sagrada Eucaristía y promover los objetivos del Renacimiento Eucarístico Nacional. Estos eventos locales culminarán en un Congreso Eucarístico, que se celebrará del 17 al 21 de julio de 2024 en Indianápolis.

En este encuentro histórico, católicos de todas las edades se reunirán para

adorar a nuestro Señor con una fe alegre y expectante. Allí, el Espíritu Santo promete encender un fuego misionero en el corazón de nuestra nación mientras nos consagramos de nuevo a la fuente y la cumbre de nuestra fe.

Hace poco más de un año, durante el Congreso Eucarístico Italiano del 26 de septiembre de 2022, el Papa Francisco dijo al clero, a los religiosos y a los fieles laicos allí presentes:

"Se los digo: ¡Volvamos a Jesús! ¡Volvamos a la Eucaristía! Aunque estemos quebrados por los dolores y sufrimientos de la vida, Jesús se convierte en el alimento que nos alimenta y nos cura."

Especialmente durante este año de Renacimiento Eucarístico, se nos invita—desafía—a desarrollar una conciencia más profunda del significado de este maravilloso sacramento. "Volver a la Eucaristía" no es únicamente para los que han dejado de practicar su fe, si bien uno de los principales objetivos de este renacimiento es animar y apoyar a los que han rechazado su fe católica o simplemente se han alejado. Volver a la Eucaristía—en el sentido de tomar la decisión deliberada de centrar nuestras vidas en el gran misterio de la presencia real de Cristo—es algo que se nos exhorta que hagamos.

Volver a Jesús, la conversión,

significa permitirle que nos muestre el camino para dar gracias al Padre entregando nuestras mentes y corazones a la voluntad de Dios para nosotros. Al volver a la Eucaristía dejamos que Jesús alimente nuestros corazones hambrientos y sane nuestros quebrantos.

Será un gran privilegio para nosotros acoger el Congreso Eucarístico Nacional aquí, en nuestra Arquidiócesis, el próximo verano, pero también entraña una gran responsabilidad. El objetivo oficial del renacimiento es: inspirar y preparar al pueblo de Dios para que se forme, sane, se convierta, se unifique y se despliegue en un mundo herido y hambriento a través de un encuentro renovado con Jesús en la Eucaristía, el origen y la cumbre de nuestra fe católica.

Como Arquidiócesis anfitriona, debemos estar preparados—espiritual y organizativamente—para cumplir este ambicioso objetivo acogiendo a peregrinos de todas las regiones de nuestra nación mientras celebramos el gran don que el Señor nos hace de sí mismo en la Eucaristía.

Durante esta temporada especial de Acción de Gracias, volvamos a la Eucaristía. Demos gracias a Dios por el maravilloso don de la presencia de Cristo entre nosotros en este Santísimo Sacramento. †

Events Calendar

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

November 27

St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) Parish, 4720 E. 13th St., Indianapolis. **Jesus and the Eucharist Bible Study**, 6:30-8 p.m., last of seven Monday evening stand-alone sessions, content also available through formed.org, free, registration preferred. Information, registration: 317-501-0060, cacdiehr@gmail.com.

November 30

St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) Parish, 4720 E. 13th St., Indianapolis. **Jesus and the Eucharist Bible Study**, 1-2:30 p.m., last of seven Thursday afternoon stand-alone sessions, content also available through formed.org, free, registration preferred. Information, registration: 317-501-0060, cacdiehr@gmail.com.

December 1

Women's Care Center, 4901 W. 86th St., Indianapolis. **First Friday Mass**, 5 p.m., optional tour of center to follow. Information: 317-829-6800, womenscarecenter.org.

Our Lady of the Greenwood Church, 335 S. Meridian St.,

Greenwood. **First Friday bilingual celebration of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus**, Mass 6 p.m. followed by adoration until 9 p.m., sacrament of reconciliation available. Information: 317-750-7309, mross1@hotmail.com.

St. John Paul II Church, 2253 St. Joe Road W., Sellersburg. **First Friday Devotion**, 11:40 a.m., litany, consecration to the Sacred Heart, Divine Mercy Chaplet followed by noon Mass. Information: 812-246-2512.

The Village Dove, 6935 Lake Plaza Drive B3, Indianapolis. **Ken Ogorek book signing: Breaking the Bread: A Biblical Devotion for Catholics (Cycle B)**, 5:30-7:30 p.m., copy signed by co-author Scott Hahn will be raffled for charity, free. Information: thevillagedove.com, 317-845-5487.

December 1-3

Theater at the Fort, 8920 Otis Ave., Indianapolis. **Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, Jr.**, Fri. and Sat. 7:30-8:30 p.m., Sun. 3-4 p.m., performed by Agape Theater Company youth

actors, tickets \$5.13-\$15.38. Information, tickets: tinyurl.com/RudolphAgape.

December 1-January 6

St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross Parish, 23345 Gavin Lane, Bright. **Bright Lights Drive-thru Christmas Light Display**, 6-10 p.m., free. Information: 812-512-1941, brightlightsdcc@gmail.com.

December 2

St. John Paul II Church, 2253 St. Joe Road W., Sellersburg. **First Saturday Devotion**, 8 a.m., rosary, litany, consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, confessions 8:10-8:30 a.m. followed by 8:30 a.m. Mass. Information: 812-246-2512.

December 2-22

Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. **Shop INN-Spiced Christmas Sale**, Mon.-Fri. 9 a.m.-4 p.m.; Dec. 2, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.; Dec. 9, 16 and 23, 9 a.m.-noon; many items 25-75% off. Information: 317-788-7581, benedictinn@benedictinn.org.

December 3

St. Matthew the Apostle

Parish, 4100 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Advent Evening of Music and Reflection**, 6 p.m., featuring choirs, handbell choir, readings and reflections followed by refreshments in parish café, free. Information: 317-257-4297, ssulka@saintmatt.org.

December 5

Ritz Charles, 12156 N. Meridian St., Carmel, Ind. **Right to Life Indiana Christmas Gala**, 5:30 p.m. VIP sponsor reception, 6:30-9 p.m. dinner and program, Super Bowl champion and author of *The New Fight for Life* Benjamin Watson keynote speaker, Christian musician Ordan St. Cyr, \$100, table of 10 is \$1,000. Information, reservations: irtl.org/gala, mwilliams@irtl.org, 317-413-9123.

December 6

MCL Cafeteria, 5520 Castleton Corner Lane, Indianapolis. **Solo Seniors**, 5:30 p.m., Catholic, educational, charitable and social singles—separated, widowed or divorced—age 50 and older, new members welcome, also call about regular Friday night dinner

events. Information: 317-796-8605.

Marian University Hall Theater, 3200 Cold Spring Road, Indianapolis. **Advent Concert**, 6:30 p.m., Catholic composer John Angotti with Marian University Sacred Choir, followed by penance service during holy hour with praise and worship music in Bishop Chartrand Memorial Chapel, free. Information: 317-955-6000, jgarcia@marian.edu.

December 7

Monthly Prayer with Sisters of Providence: "Prayer on Christmas," for single Catholic women ages 18-42, via Zoom, 7-7:45 p.m., seventh day of each month. Information, registration: Events.SistersofProvidence.org, 361-500-9505, jluna@spsmw.org.

December 9

Providence Spirituality and Conference Center, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Christmas Fun at the Woods and Providence Community Bake Sale**, bake sale 12:30-4:30 p.m., Christmas Fun 1:30-4:30 p.m.,

event includes Santa Claus and North Pole Zone with alpacas. Information: 812-535-2812, spsmw.org/events, amiranda@spsmw.org.

Holy Trinity Parish, 100 Keely St., Edinburg. **Spanish Women's Conference (in Spanish only)**, 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m., speakers include Marian University in Indianapolis director for the Initiative for Parish Renewal (*Renovación*) Oscar Castellanos and Holy Spirit Parish in Indianapolis associate pastor Marianhill Father José Ferney Aragón Briñez, includes Mass, adoration, confession, lunch, \$30. Information, registration: 317-261-3381, chernandez@archindy.org.

December 9-10

Christ the King School, Tuohy Hall, 5884 Crittenden Ave., Indianapolis. **4th Annual Jack Shockley Memorial Blood Drive**, 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., also accepting gently used hats, gloves and new socks for Mother Theodore Catholic Academy grade schools. Information, registration: tinyurl.com/warrior4peace23, 317-207-0291, contact@warriors4peace.org. †

Retreats and Programs

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

December 8

Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **A Day of Quiet Renewal**, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., \$20, \$80 with spiritual direction. Information, registration: 812-933-6437, oldenburgfranciscancenter.org.

December 11

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Movie Night at Fatima: The Nativity Story**, 5-9 p.m., includes dinner, popcorn, refreshments, \$16. Registration: ftm.retreatportal.com/events, 317-545-7681, lcoons@archindy.org.

December 12, 13, 14

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Advent Days of Silence**, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., \$40 per day, includes room, lunch and use of common areas and grounds, overnight stays available for additional \$30 per night, dinner additional \$10 per meal. Registration: ftm.retreatportal.com/events, 317-545-7681 or lcoons@archindy.org.

December 13, Jan. 9

Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. **Personal Day of Retreat**, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., \$40, includes private room for the day and lunch; spiritual direction available for additional \$30, must be scheduled in advance. Information, registration: benedictinn.org/programs, 317-788-7581, benedictinn@benedictinn.org.

December 16

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Organ Workshop and Concert**,

9 a.m.-3 p.m. CT, recital at 3 p.m., Nolan Snyder presenting, \$55. Registration: saintmeinrad.org/retreats.

December 24-26

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Christmas Celebration at Saint Meinrad Archabbey**, opportunity to join monastic community in their Christmas Eve and Christmas Day prayer and liturgies in the archabbey church, fellowship and socials with monks and other guests, \$300 single, \$425 double. Registration: saintmeinrad.org/retreats.

December 29-31

Mount Saint Francis Center for Spirituality, 101 St. Anthony Dr., Mt. St. Francis. **Greccio 800**, Fri. 4 p.m.-Sun. 1 p.m., retreat celebrating 800 years of the nativity scene St. Francis shared with the people of Greccio, Italy. Franciscan Father Jack Clark Robinson and Third Order Franciscan Dennis Feece presenting, \$150 commuters, \$250 includes two nights' accommodations and four meals. Information, registration: 812-923-8817, tinyurl.com/msfgreccio800.

2024

January 4

Creative Ways to Encounter the Divine (virtual via Zoom): "Hearing God's Voice in Poetry," offered by Benedict Inn Retreat & Conference Center, 7-8:30 p.m. Thursdays, first of four stand-alone sessions (Jan. 11, 18, 25), Benedictine Sister Antoinette Purcel presenting, \$75 for four

sessions or \$25 per session. Information, registration: benedictinn.org/programs, 317-788-7581, benedictinn@benedictinn.org.

January 11

Creative Ways to Encounter the Divine (via Zoom): "Hearing God's Voice in Nature," offered by Benedict Inn Retreat & Conference Center, 7-8:30 p.m. Thursdays, second of four stand-alone sessions (Jan. 18, 25), Benedictine Sister Antoinette Purcel presenting, \$25. Information, registration: benedictinn.org/programs, 317-788-7581, benedictinn@benedictinn.org.

January 12-14

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **TOBIT Marriage Preparation Weekend**, 7 p.m. Fri.-11:45 a.m. Sun., \$298 per couple, separate rooms, includes meals and materials. Registration: ftm.retreatportal.com/events, 317-545-7681, lcoons@archindy.org.

January 18

Creative Ways to Encounter the Divine (via Zoom): "Hearing God's voice in Art," offered by Benedict Inn Retreat & Conference Center, 7-8:30 p.m. Thursdays, third of four stand-alone sessions (Jan. 25), Benedictine Sister Antoinette Purcel presenting, \$25. Information, registration: benedictinn.org/programs, 317-788-7581, benedictinn@benedictinn.org.

January 22-26

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Winter Chant**

Workshop, Benedictine Brother John Glasenapp presenting, for directors of liturgical music and singers in parish liturgies, \$750 single, \$835 double, \$200 commuter. Registration: saintmeinrad.org/retreats.

January 25

Creative Ways to Encounter the Divine (via Zoom): "Hearing God's Voice in People, Events and Dreams," offered by Benedict Inn Retreat & Conference Center,

7-8:30 p.m. fourth of four stand-alone sessions, Benedictine Sister Antoinette Purcel presenting, \$25. Information, registration: benedictinn.org/programs, 317-788-7581, benedictinn@benedictinn.org. †

Wedding Anniversaries

JOHN AND SUSAN (WILSON) O'NAN, members of St. Matthew the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis, will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary on Nov. 28.

The couple was married in Holy Name of Jesus Church in Henderson, Ky., on Nov. 28, 1963.

They have two children: Chad and Kevin O'Nan.

The couple also has four grandchildren.



RICK AND PEG (BECKER) METZLER, members of St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis, will celebrate their 55th wedding anniversary on Nov. 30.

The couple was married in Holy Name of Jesus Church in Beech Grove on Nov. 30, 1968.

They have one child: Michael Metzler.

The couple also has three grandchildren.



GREGORY AND REBECCA (HOELTKE) KOERS, members of Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ Parish in Indianapolis, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on Nov. 24.

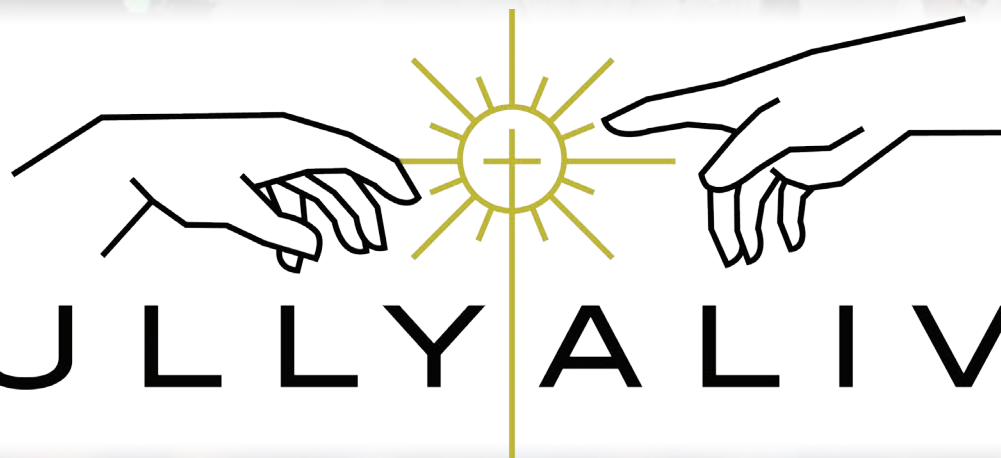
The couple was married on Nov. 24, 1973.

They have two children: Cynthia Pacheco and Matthew Koers.

The couple also has six grandchildren.



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



FULLY ALIVE



INCYC

NOVEMBER 16-18, 2023

INDIANAPOLIS, IN

A Special Supplement
of *The Criterion*



Teens from the Diocese of Gary, Ind., laugh on Nov. 18 during the homily of the closing Mass of the National Catholic Youth Conference in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

Fun and faith combine to create a 'Fully Alive' celebration at NCYC

"You're not a problem to be solved, you are a mystery to be encountered."

Those words shared by Archbishop Charles C. Thompson during the opening session of the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) on Nov. 16 at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis set the tone for a three-day gathering of faith for more than 12,000 teenagers, chaperones, clergy, religious, speakers and volunteers. That phrase was repeated several times during the weekend.

The archbishop's message tied in with the gathering's theme, "Fully Alive," where young people were reminded that they are called to be disciples who let the light of Christ shine through them in all they say and do.

Archbishop Thompson reminded the teens that each of them is defined by their identity in Christ, whose body,

blood, soul and divinity is present in the Eucharist.

"The Eucharist has been given to us through the passion, the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ so that we have life, that we have what is necessary to be witnesses to the good news, what it means to be fully alive," he said.

"We are most fully alive when we live our lives not with ourselves at the center, but keeping Christ at the center. We are fully alive when we live for the glory of God and in service to others."

The teens were reminded several times during the weekend that Jesus loves them and wants to have a relationship with them.

During a Mass on Nov. 17 at St. John the Evangelist Church in Indianapolis, Bishop Bruce A. Lewandowski,

an auxiliary bishop for the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Md., told young people, "Jesus only wants one thing from you—make him the love of your life!"

In today's ever-growing secularistic world, we know that charge is no easy task.

In his homily at the closing Mass on Nov. 18, Bishop Joseph A. Espaillat, an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of New York, implored his young listeners to take up the mission given to them by Christ in their baptism.

"We are the now of God," he said. "NCYC, we are counting on you. Jesus started with 12 Apostles. We have 12,000 here today. So, we can change the world!"

"God bless you. God keep you. May he continue to let his face shine upon you. And always remember: have faith, have fun while you're doing it," Bishop Espaillat continued. "And remember, hold on to the Church, because the Church is holding on to you."

We hope the stories and photos featured on pages 1B-12B in this week's issue of *The Criterion* paint a portrait of a young Church that is serving as a beacon of light in a troubled world.

For more photos from the conference, visit www.CriterionOnline.com.

And we pray that you enjoy the young people's stories, their enthusiasm and their passion for our shared faith.

—Mike Krokos, editor



Youths from the Archdiocese of Dubuque, Iowa, kneel in prayer during the closing Mass of the National Catholic Youth Conference on Nov. 18 at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

On the cover, page 1B

At top, scores of priests process into Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis on Nov. 18 during the closing Mass for the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC). An estimated 12,000 teenagers attended this year's gathering. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

At bottom, an NCYC participant stretches out her hands in prayer during eucharistic adoration in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis on Nov. 17. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

Bishop exhorts youths at closing Mass of NCYC to choose 'joy over fear'

By Sean Gallagher

The joyful shouts of 12,000 Catholic teens from across the country echoed loudly during the two-hour closing Mass of the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) on Nov. 18 in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis.

Bishop Joseph A. Espailat, an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of New York, described the scene well during his homily in which he often led a loud call-and-response dialogue with the youths.

"Jesus, my sisters and my brothers, left us the best party! He left us the Eucharist," Bishop Espailat shouted. "This is the party *par excellence*, man! You've got a front seat, buddy! This is good news!"

The congregation responded immediately with a deafening, "Amen!"

"Did you hear that? I think that was louder than a [Indianapolis] Colts game," said Bishop Espailat from the floor of the stadium where the city's National Football League team plays its home games.

Bishop Andrew H. Cozzens of Crookston, Minn., was the principal celebrant of the Mass. He was joined by 17 concelebrating bishops, including Indianapolis Archbishop Charles C. Thompson and approximately 175 concelebrating priests.

While Bishop Espailat had many moments of fun and laughter during his homily, he also gave important messages to his listeners to take with them as they returned to their homes across the country.

The first was that they were called to choose "joy over fear."

In explaining this, Bishop Espailat distinguished between a "worldly fear that creates panic and anxiety" and "a holy fear, or fear of the Lord, [that] is a source of peace and happiness."

"If we love God and know that we are loved by God, then why do we need to fear?" he asked his listeners.

Bishop Espailat then laid out three simple points he wanted the young people at NCYC to take home with them.

"You've got to have faith," he said. "You've got to have fun while you do it. And you need family and friends and community along the way."

Bishop Espailat added that the faith to which he exhorted the youths involved more than simply affirming that God exists.

"It's not just about believing in God," he said. "It's



Participants in the National Catholic Youth Conference raise their hands in prayer during the closing Mass of the National Catholic Youth Conference on Nov. 18 in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis. (Photo by Mike Krokos)

accepting what God gives us, especially through the Church, and then responding by our actions by how we treat each other and the way we live.

"Faith is critical because it leads us to joy. And joy overcomes worldly fear because it leads us outside of ourselves."

During his homily, Bishop Espailat quoted from Pope Francis' 2013 apostolic exhortation "*Evangelii Gaudium*" ("The Joy of the Gospel"), in which the pontiff wrote that all believers have the "mission of bringing light, blessing, enlivening, raising up, healing and freeing" (#273).

Regarding the blessing mentioned by the pope, Bishop Espailat asked his listeners with a smile to raise their hands if they knew how to curse at people.

Many in the stadium predictably did.

They also cheered loudly after Bishop Espailat told them that "if you know how to curse, you know how to bless. If you know how to curse, you are following what the enemy wants you to do. That's what the devil wants. But God doesn't want you to curse. God wants you to bless. So, instead of cursing somebody out, we need to bless people up."

In closing his homily, Bishop Espailat called his young listeners to take up the mission given to them by Christ in their baptism.

"We are the now of God," he said. "NCYC, we are counting on you. Jesus started with 12 Apostles. We have 12,000 here today. So, we can change the world!"

A long, loud cheer filled the stadium in response to Bishop Espailat's call. As the cheer died down, the bishop gave a parting blessing.

"God bless you. God keep you. May he continue to let his face shine upon you. And always remember: have faith, have fun while you're doing it. And remember, hold on to the Church, because the Church is holding on to you."

The raucousness of the 35-minute homily later gave way to quiet, emotional and heartfelt prayer during Communion as the house band played such popular contemporary Christian meditative songs as "Yeshua" and "Lord, I need you."

As the Mass closed, the rejoicing returned, with flashlights on smartphones lighting up the floor and stands in the stadium. When the closing



Bishop Joseph A. Espailat, an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of New York, gives the homily during the closing Mass of the National Catholic Youth Conference on Nov. 18 in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

procession was over, the band began playing upbeat music and teens rushed forward to celebrate as close to the stage as they could get.

Zach Spahr, a member of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Indianapolis, was proud that so many of his Catholic peers from across the country had come to his hometown to celebrate their faith.

"There are a lot of times when I think that Indy is not really the best place," said Zach in a concourse of the stadium after the liturgy. "But then you see something like this and it's like, 'What a great place to live!' There's a little bit of pride."

He spoke about how he, as a Catholic, sometimes feels alone at North Central High School in Indianapolis where he is a student.

"So, seeing that there are so many other Catholics across the country is important to me," Zach said.

The jubilation of the 12,000 young Catholics at the closing Mass confirmed that conviction in Ean Nelson, a sophomore from the Diocese of Des Moines, Iowa.

"It was something like I'd never seen before," he said of the closing Mass. "It's something that I'll never forget. It was cool being able to see that I'm not alone."

For Ean, NCYC "was life-changing."

"I'm going to be more aware of myself, more happy and full of the Lord." †



Bishop Andrew H. Cozzens of Crookston, Minn., elevates a chalice during the closing Mass of the National Catholic Youth Conference on Nov. 18 in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)



Youths from the Archdiocese of Dubuque, Iowa, kneel in prayer during the closing Mass of the National Catholic Youth Conference on Nov. 18 in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

Archbishop calls on archdiocesan youths to be 'eucharistic people'

By Natalie Hoefler

Nina Krueer was amazed when she looked around the room filled with more than 1,100 teens from all corners of central and southern Indiana.

When asked if she'd ever been to Mass with so many of her peers, "That's an easy no," said the member of Holy Family Parish in New Albany.

The youths filled a section of the Indiana Convention Center's 500 Ballroom for a special Mass celebrated by Archbishop Charles C. Thompson on the opening day of the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) on Nov. 16.

It's likely that Nina had also never been to a Mass with so many archdiocesan priests and seminarians, either. At least 20 archdiocesan priests processed in with the archbishop.

"And I think all of our 32 seminarians for the archdiocese are here, including these three [transitional] deacons up here [on the stage] that we'll ordain priests next year," Archbishop Thompson said at the beginning of his homily.

"I expect a few of you to be thinking about that and praying about that, about how we might add to those numbers very soon. So, keep open to how the Holy Spirit moves you throughout these couple of days."

'Called to be eucharistic people'

The special Mass just for the NCYC participants of central and southern Indiana was celebrated "to keep



Nina Krueer, left, Avery Drury and Tessa Holifield, all members of Holy Family Parish in New Albany, sing a song for the opening procession during a Mass for National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) participants from the Archdiocese of Indianapolis on Nov. 16.

Christ at the center" of the three-day conference, the archbishop said.

"Remember that we are called to be eucharistic people, people with grateful hearts, people who live, who embody Christ in service to others. And so it's important for us to understand the Eucharist not as a mere symbol but as the body and blood, soul and divinity of Christ."

He cautioned the youths that any concerns, struggles or issues they left at home will still be there after the conference.

"For the time being, however, we take solace in the joy, the wisdom, the beauty and spirit of this sacred time in prayer, fellowship, adoration and celebration of our faith in Jesus Christ. ... Let us keep before us the wisdom of his words, namely that the kingdom of God is among you."

We live in a world of idolatry, Archbishop Thompson said, where some believers "attempt to create God in their own image, picking and choosing what to believe about Jesus. Maybe that's why so many think it's a mere symbol, the Eucharist.

"It is only by seeking and embracing divine wisdom ... that we are able to rise above the idolatry, keeping before us the beauty, truth and goodness of God, in whose image we have been created to love and to serve."

It is important to understand the Eucharist as the true presence of Christ, he said, "because we are created in God's image."

Archbishop Thompson mentioned the upcoming National Eucharistic Congress to be held here in Indianapolis on July 17-21 next year.

The congress and the current three-year National Eucharistic Revival "are meant to have the same effect of NCYC," he said. "Namely, to renew our faith, to inspire us to live more fully that faith as missionary disciples, fully alive in Christ.

"The source and summit of our identity and mission, of course, is the real presence of Jesus Christ, body and blood, in the most holy Eucharist.

"We are not saved by trying to conform Jesus to our



Transitional Deacon Bobby Vogel of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, left, and Archbishop Charles C. Thompson elevate the Eucharist as archdiocesan transitional Deacon Samuel Rosko looks on during a Mass for National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) participants from the Archdiocese of Indianapolis in the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis at the opening of NCYC on Nov. 16. (Photos by Natalie Hoefler)

image, but through his passion, death and resurrection we are saved. It is for this reason that we celebrate and adore Jesus in the sacrament of the most holy Eucharist throughout this weekend, revival, congress and beyond."

'The kingdom of God is among you'

After the Mass, which included music by a choir of Cathedral High School in Indianapolis, Archbishop Thompson processed with the Blessed Sacrament through the halls of the convention center and along Georgia Street. Those present at the Mass joined the procession. Thousands of other NCYC participants either joined in or knelt along the procession route.

Before embarking on the procession "amid all those gathering for NCYC—as well as those who may just happen to be there along the way," Archbishop Thompson urged the youths of the archdiocese "to realize the awesome privilege and responsibility placed upon us as companions of Jesus Christ and echoing his proclamation: The kingdom of God is among you." †

Dozens of priests at NCYC give the gift of mercy in the sacrament of penance

By Sean Gallagher

The National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) is known for its large crowds of boisterous Catholic teens from across the country rejoicing together as one.

But the conference is also marked by more intimate experiences. That happens especially, and in large numbers, in the sacrament of penance.

Dozens of priests from across the U.S. heard confessions for hours in a large ballroom on Nov. 17 and 18 in the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis and during conference general sessions in a concourse of the adjacent Lucas Oil Stadium.



Father Noah Diehm of the Archdiocese of Dubuque, Iowa, hears the confession of a National Catholic Youth Conference participant on Nov. 17 in the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

Teens gladly waited for the sacrament of penance for 30 minutes in a long winding line that extended from the confession room well out into a convention center hallway.

Demi Bolen, a high school junior and member of St. Susanna Parish in Plainfield, went to confession at NCYC this year, the second time she had attended the conference.

"It's worth it," she said of waiting in line for the sacrament. "You're confessing your sins and getting forgiven. That's important. Having that weight lifted off your chest is really good."

Seeing so many of her peers wanting to receive God's mercy in the sacrament was encouraging to her.

"It just shows that everyone's going through the same things you are," Demi said. "Everyone has their faults like I do."

She was also impressed by the dozens of priests hearing confessions.

"It's insane how many priests take their time to do this for people," Demi said. "They're passionate in what they do, and they're here to help you."

One of those priests was Father Jeffrey Starkovich of the Diocese of Lake Charles, La.

"The greatest encounter of our life is the encounter with mercy and forgiveness," he said. "In my experience as a priest, to be forgiven is one of the deepest desires of the human heart. That applies whether you're a 7-year-old making your first confession or you're at the end of your life and you want to be forgiven before you go to your judgment and eternal reward.

"Teenagers are human, just like everybody else. They want to be forgiven."

Being in the ballroom with so many priests from across the country was a blessed reminder for Father Starkovich of the fraternity of the priesthood.

"I love being part of what I call the world's biggest fraternity," he said. "I've never met you. I don't know anything about you. But I know the most important thing about you. We both love the Lord, and we've been ordained to serve.

"And we're willing to sit in these not-very-comfortable chairs for long hours hearing stories from everybody about their sins to give them the gift of mercy and forgiveness. It's what unites us. I love the visual of seeing 50 priests hearing confessions at the same time and seeing the people in line."

Monica Robinson loved that sight as well. A pastoral associate at SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi Parish in Greenwood, Robinson has been a chaperone at many past NCYC gatherings. This was the first time she served there as a volunteer. Her job was to give out stickers to penitents leaving the confession room, stickers that said, "I'm forgiven."

She remarked on Nov. 17 that many people receiving the sticker had said that it was like an "I voted" sticker handed out at polling places on election day.

"I told them, 'No. It's way better,'" said Robinson.

She was amazed at the long line of teens waiting to experience God's mercy in the sacrament of penance.

"I've been here since [noon], and the line has not ceased the entire time," said Robinson more than three hours later. "There are more than 50 priests here. It's unbelievable. To see all of this beauty in front of me, my heart has just exploded."

Not only was Robinson impressed by the number of teens waiting to confess their sins and be forgiven, she was also encouraged by the number of priests ready to hear those confessions.

"To see the love that they're offering these young people speaks volumes about our Church," she said. †

Teens at NCYC show love for Christ in the Eucharist during adoration

By Sean Gallagher

Some 12,000 youths from across the country showed their love for Christ in the Eucharist in a profound time of adoration on Nov. 17 in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis during the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC).

From the start of the conference the day before, the Blessed Sacrament had been exposed in a monstrance for adoration in a chapel in the adjacent Indiana Convention Center.

During the evening general session of NCYC on Nov. 17, Bishop Joseph A. Espallat, an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of New York, carried the monstrance in a procession from the convention center to the stadium where he placed it on an altar for all 12,000 youths to see and adore.

Dominican Sister Jude Andrew Link gave a reflection before the Eucharist was brought to the stadium that helped prepare the youths for that time of adoration. She told them that the Eucharist is “the secret of transformation” in their own lives.

“When you and I go to Mass, bread and wine are brought up and offered to God. And he changes them into himself,” Sister Jude Andrew said. “Then, in the very same spot where we brought up the bread and wine, we now receive Jesus Christ.

“When that happens at Mass and the bread and wine are offered up to God, offer yourself. I promise you, if you offer yourself, your whole self to God, he will transform you. It’s what he does. He makes all things new.”

A young man from the archdiocese who has experienced that transformation then offered a witness talk to the youths in the stadium.

Garet Colburn is a member of St. John Paul II Parish in Sellersburg. A senior at Silver Creek High School in Sellersburg, he grew in his appreciation of the Eucharist and the Church’s liturgy through taking part twice in One Bread One Cup, a summer youth liturgical leadership program of Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad.

Garet shared with his Catholic peers from across the country how he was afraid in the past to share his faith with his non-Catholic friends because of how they ridiculed him for it.

One Bread One Cup and his parish helped change him, he said.

“I’m here to tell you tonight, don’t worry about ... what anyone else has to say about your relationship with your Lord, because that’s what’s most important,” Garet said. “Be steadfast in faith and your love for the Lord. I implore you. When you go home from this place, go to your home parish, your family and even your schools and show the love that a Catholic community like this one has to offer. It’s beautiful and everyone deserves it.”



Teens kneel in prayer during eucharistic adoration on Nov. 17 in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis during the National Catholic Youth Conference. Among the teens is Zowie Pierce, in a gray T-shirt at left, of Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish in Greenwood. (Photos by Sean Gallagher)

In a later interview with *The Criterion*, Garet said the time of adoration at Lucas Oil Stadium “was the most moving adoration experience I’ve ever had.” He added that he hoped that the adoration that night would help all the teens at the stadium “turn closer to God and grow closer in their relationship with Jesus Christ.”

The adoration that took place after Garet’s witness talk featured a homily by Bishop Espallat and contemporary Christian meditative music played by the house band. While they played Matt Maher’s song, “Lay It Down,” Bishop Espallat invited the youths to place themselves entirely before Jesus present with them in the Blessed Sacrament.

Youths came from their seats higher up in the stadium to get as close to the stage as possible. As they prayed before the Blessed Sacrament, many knelt, others stood with their hands raised in prayer and a handful laid prostrate on the stadium floor.

After the music and homily, Bishop Espallat invited the youths to move to silent prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. “At this moment, just let this beautiful silence reign

in this arena right now,” he said. “We’ve laid it down. But what does God say to us? Let’s spend a couple of moments in deep silence, in penetrating silence, and let God speak to us. ... There’s beauty in the silence.”

The band stopped playing. And Lucas Oil Stadium, which so often was pulsating with loud music and the rejoicing of jubilant teens in other NCYC sessions, was entirely silent.

Afterwards, Bishop Espallat presided over Benediction before taking the Blessed Sacrament from the floor of the stadium.

Liam Slotten, a member of Holy Family Parish in New Albany and a sophomore at Our Lady of Providence High School in Clarksville, was present during the time of adoration in the stadium.

“It shows that, even with our society starting to stray further from God, there are still people wanting to stay close and get others to stay close,” Liam said. “It encourages me to dedicate more time in my life to God and try to encourage some of my peers, whom I know aren’t religious at all, to have a deeper thought about experiences like that.” †



Garet Colburn, a youth of St. John Paul II Parish in Sellersburg, gives a witness talk on Nov. 17 in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis during the National Catholic Youth Conference.



Bishop Joseph A. Espallat, an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of New York, carries a monstrance holding the Blessed Sacrament during a eucharistic procession on Nov. 17 in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis during the National Catholic Youth Conference.



FULLY ALIVE



Jose Alvarez, an adult from the Diocese of Gary, Ind., stands with hands raised in prayer on Nov. 18 during the closing Mass of the National Catholic Youth Conference in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis. Kneeling in prayer behind Alvarez are teens from the Archdiocese of Dubuque, Iowa. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)



Karen Amayo Castro of the Diocese of Knoxville, Tenn., reflects on her Mexican heritage and explains her family's tradition of recognizing "El Dia de los Muertos" ("The Day of the Dead") during a Nov. 17 general session in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis. (Photo by Mike Krokos)



Holy Family of Nazareth Sister Josephine Garrett, a National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) emcee, offers a reflection to more than 12,000 youths in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis during the opening session of NCYC on Nov. 16. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson addresses more than 12,000 youths in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis during the opening session of the National Catholic Youth Conference on Nov. 16. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)



Teens use their cell phones to record the band for KING + COUNTRY playing their rendition of "The Little Drummer Boy" before the opening general session of the National Catholic Youth Conference in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis on Nov. 16. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)



Father Michael Keucher, pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Shelbyville and St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Shelby County, gives absolution in the sacrament of penance on Nov. 17 to a youth taking part in the National Catholic Youth Conference. The three-day gathering of faith took place at the Indiana Convention Center and the adjacent Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis. Father Keucher also serves as archdiocesan vocations director. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

Below: A teen readies his bow and arrow to aim for a target in the interactive exhibit hall in the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis on Nov. 18 during the National Catholic Youth Conference. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)



Teens and adults kneel as Archbishop Charles C. Thompson processes with the Blessed Sacrament through the halls of the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis on Nov. 16 for the opening of the National Catholic Youth Conference. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)

More than 12,000 youths, chaperones and volunteers stand as nearly 200 priests and bishops process in for the closing Mass of the National Catholic Youth Conference on Nov. 18 in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)



NCYC is a place where seeds of vocations are planted in hearts of teens

By Sean Gallagher

When archdiocesan seminarian Kristopher Garlitch first came to the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC), he was a high school senior and a member of St. Mary Parish in North Vernon.

While he was discerning a possible priestly vocation at the time, taking part in a Mass at NCYC in which many archdiocesan seminarians were assisting in the liturgy helped confirm in him God's call.

"It was attractive to me to see them serving at Mass all together," said Garlitch, who is now in priestly formation at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad. "I still think of that. That's where I saw them together for the first time."

At NCYC this year, Garlitch got to do what he witnessed many seminarians doing when he was a high school senior—assisting in liturgies and taking part in a eucharistic procession.

Openness to a variety of vocations was emphasized during NCYC.

At 19, Bridget Hegarty was technically a chaperone at NCYC for youths from the Diocese of Springfield, Mass. But discerning God's will in her life was still very much on her mind and her wish for the high school students traveling with her to Indianapolis.

"You get so much insight from so many people in so many different ways of going about the faith," Hegarty said. "It's good for kids in high school who don't know what they want to do in life yet to get a little peek at everything and then choose what they want."

She spoke with *The Criterion* on Nov. 16 in the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis after speaking with Providence Sister Marilyn Baker at a booth for her



Providence Sister Marilyn Baker speaks with Bridget Hegarty of the Diocese of Springfield, Mass., on Nov. 16 in the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis during the National Catholic Youth Conference.

religious community, the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in western Indiana.

"They give me hope," said Sister Marilyn of the youths at NCYC. "I think they're searching for something that's going to have a real impact in their lives. Having us [here] sharing our work and our charism helps them to see that there is a vitality in the Church."

Kara Hartz and Amanda Mullin, both from the Archdiocese of Las Vegas, spoke with *The Criterion* after visiting with Viatorian Brother John Eustice, who ministers as a transitional deacon at Maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Bourbonnais, Ill.

The girls were amazed at the broad variety of priests, seminarians and religious at NCYC.

"It's interesting to see so many different kinds of people, especially nuns," Kara said. "But it's also a little overwhelming."

"I love seeing all the different people and how they practice their faith," added Amanda.

While many people involved in promoting vocations in religious orders were at the conference, Brother John was quick to emphasize that leading young people to their vocation is the work of all the faithful.

"Everybody is a vocation promoter," said Brother John. "It starts in the home and among friends. I'm a religious because my friends sold me on it. They saw something in me, knew the Viatorians and said, 'John would be good at that.'"

"My hope is that every single person knows that God's invitation is waiting for them and probably will come to them from someone they're not expecting."

Dominican Sister Mercedes Torres serves as the vocations director for the Dominicans of Mary Mother of the Eucharist based in Ann Arbor, Mich. She spoke with *The Criterion* on Nov. 17 in Lucas Oil Stadium.

Looking out at the 12,000 teens filling the floor and stands of the stadium filled her with wonder.

"It's such a blessing," Sister Mercedes said. "These young people come here because they choose to be here. They choose to have an encounter. They're hungry for it. That encounter is what's going to help them grow and understand over time their vocation."

She and everyone else at the stadium looked forward



Viatorian Brother John Eustice poses for a selfie with Amanda Mullin, left, Bella Vazquez and Kara Hartz on Nov. 16 in the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis during the National Catholic Youth Conference. The youths came to the conference in Indianapolis from the Archdiocese of Las Vegas. Brother John, a transitional deacon, serves at Maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Bourbonnais, Ill. (Photos by Sean Gallagher)

that night to eucharistic adoration. Sister Mercedes said that time of prayer and an encounter with Christ in the Eucharist could be an important moment in the vocation journey of many at NCYC.

"Right now, the Lord is planting seeds," she said. "Just seeing the religious, seeing the priests and speaking with them is all very encouraging to them. The Lord is working in their hearts now."

"The encounter with the Eucharist that they're going to have here is going to be what transforms their hearts and opens their hearts to what he's going to do to bring them to himself and their vocation. For a lot of them, that's going to start here."

As Garlitch saw the 12,000 Catholic youths at NCYC, he appreciated their openness to the faith and wondered what the future held for them.

"Them just being here is a sign of that openness," he said. "This is kind of the first step for them, in a sense, no matter what vocation they're called to. Just being here is a good start."

(For more information on vocations to the priesthood and religious life, visit the website of the archdiocese's vocations office at HearGodsCall.com.) †

Teenagers embrace volunteer opportunities during NCYC

By Mike Krokos

It may still be a month away, but the Christmas spirit was alive and well in an exhibit hall at the Indiana Convention Center during the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC).

As part of an outreach effort for Catholic Charities Terre Haute, teenagers from across the U.S. spent time decorating brown lunch bags—many with faith-based messages—and making Christmas cards that will be shared with the less fortunate through the agency.

Jennifer Tames, assistant agency director for Catholic Charities Terre Haute, said the lunch bags will be used for the organization's Fishes and Loaves' soup kitchen when they distribute sack lunches on weekends and holidays. The Christmas cards, she continued, will be distributed to families who visit its Christmas store.

"It's a great opportunity for the kids not only to be creative and to take a break, but then, to pass along that love they have for God and for Jesus to others in our community," she said on Nov. 17, the second day of the three-day conference.



Jennifer Tames

About 1,000 lunch bags and the same amount of Christmas cards were brought to NCYC, Tames noted, "and if we go through all of those, we will be astonished."

High school seniors Julia Trainer and Taylor Roemmich of the Archdiocese of Omaha, Neb., were among a group who embraced the opportunity to make Christmas cards for their brothers and sisters in Christ.

"I think it's really cool that through this conference we're able to spread a little bit of holiday cheer to the Indianapolis [area] community," Julia said, "and to make a difference."

Added Taylor, "There are a lot of families out there that might not experience joy [during the Christmas season], ... and I think it's great that we're able to do this."

Taylor Vitteco, a sophomore from the Diocese of Davenport, Iowa, and a group of her friends were all smiles as they decorated lunch bags.

A few feet away in the convention center, other teenagers were embracing the mission of Hands Across Haiti, a ministry of St. John Paul II Parish in Sellersburg. The outreach provides decorated T-shirts, school supplies, tote bags and backpacks, among other things, to its sister parishes in Haiti.

Natalie Bixenman, a freshman from the Diocese of

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



Freshman Natalie Bixenman of the Diocese of Salina, Kan., displays the tote bag she decorated for Hands Across Haiti, a ministry of St. John Paul II Parish in Sellersburg. (Photo by Mike Krokos)

Archbishop Thompson calls youths 'a mystery to be encountered'

By Natalie Hoefler

Grace Stecker of the Diocese of Helena, Mont., pulled out her cell phone and called her dad, right in the middle of a talk during the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC).

In fact, teens all around her were talking on their phones, even as the speaker stood on the stage.

But they had his permission.

"I want you right now, in one minute, to just make a call to somebody in your life whom you love, who's pretty special, whom you appreciate," Scripture scholar and astrophysicist Father John Kartje asked of the more than 12,000 NCYC participants.



Fr. John Kartje

The request came as part of his talk on the oneness of God and the universe—faith and science—that served as the topic of the opening session of NCYC in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis on Nov. 16.

He began the talk echoing words spoken by Archbishop Charles

C. Thompson just moments before.

"The line that really struck me amongst everything [Archbishop Thompson] said is this," Father Kartje noted: "You're not a problem to be solved, but you are a mystery to be encountered."

'What it means to be fully alive'

Archbishop Thompson spoke to the teens about this year's NCYC theme "Fully Alive" in a prayer service at the beginning of the opening session—after the teens had settled down from a rousing concert by Christian rock band for KING + COUNTRY.

He quoted his "favorite line" from Pope Francis' encyclical, "*Laudato Si': On Care of Our Common Home*": "Rather than a problem to be solved, the world is a joyful mystery to be contemplated with gladness and praise" (#12).

"We heard that beautiful reading about creation from the Book of Genesis," Archbishop Thompson said of the Scripture proclaimed at the beginning of the prayer service. "But the ultimate part of that creation is when God created humanity, when God created us. We are part of that creation that's been given life by the Spirit breathing into us, by the Word taking root in us, claiming us as his own."

"And so, no one here is a problem to be solved, but is to be contemplated as a joyful mystery with gladness and praise."

"Whatever pains in our lives, whatever is going on, whatever hurts, whatever guilt, whatever fears, whatever anxieties, whatever it is—that does not define us."

Rather, he said, we are defined by our identity in Christ, whose body, blood, soul and divinity is present in the Eucharist.

"The Eucharist has been given to us through the passion, the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ so that we have life, that we have what is necessary to be witnesses to the good news, what it means to be fully alive," Archbishop Thompson said.

"We are most fully alive when we live our lives not



Teens sing a song of praise in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis on Nov. 16 during the opening session of the National Catholic Youth Conference. (Photos by Natalie Hoefler)

with ourselves at the center, but keeping Christ at the center. We are fully alive when we live for the glory of God and in service to others.

"We gather tonight remembering that we belong to something greater than ourselves as children of God, created in the image of God. We have a dignity, a dignity no power on Earth can take away."

"That's why we can claim to be fully alive."

'The one through whom astronomy is possible'

Father Kartje, a priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago, picked up where Archbishop Thompson left off—speaking about the NCYC theme.

"If you talk about being fully alive, I can't think of a better way to get at what that actually looks like in our world today than to look at this interaction between faith and science," he said. With doctorates in Scripture and astrophysics, the current rector and president of the University of Saint Mary of the Lake/Mundelein Seminary in Mundelein, Ill., is an expert on both topics.

He quoted John 1:3: "All things came into being through him. Without him, not one thing came to being."

"A hundred billion galaxies exist," Father Kartje said. "That very same God of creation is the God alive in our own bodies. The very same God that gives you the galaxies ... gives us the very life in our hearts."

Science and faith are both a way of looking at the

world, he explained—one through the lens of a telescope, the other through the glass of a monstrance.

"The Eucharist you see through the glass of the monstrance gives us the ability to see the body and the blood of Christ in a way that doesn't look like the body and blood of Christ," Father Kartje said.

Meanwhile, the new, high-resolution Webb Telescope launched in 2021 can view objects much further out in the universe than its predecessor, the Hubble Telescope.

"Through the Webb Telescope, you can see the world that goes all the way back to Genesis," he said. "It's the world that goes back to the life that is in us. That is a monstrance all its own, these beautiful images from the Webb Telescope, to look at them for who Jesus is precisely because he is the one through whom all of that glorious astronomy is possible."

To gaze upon the universe or to gaze upon Christ in the Eucharist, said Father Kartje, "is literally to let yourself be gazed upon by the one who delights in your very existence."

As for his request for the more than 12,000 youths to call someone they love, Father Kartje explained the connection to faith and science.

"The person you called is probably feeling loved right now," he said. "The reason something special happened at that connection is because of what you see in the monstrance. That's why Christ came into the world—the one who does all of this is love." †

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Salina, Kan., used her artistic gifts to decorate a tote bag, because "I like donating to good causes."

Dan Ohlmann, a member of St. John Paul II's board of directors for Hands Across Haiti, has been involved with the ministry for several years and has attended NCYC in the past. He said the parish's overseas outreach has become a staple at the conference because they want to get "the youths interested in what's happening abroad."



Dan Ohlmann

"Haiti is close to my heart ... but we want to get the youths involved, and to bring awareness to what's going on."

The T-shirts, tote bags and other items provided to the sister parishes, he added, "are a way for them to communicate with our students that we sponsor in Haiti. ... Our goal is to get people involved nationally [and] internationally."

Further toward the back of the convention center, teenagers were helping put together meals for Pack Away Hunger, an Indianapolis-based organization that provides nutritious dehydrated meals to local food pantries throughout Indiana. They also work with international populations.

Lea Snyder, an event manager for the organization,

supervised a group of young people as they worked tirelessly to put packaged meals together.

"We've sent to Hawaii, we've sent to Ukraine, Russia, Haiti. ... It just depends on where the need is at the time," she said.

The meal consists of soy and rice, a mixture of vegetables and a vitamin nutrient packet. The meals are sealed and have a long shelf life.

As in years past, NCYC participants again stepped up and took this volunteer initiative to heart.

"Oh my gosh, these young people, the past two days, they have been on fire!" Snyder said. "It's amazing. They've done a wonderful, a great job. We have had some of them stay quite awhile. ... A lot of them really enjoy it. ... They're doing something good for society." †



Teenagers assemble ingredients for Pack Away Hunger, an Indianapolis-based organization that provides nutritious dehydrated meals to local food pantries throughout Indiana and around the world. (Photo by Mike Krokos)

Bishop Cozzens: NCYC is a preview of the National Eucharistic Congress next summer in Indianapolis

First of two parts

By Sean Gallagher

As Bishop Joseph A. Espallat of the Archdiocese of New York processed into Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis with the Blessed Sacrament in a monstrance, thousands of youths fell to their knees in adoration.

It was Friday night at the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC), when there is ordinarily eucharistic adoration and Benediction.

Bishop Andrew H. Cozzens of Crookston, Minn., walked in the procession with Bishop Espallat into the stadium turned into a massive place of worship.

For Bishop Cozzens, adoration on Nov. 17 and NCYC's closing Mass the following night, at which he was the principal celebrant, was a preview of the National Eucharistic Congress to be held in Indianapolis on July 17-21 next year. Bishop Cozzens has led the National Eucharistic Revival and the planning for the eucharistic congress.

He spoke with *The Criterion* earlier in the day before the closing liturgy about his experience of the love the teens at NCYC showed for Christ in the Eucharist and how it was encouraging for the eucharistic revival and eucharistic congress.

The following interview has been edited for clarity and content.

Q: What were your impressions from being present during the time of adoration in the stadium?

A: "It was inspiring to be there, especially with the young people. Of course, I was praying for them, but also for the eucharistic revival and for the eucharistic congress. There was just a sense of the Lord wanting to continue to bless the young people and our country through a love of the Eucharist.

"It was beautiful to be up on the stage praying before the Blessed Sacrament surrounded by 12,000 young people."

Q: The Eucharist has long been at the heart of NCYC. What can the rest of the Church in the U.S. learn from the witness of the teens' encounter with Christ in the Eucharist at this conference?

A: "It's part of what we're trying to do in the eucharistic revival. Those of us who have been doing youth ministry for the past two decades have seen this reality. Young people love to be with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Many of them actually come to understand the Mass through adoration.

"They come to encounter Jesus in his presence in adoration, and then it draws them into the Mass. So, they start to go to Mass more.

"It's a beautiful thing, too, that teens come to know

the love of Jesus and want to express their emotion and their devotion toward him. It can have an impact on their whole life. It's also the reason why we as a Church have to be involved with young people. It's when people are young that they make their most important decisions in their life.

"The Church has a responsibility to be there to present Christ to them so that, as they're making those vocational choices and deciding what they're going to do for the rest of their life, they know Christ and can be a part of it. That's the beauty of NCYC and other youth events in the Church. We can accompany youths at those important moments."

Q: How might what happens at NCYC be a way for Catholics in the U.S. to anticipate what will happen in Indianapolis next July in the National Eucharistic Congress?

A: "Since I landed in Indianapolis [before NCYC], I was filled with a desire to pray and an enthusiasm for what Indianapolis means for the Church right now because of the coming eucharistic congress. We're going to have a huge impact on the Church here.

"These kinds of events can be life-transforming. Look at the event of World Youth Day in Denver and what that did for the Church in the United States. So, NCYC is kind of a foretaste of that. It's why I love coming. This event is a rare opportunity for our young people to have an experience of Christ and his Church that they can't have elsewhere.

"The eucharistic congress is going to be that. It's going to be a rare opportunity to have an experience of Christ and his Church that you can't have elsewhere and that we haven't had in the United States in decades. It's going to be an event centered on the heart of our Church, which is the Eucharist, where the Church herself in all her cultures and races, her beautiful diversity, gathers together to celebrate this gift that makes us one.

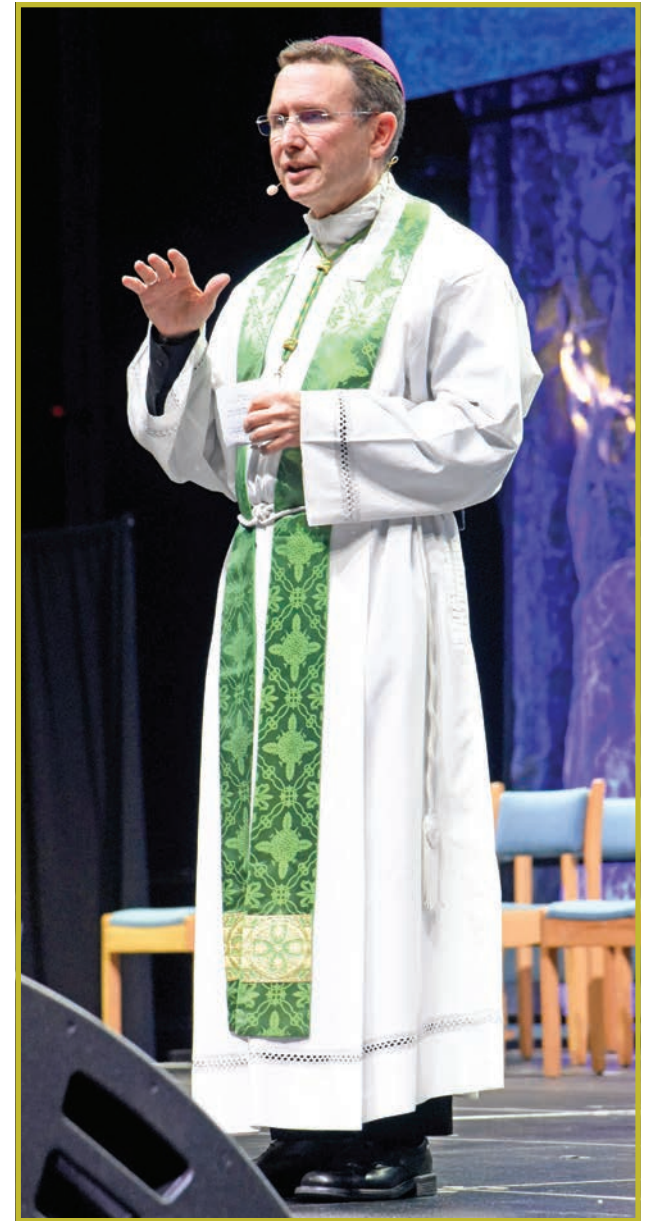
"Seeing the power of this event certainly helps me to remember the power of the event that we're planning."

Q: What can the organizers of the eucharistic congress learn from NCYC to make it more effective in drawing Catholics from across the country into a deeper relationship with Christ and each other through the Eucharist?

A: "There are members of our team who are here this weekend. They're scouting everything and watching everything. NCYC has been great to give us full-access passes for our team so they can learn from what's happening here and how they do it and what they do. That's been a huge help.

"One of the reasons why we chose Indianapolis is because of the positive experience of NCYC. Even in the bishops' minds, they're used to coming here for this kind of an event. They know that this is a good city for events.

"We're significantly larger than NCYC, so we have



Bishop Andrew H. Cozzens of Crookston, Minn., speaks before the National Catholic Youth Congress' closing Mass on Nov. 18 about next summer's National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

challenges that they probably don't have. But there certainly is a lot that we can learn from how they do what they do. We just have to multiply it."

(For more information on the National Eucharistic Revival, visit eucharisticrevival.org. For more information on the National Eucharistic Congress, including on how to purchase tickets for it, visit eucharisticcongress.org.) †

Become the man or woman that God made you to be, NCYC speaker says

By Mike Krokos

God sees us, he knows us and he is strengthening each of us to become more of the man or woman he made us to be, said a keynote speaker at the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) on Nov. 17 in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis.



Brian Butler, executive director and co-founder of Echo Community, speaks to young people during the National Catholic Youth Conference's Nov. 17 general morning session in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis. (Photo by Mike Krokos)

Our Creator is helping all humanity to grow "more deeply into the masculinity or your femininity that God has given to you, and becoming more and more of the gift that you already are, in all your uniqueness," noted Brian Butler, executive director and co-founder of Echo Community, which cultivates chastity and authentic masculinity and femininity with teenagers, young adults and families through the lens of St. John Paul II's Theology of the Body.

"Each one of you, all you men in the house, are refracting the light of God in a way that none of these women do," he continued, "and all of you women in the house are refracting the light of God in a way that none of these men do. That's good. In fact, it's very good."

A father of four, Butler said the trust that children develop for their parents from a young age leads them to more freedom, allowing them "to become more and more fully alive."

"This is what God wants for each one of us, but not to stay distracted in the shallows, but to go to him, to go to his own Word, to go to the sacraments, to hear the truth about who he says you are," he continued, "the gift of your dignity and your call to a destiny that's far beyond what you can imagine."

We must remember that God is always inviting us into a closer relationship, Butler noted.

"Even though you don't always feel it, the grace is not always affective, it is always effective. It's always

working, to help us to be more fully known, to help us to be more fully grown, that we might be able to be more free."

While life's challenges may pull us away from our faith, we must not become distracted in our relationship with our Creator, Butler said. God sees our pains and he knows what we're going through, he added.

Reflecting on a memory of playing hide-and-seek with two of his children, Butler recounted how his daughter Lauren always ran into his arms whenever he found her, saying, "Daddy, hold me for a long, long time." That is what God wants from us, he said.

"For her, the whole point of the game was not to run away. The whole point of the game was to be found and to be reunited with her good father, to be at home in my arms," Butler said.

Citing Scripture, Butler said adults need to remember the Bible verse "Unless you become like children, you will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Mt 18:3).

"At the very end, we're going to cross the threshold of eternity, and we pray that, by his grace ... [he will call] us toward our eternal home, where we'll be fully known, we'll be fully grown, we'll be fully free.

"St. John Paul II says that 'freedom exists for the sake of love,' to be fully in the love that you were made for, and that's when you'll be fully alive. And we'll all throw our arms around God the Father's neck and say, 'Daddy, hold me for a long, long time.'" †

Archdiocesan youths experience 'a deeper connection with God' at NCYC

By Mike Krokos

Sophomore Lilly Hertel was eager to experience the National Youth Conference (NCYC) in Indianapolis for the first time.

Junior Joseph Waterman was looking forward to taking part in an NCYC gathering post-COVID.

When he attended in 2021, some of the pandemic's restrictions—including wearing masks—were still being observed at the conference, and getting to know other participants was challenging.

The teenagers approached the Nov. 16-18 gathering of 12,000 youths with open minds and hearts.

A member of St. Gabriel Parish in Connersville, Joseph was looking for a spiritual recharge.

Lilly said she was hoping the youth gathering would be "an emotional experience." But that changed after she attended a session that opened her eyes about her Creator.

"I learned that God isn't an emotion, and that we can't always expect big emotional things from God," said Lilly, a member of St. Bridget of Ireland Parish in Liberty, "that we just have to trust and believe that God is always with us."

'A really eye-opening experience'

As they were leaving Lucas Oil Stadium after NCYC's closing Mass on Nov. 18, both were energized by the two-hour liturgy and happy to talk about their time at NCYC.

"It's been a really eye-opening experience, ... to see so many different things with so many people," Lilly said.

"Adoration—that was really cool for me," she continued. "I actually cried through that because I really felt God in my heart, that he loved me. I really felt God's presence."

Joseph called his second NCYC experience "awesome," adding, "I felt fully alive" taking part in this pilgrimage of faith.

"It has helped me get out of the lukewarmness I had with my faith," he said. "The whole experience was fantastic."

Lilly, who plans to attend NCYC in Indianapolis in 2025, encouraged future participants to "keep an open mind. The experience is different for everyone. ... Whatever God wants to happen to you during this time will [happen]."

'A deeper connection with God'

Freshman Bella Hubert and junior Margeaux Stewart were both first-time NCYC participants who viewed the conference as a way to build their relationship with God.

As she prepared to take part in the closing Mass, Bella, a member of St. Joseph Parish in Corydon, said she was



Teenagers and chaperones from St. Gabriel Parish in Connersville and St. Bridget of Ireland Parish in Liberty pose in the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis on Nov. 17 with their pastor, Father Dustin Boehm. (Photo by Mike Krokos)

leaving NCYC with "a deeper connection with God and my faith, remembering the beauty around me and the knowledge [shared]."

"I will walk away with the relationships that we've built," noted Margeaux, a member of St. Mary Parish in Lanesville, "and knowing that NCYC doesn't stop here, that we have to take it home with us and share [our faith] with others."



Bella Hubert, left, and Margeaux Stewart

Following his older brother's advice, senior Nick Eve jumped at the chance to attend NCYC this year.

As he reflected on his experience, Nick, a member of St. Joseph Parish in Corydon, said he could sense a palpable joy among the participants.

He especially felt that connection during eucharistic adoration with all 12,000 NCYC participants on Nov. 17 in Lucas Oil Stadium. "Everyone was there to praise the Lord. ... It was an amazing experience."



Nick Eve, left, and Hays Ferriell

Sophomore Hays Ferriell, also a member of St. Joseph, heard about the biennial gathering through a friend. He repeated a phrase first shared by Archbishop Charles C. Thompson during the opening night on Nov. 16 and repeated several times during the weekend: "You're not a problem to be solved, you are a mystery to be encountered."

Reflecting on those words, "That was definitely a high point for me," Hays noted.

'Getting a front seat for what God is doing'

Katie Warren, the youth minister for both St. Joseph and St. Mary parishes, came to the conference with no expectations. But like so many others who attend NCYC, the three-day pilgrimage of faith "blew that lack of expectations out of the water."



Katie Warren

"Part of the beauty of my experience is getting to see [our teens'] experiences, ... seeing them experience the Lord in a new way."

Becoming emotional, she added, "That's been my favorite part of this [conference], getting to accompany them, and watch. Working in youth ministry, the best part of the job is getting a front seat for what God is doing in their lives."

As she looks beyond NCYC, Warren hopes to help the teenagers nurture the seeds of faith planted.

"How can we cultivate that culture back at home, where God is first and important always?" she asked, where "we can have the same Jesus, here and there?" †

Young people, religious embrace devotion to Blessed Mother through the rosary

By Mike Krokos

At 6 feet 5 inches tall, Abraham Wolf towered over the majority of the nearly 12,000 young people who participated in the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) in Indianapolis.

But his height advantage was not as evident as he knelt in prayerful reverence in front of a monstrance inside the

chapel at the Indiana Convention Center on Nov. 17 as he took part in a recitation of the rosary.

A high school senior from the Diocese of Erie, Pa., Abraham was among a group that took part in praying a rosary led by members of various religious orders. Like many others there, he made it a point to include prayers to the Blessed Mother during his time at NCYC.

"The rosary is very important to me to ask for the intercession of our Mother Mary, and to truly honor her, and to pray," Abraham said. "Praying is the biggest thing that we can do, to communicate with God, to communicate with Mary, to communicate with all the saints. It's a huge thing."

While Abraham admitted up to that point he did not have any favorite NCYC moment, he said being part of a group praying the rosary together "was truly amazing."

"It's been a little while since I've done a group rosary that big, and it's always great to just be in the same moment as everybody else, doing the same prayer."

When he attends Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pa., next fall, Abraham said he plans to double major in political science and philosophy, then God willing, transition to a seminary to begin formation for the priesthood.

"I know this [NCYC] experience will truly light my faith on fire again, even though it has already been on fire," he said. "It will be further engulfed in flames, even brighter, better than ever."

Abraham said he has always felt called to teach. But as he has prayed more and more on his faith journey, he

has slowly realized he is "meant to teach the word of God."

"It's become an overwhelming feeling upon me, that that's my call, to teach the word of God, to spread the love of God to everybody, to bring people closer to God."

Sister Emily Beata, a member of the Daughters of St. Paul, led the first decade of the sorrowful mysteries that day for vocations.

"I thought it was beautiful the number of people that came, and the variety of people, too," she said. "There were some religious there to pray with us, and a number of young people. There were also chaperones and priests who are here [attending NCYC]."

Like so many others who recited the rosary that day, Sister Emily said she and the members of her order have a special devotion to the Blessed Mother.

"For us, Mary is the model of our mission ... to give Jesus to the world through the media," she noted. "Her whole life was about giving Jesus to the world, so we look to her a lot for that, and for how to be close to Jesus."

When asked about the message she wants young people attending NCYC to take home, Sister Emily said, "It's a big, exciting weekend with a lot going on, and you're here with your family and friends. ... I really hope they take home the sense that God wants to walk with them in their daily life, that he's not separate from what they're going through, from what they're living, that he's right next to them, that he's walking with them." †



Abraham Wolf of the Diocese of Erie, Pa., prays the rosary on Nov. 17 inside the chapel at the Indiana Convention Center.

(Photo by Mike Krokos)

Teens describe NCYC as ‘amazing’—and so much more

Compiled by Natalie Hoefler

The National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) can have a deep impact on high school teens. For three days—this year on Nov. 16-18 in Indianapolis—their faith is enriched through speakers,



“It’s amazing,” said Sabrina Howard of the Diocese of Covington, Ky., shown here second from left. “There was a point where our entire diocese that came, like 275 kids and adults, were in one really tiny room where we were having Mass, and it was fantastic. We were all singing and having fun. And just the fact that everybody is here for the same thing, for our faith. It really is awesome!”



This was the second NCYC for Alexa Foxx, left, and Kaylen Snovak, both of the Diocese of Orlando, Fla. “This one was just so moving,” said Kaylen. She noted the freedom from COVID-19 restrictions in place at the last NCYC in Indianapolis in 2021. “So, it was a lot more powerful and just absolutely wonderful. My favorite moment was adoration. It was just amazing.” Kaylen said she walked away from the conference with a desire “to be fully present with the Lord and fully embrace him in my life and with others.” Alexa agreed. “I think you don’t get to fully realize the power of NCYC until you see 12,000 young people on their hands and knees crying and seeing the face of Jesus in the Eucharist,” she said. She is going home “invigorated with the Spirit, invigorated with the Lord, to bring that energy to my own parish, to pray with them more deeply, to share [with them] what I experienced here, and to keep it going.”

uplifting music, eucharistic adoration, group or quiet prayer, the opportunity for the sacrament of penance and daily Mass.

Their faith is also emboldened in witnessing and worshipping with thousands of their Catholic peers, leaving the youths encouraged by the fact that they are



Jacob Lamoureux of the Omaha, Neb., Archdiocese, was unable to speak immediately after the closing Mass on Nov. 18. But he did share with *The Criterion* earlier that day about his experience. “It really clicked for me in the talk on ‘I Believe It But I Don’t Feel It,’” said the teen, shown here second from right praying the rosary with other NCYC participants from his archdiocese on Nov. 16. “The speaker said faith isn’t about emotions. It’s about surrender. And [opening session speaker] Father [John] Kartje was talking about how faith isn’t just about what you see—it’s called faith because it’s believing in something even if you don’t see physical evidence. God has taught me that even if I don’t feel that sense of another presence with me, even if I feel like I’m just sitting there and there’s no one else in the room and I’m just all alone and wasting my time—God is telling me just to remember I’m not alone, he’s there.”

not alone in following Christ in the one true Church.

The Criterion spoke with five teenagers in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis after the closing Mass there on Nov. 18—and one youth earlier that day—about their overall NCYC experience. †

(Photos by Natalie Hoefler)



His subtle smile hides the emotion Bryan Chavez, fourth from left, of the Diocese of Raleigh, N.C., expressed when sharing his thoughts on NCYC. “Honestly, it was so amazing, just being around all these teenagers who are Catholic just like me, so I know that I’m not alone here and I know that I have everybody, not just like in my youth group, but other people out there who have the same faith as I have,” said Bryan, who sometimes feels alone in his faith at his public high school. He was especially moved by the closing Mass. “Sometimes I have trouble focusing on the Mass, but today it was just so different. I felt very emotional, and I started crying. It was honestly one of the most beautiful things I’ve experienced so far. I want to try to live out my faith more and not just keep it in my church or around my youth group.”



“This is my first NCYC, and it’s been a really life-changing experience,” said Davis Coppola of the Archdiocese of Dubuque, Iowa. “Being able to be around so many faithful Catholic people is something that I may never get to experience again. Being able to be in the small groups and talk with people, hearing people’s testimonies—it’s an amazing, amazing experience.” Davis, center, smiles with Gabriel Mattson, left, and Caleb Perkins, also of the Dubuque Archdiocese.

NCYC teens share new-found insight on what it means to be ‘fully alive’

Compiled by Natalie Hoefler

The theme of this year’s National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) was “Fully Alive.” Throughout the three-day conference in Indianapolis on Nov. 16-18, youths heard from Scripture passages and speakers on what it means to be “fully alive.” Six teens shared with *The Criterion* the knowledge they gained from this NCYC on what living fully alive means.



I’ve realized that fully alive means not just being alive when you’re feeling it, but being fully alive in all ways of your life, in all situations, knowing God is there even if you might not feel him.

—Jacob Lamoureux, St. Francis Borgia Parish, Diocese of Omaha, Neb.

(posing with Deacon Jeff Zurek, a chaperon for his group)



To be fully alive is to completely give yourself to Christ in a way where you will live your life for Christ completely.

—Olivia Murrey, St. Thomas More Parish, Mooresville, Archdiocese of Indianapolis



It means to not be scared of what others think, to be able to be yourself and to express your faith. It’s a big part of just being yourself in Christ and expressing your love for him.

—Avery Drury, Holy Family Parish, New Albany, Archdiocese of Indianapolis



Fully alive to me means no boundaries, hiding nothing from God, no phoniness, no lies, just me being completely, bearing my soul completely to my Lord.

—Alexa Foxx, Diocese of Orlando, Fla.

It means to stop living the way I’m living, which is kind of hiding in the shadows. To be myself, show my religion, be proud of who I am and who I believe in.

—Davis Coppola, Archdiocese of Dubuque, Iowa



It means to not miss an opportunity to celebrate God.

—Claire Welsh, Diocese of Great Falls-Billings, Mont. (posing with Father Samuel Spiering, a chaperone priest from the diocese)

SIMPLY CATHOLIC

Christians find unity of life in a vocation to do God's will

By Russell Shaw

(OSV News)—The state or condition called “unity of life” isn’t a virtue in itself. It can even serve bad ends. So, what’s it doing as the subject of an article on virtues for people trying to lead good lives out in the secular world? That needs explaining.

One thing that’s obvious is that a life without unity is a sorry spectacle, a kind of existential blob that lacks focus. People with this life typically flit from one activity or one relationship to another, waste time, get on others’ nerves, never accomplish much. Of such a person it’s often said, “Nice guy, but . . .”

Still, the opposite error can be even worse. The pages of history, to say nothing of everyday life, are full of people who manifest unity of life by their fanatical concentration on the pursuit of power, wealth or pleasure, regardless of the cost to themselves and others. Lots of unity there, but put to bad use.

Evidently, then, we need to know the difference between unity that’s good and unity that’s bad. An example may help.

The most moving display of unity of life I’ve personally witnessed was an incident years ago in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican. It was a cold, raw Sunday morning in February, the kind of day when most people would rather stay indoors. A small crowd had assembled in the square to wait for St. John Paul II’s weekly *Angelus* address—or, more precisely, to see whether there would be an *Angelus* that week.

The pope had recently been hospitalized for what Vatican officials described as bronchitis. His Parkinson’s disease was getting worse. Everybody knew he was a sick man in failing health. Would he brave the damp chill this particular Sunday to come to his window and speak?

The answer was yes. Promptly at noon, Pope John Paul II appeared at an open window high above the square and began. It was agonizing to hear him struggle for each syllable—each breath. As he did, I asked myself, “Is it really a good idea for him to be doing this at an open window on such a miserable day?”

In one sense, it pretty clearly wasn’t. A few days later, he was rushed to the hospital again. A tracheotomy was performed so that he could breathe. He died on April 2 at the Vatican.

As far as I can tell, that Sunday morning in February marked the beginning of the end. So, why did he do it? Why would a man in weakened health expose himself to the elements for the sake of conducting a routine ceremony?

The answer, I believe, can be found in St. John Paul II’s strong sense of personal vocation. For several years, he’d been making use of his illness—exploiting it, if you will—as a catechetical tool for showing others how a Christian should handle sickness and the approach of death.

That had become part of his special ministry as pope, and the Sunday *Angelus* was one element of it. He was determined to go on teaching, praying and giving public witness to faith just as long as he could. In light of his vocation as supreme pastor of the Church and vicar of Christ, he believed he could do no less.



Pope St. John Paul II peers out on Jan. 16, 2005, from his apartment window above St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican during his Sunday *Angelus* address. Due to his firm dedication to his personal vocation, the pontiff continued his ministry at the time despite failing health. (OSV News photo/Max Rossi, Reuters)

That was unity of life as St. John Paul II lived it.

Personal vocation was the key to it. But it’s necessary to understand that this is something vastly different from the lust for power, wealth or pleasure that drives some people.

Rooted in the commitment of faith, personal vocation embodies an individual’s determination to serve God in whatever way God is calling him or her. Several recent popes have taught that every life is a vocation. Pope St. John Paul II had his personal vocation. Each of us has his or her own. And no two personal vocations—or lives—are exactly alike.

Personal vocations are discerned—generally, with the help of a reliable spiritual advisor—through study, investigation and prayer centered on the Eucharist and the sacramental life of the Church. The discernment of the vocation is followed by a special kind of choice—a commitment—to walk the life path God intends for oneself.

Even though the discernment is sound and the commitment is sincere, living out a personal vocation is a complex, sometimes difficult task. Our inner conflicts and divisions guarantee that. St. Paul expresses the universal human plight in a famous passage in his Letter to the Romans: “I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. . . . I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. . . . I of myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh

I serve the law of sin” (Rom 7:15, 18, 25).

Fortunately, there’s a solution to that, and Paul speaks of it, too: “Hence, now there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed you from the law of sin and death” (Rom 8:1-2).

St. Augustine is another case of a divided mind and divided heart working against unity of life. Even after experiencing conversion (up to a point), this great doctor of the Church famously prayed, “Lord, make me chaste, but not just yet.”

True unity of life grounded in personal vocation comes to those

who not only would like to have it but who labor, with the help of grace, to achieve it. It is God’s gift, but given to those who desire it and choose to cooperate with it.

The calling to a personal vocation doesn’t occur only once. It’s a repeated, lifelong process. St. John Henry Newman underlined that in a homily, “Divine Calls,” on the reality of vocation: “All through our life, Christ is calling us. He called us first in baptism; but afterward also; whether we obey his voice or not, he graciously calls us still. . . . He calls us again and again, in order to justify us again and again—and again and again, and more and more, to sanctify and glorify us.”

Yet, many good people organize their lives more or less loosely around a shifting group of purposes and goals: “I’m doing this for my wife, I’m doing that for my children, I’m doing other things for the sake of my career, my parish . . .” and so forth. That isn’t wrong exactly, but it does fall a bit short of the ideal of unity of life.

In other cases, people have a high degree of unity derived from devotion to an activity requiring intense discipline together with skillful performance. That’s how it is, for instance, with professional athletes, concert musicians, strongly motivated doctors and lawyers and others. Nothing wrong with that either, yet it also is something less than the ideal.

For a serious Christian, real unity of life comes above all from the commitment of faith—the determination to make love of God and love of neighbor as part of it, the organizing principle of their lives, and to carry out that decision consistently within the framework of personal vocation.

That doesn’t mean becoming a religious fanatic. It means that everything one does—family and professional duties, friendships, along with specifically religious activities—is situated within the fundamental commitment to love and serve God and neighbor. The specifics of personal vocation then supply the form and content for living out this commitment of faith.

Several things are essential to the successful carrying on of this struggle. They include not only the continuing grace of conversion but also self-examination, prayer and spiritual direction. In the end, however, the only key to success is not our efforts but God’s healing grace.

As with everything else in Christian living, Jesus is our model of unity of life. Reading about his life in the New Testament, we are impressed by his single-minded focus on doing the Father’s will. Everything else must either be related to that or else be discarded. “My food is to do the will of the one who sent me,” Jesus says (Jn 4:34). That same determination to do the Father’s will, come what may, undergirds the unity of life of a committed Christian living in the world.

(Russell Shaw is a contributing editor of Our Sunday Visitor *Catholic news weekly*.) †



A man kneels in prayer on July 13 during a Holy Hour at St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York City. Much prayer and discernment is needed to form a unity of life around a personal vocation. (OSV News photo/ Gregory A. Shemitz)

Correction Ministries/Ed Witulski

Trusted Mentors program assists those re-entering society

The archdiocese's Corrections Ministry has learned that homeless people and those re-entering society from incarceration have a much higher success rate when they are paired with a skilled and trained mentor. We work closely



with an Indianapolis-based organization called Trusted Mentors (www.trustedmentors.org), which matches trained, volunteer mentors with at-risk adults to help them remain housed and out of prison.

This story is about Barry, who has been mentored by Dan, a volunteer mentor with Trusted Mentors. Barry was referred to Trusted Mentors from a local homeless shelter seven years ago. Dan has visited Barry every week or two since. The two of them usually go shopping for groceries during those meetings. Dan has also helped Barry manage his funds and also assisted him with two moves to different apartments.

Barry has struggled with anger issues. His referring case manager at the homeless shelter told Trusted Mentors, "Barry has little income and no family or friends. He's at risk of self-isolating and is fearful of building relationships and trust."

Barry's most recent apartment was filthy. His rent was increasing so that he likely wouldn't be able to afford it anymore. Barry had confrontations with some of his neighbors. Dan consistently talks with him about this and how he might avoid them in the future. He had tried several different approaches to help Dan avoid these conflicts to little or no avail.

Recently, however, Dan decided to see what he and Barry could do to find him an affordable, safe and friendly

apartment. During a two-month period, Dan helped him find places to investigate, followed by phone calls together to set appointments to meet with potential renters and living assistance agencies.

Dan accompanied Barry to three appointments. Barry was able to move into a nice, clean, assisted living apartment, with empathetic management and neighbors surrounding him. In addition, his monthly rent was reduced from \$600 to \$274, a significant savings that has eased his mind tremendously. It was hard work but extremely rewarding for both Dan and Barry.

Dan explained that Barry's demeanor and attitude have completely changed. He has been connecting with fellow neighbors and has attended community social events. He has also organized his apartment and is taking pride in his new environment. He recently was able to save some of his money to attend a Beach Boys concert with Dan. Recently, Dan was happy that Barry had been able to pay for lunch for them both.

Dan's consistent, long-term love and support for Barry during some tough times through the years have primarily brought about this change. It has not been easy, but Barry has told Dan that he is the "only person who has stuck with him." Those words have been reward enough for Dan, who truly has a patient, servant's heart. As Dan puts it, "It has been a labor of love for a good man."

Please consider becoming a volunteer mentor to someone who could use a friend. Call me at 317-590-6970 or go to www.trustedmentors.org for more information.

(Ed Witulski of Trusted Mentors is a member of the archdiocese's Corrections Ministry Advisory Committee and a member of

Barry was able to move into a nice, clean, assisted living apartment, with empathetic management and neighbors surrounding him.

Faith and Family/Sean Gallagher

The challenges and blessings in getting 'used to saying no'

"Get used to saying no." These are the words of St. Josemaria Escrivá, a Spanish saint who died in

1975. He was the founder of Opus Dei, an organization in the Church that promotes holiness in everyday life, especially among the laity.

This short exhortation was one of 999 spiritual maxims in St. Josemaria's



popular work *The Way*.

For such a short saying, there's a lot to reflect upon. St. Josemaria could have written, "Say no sometimes" or just "Say no." But he wrote instead, "Get used to saying no."

That presumes that it's not been a habit for us to say no, that we may find it hard to say no. We have to get used to doing it.

We're moving into a season when parents can find it especially hard to say no. Our children have worked for months on Christmas wish lists. And they certainly let us parents know about them.

We don't want to say no to them. It's easier to say yes. There's less conflict then—at least in the short term. And we want them to be happy.

But will saying yes make that so? The habits we as individuals build up in our lives, such as eating too many sweets, drinking too much beer or spending too much time online, make us feel good in the moment. But they fail in the long run to help us be truly happy.

Similarly, the yes we parents say to our children can keep them and our families from experiencing the authentic happiness and holiness that God has planned for us.

Parents can find it hard to say no to their children because of pressure they experience from many sources.

Marketers and retailers seek to persuade parents to say yes to children's requests for the latest toys and fashions. But demanding expectations seep in countless ways through the broader culture into the lives of parents, especially regarding digital devices—and smartphones in particular.

Although they've only been widely available for about 15 years, smartphones have penetrated our culture from top to bottom and side to side.

Their presence in society is so pervasive that parents might not even experience pressure in considering whether or not their children should have one. They might simply presume that their children need such a phone in order to function in society.

In my experience as a parent, I've been concerned about the downside of smartphones, but have still experienced pressure in considering whether or not to allow my children to have them.

As my wife Cindy and I have grown in our lives as parents and become more familiar with digital devices and the good and bad effects they can have on children and families, we've become more careful about their presence in our home.

We've gotten used to saying no, as difficult as it can be.

But simply saying no isn't enough for parents to lead their children to authentic happiness. If we say no to them when they ask for the latest smartphone or gaming platform, we need to offer other things for them to say yes to.

And as Catholic families, that's first and foremost found in life-giving relationships within the home, with their peers and, most importantly, with Christ, the saints, angels and the Church.

A hidden Christmas gift we might give our children, then, is to help them build up the habit of saying no to what saps life from them and saying yes to the ultimate source of life, Jesus Christ our Lord. †

Guest Column/Gina Christian

Really want to end abortion? Then heal sexual brokenness

As pro-life advocates lament Ohio's decision to enshrine abortion in its constitution, I'm reminded of a Catholic high school pro-life seminar I covered several months ago, and what it revealed about our incomplete approach to the issue.



The event brought together hundreds of students in a dreary auditorium to hear ministry leaders earnestly describe their approaches to ending abortion—the only pro-life issue on the agenda.

Some panelists extolled prayer and sidewalk counseling at abortion clinics; others stressed providing impoverished, abortion-vulnerable women with material support: housing, medical care, job training, etc. Another speaker urged the students to vote pro-life.

The teens listened politely but without enthusiasm.

Then a Sister of Life took the microphone, walked into the audience and looked around at the students. "I want to tell you what the real problem is when it comes to abortion," she said to them. "And that is, I just don't think you know how much Jesus loves you."

Suddenly, the teens were paying attention; in less than 10 seconds, that sister had hauled the pro-life issue from the mire of politics, social justice, religious infighting and sexual ideology, and placed it back where it belongs: at the feet of the Lord, in that small sacred space between Creator and creature.

Being pro-life wasn't a matter of simply marching in demonstrations, collecting donations and hosting prayer vigils, the sister said. Rather, it flowed from understanding who we are in Christ, and what God's intention is for our enfolded souls and for human sexuality.

In an era of profound sexual brokenness, Catholics desperately need to give such courageous and comprehensive witness. Without that, we cannot hope to end the scourge of abortion and every other attack on human dignity that manifests itself through the misuse of our sexuality.

The pro-life battle for hearts doesn't start at the threshold of the abortion clinic, and it doesn't end at courtrooms or state legislatures. Planned Parenthood founder (and ardent eugenicist) Margaret Sanger recognized the limitations of the law in regulating human sexual behavior. In *The Pivot of Civilization*, her 1922 manifesto for birth control, she railed against "idealists and reformers who think that by the ballot society may be led to an earthly paradise."

Everywhere, humans are struggling with deep sexual confusion and woundedness, and with deadly consequences. More than 64 million abortions have taken place in this country since the procedure was legalized in 1973. Globally, some 73 million abortions are performed each year. That's about 6 million higher than the planet's total annual deaths in 2022, and 5.1 million more than the current population of the nation of France.

Meanwhile, the pornographic industry in the U.S., which grew almost 12% from 2017-2022, rakes in more than \$1.1 billion in annual revenue. Some 4.5 million people worldwide, many of them children, are exploited by sex traffickers. An estimated 736 million women (almost one in three) across the globe have experienced sexual violence, most commonly due to a spouse or intimate partner—and that total does not include those who have been subjected to sexual harassment. In the U.S., 1.6 million people ages 13 and older consider themselves as transgender; almost one in five are ages 13 to 17.

None of that data mirrors what God had in mind when he gifted us with human sexuality. As Catholics, our faith challenges us to know and to do better, for ourselves and for humankind.

Before we can say we are truly pro-life, we need to undertake, both individually and collectively, a thorough sexual examen, and ponder the ways we have (or haven't) stewarded our sexuality, regardless of our state in life.

We need to teach more effectively about chastity, which derives from the cardinal virtue of temperance and which enables us to attain an inner unity of body and soul.

We need to accompany our youths as they develop sexually, and not forfeit that task to Instagram.

We need to reach out to the single and the divorced and to those who are confused about their sexuality, rather than leaving them to figure things out via TikTok.

We need to minister to those who have been sexually abused (whether by our own clergy or by others) and work to recognize potential abusers before they become offenders.

Mostly, as a society, we need to grow up, stop treating our gift of sexuality like a ramshackle playground and look at it from a holistic, "body, mind and spirit"—dare I say "trinitarian"—perspective. We must demonstrate a little humility before our Maker, that we might stand tall in the fullness of our humanity, living out our dignity as sons and daughters of God—and ensuring that others can do the same.

(Gina Christian is a national reporter for OSV News. Follow her on X, formerly Twitter, at @GinaJesseReina.) †

In an era of profound sexual brokenness, Catholics desperately need to give such courageous and comprehensive witness. Without that, we cannot hope to end the scourge of abortion.

Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe/

Msgr. Owen F. Campion

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, November 26, 2023

- Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17
- 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28
- Matthew 25:31-46

This weekend, the Church concludes its liturgical year of 2023. Next week, a new year will begin with the First Sunday of Advent. The Church closes the year with an excited and fervent proclamation of Christ as the king of the universe.

The first reading comes from the ancient Book of Ezekiel. In this reading, God speaks in the first person, promising protection of the flock—in other words, the people of God. He is the shepherd, seeking the lost, caring for the injured, rescuing the imperiled. God will also distinguish between the sheep and others who assume other identities because of their unfaithfulness.

St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians provides the second reading. This selection is a proclamation of the resurrection and of the role of the Lord as Redeemer of humanity. He is the risen Lord, the first of those who will rise to everlasting life. Those who will follow Jesus in being raised from the dead are "those who belong" to Christ, in other words, those who have admitted God, through Jesus, into their lives and who have received from the Lord the gift of grace, eternal life and strength (1 Cor 15:23).

Paul frankly admits that there are forces in the world hostile to God. These forces cannot be dismissed as insignificant or timid. However, they are by no means omnipotent. In and through Jesus, the power and life of God will endure. God will triumph over all evil. No one bound to God should fear the powers of evil, although all must resist them.

For its final reading on this great feast, the Church offers a passage from St. Matthew's Gospel. It is a glance forward, to the day when Jesus will return in majesty and glory.

The reading repeats the description given in Ezekiel. God, the shepherd, separates the sheep from the goats, the

good from the unfaithful. In this reading from Matthew, Jesus promises a final judgment to separate the faithful from the sinful.

In this reading, the Lord defines who will be judged as faithful, those who love God completely, without question. The faithful will not be those who only give lip-service to their belief in God, but those who, in the model of Jesus, give themselves totally to the will of God.

Reflection

Although Americans cannot understand modern monarchies, they are obsessed with stories of British royalty, some edifying, some not. But Britain is not the only monarchy in the world today. The Netherlands is happy to be a monarchy.

A monarch holds a country together, is its defender and example.

Germany ruthlessly overran Holland in the Second World War. For the Dutch, the great heroine of that fearful time was Queen Wilhelmina, great-grandmother of the present King Willem-Alexander. Defying Hitler, she risked everything to champion her people.

Wilhelmina came to the throne as a young girl, succeeding her father. Under Dutch law, her mother, the widowed Queen Emma, was regent until Wilhelmina was an adult.

Emma wanted to rear Wilhelmina in conditions as ordinary and with as little fanfare as possible. But when thousands of cheering Dutch citizens appeared before the palace on a national holiday, demanding to see Wilhelmina, her mother had to oblige. The regent led the little queen onto the balcony, and the crowd was ecstatic.

Thrilled by the sight, knowing that she was queen of The Netherlands, Wilhelmina said, "Mommy, do all these people belong to me?" Queen Emma replied, "No, dear. You belong to them."

Christ the King, forever young in the resurrection, belongs to us. He died for us, our brother, our Redeemer, the Son of God, the Lord of life, who gives us strength, mercy and guidance. He never forsakes us. †

Daily Readings

Monday, November 27
Daniel 1:1-6, 8-20
(Response) Daniel 3:52-56
Luke 21:1-4

Tuesday, November 28
Daniel 2:31-45
(Response) Daniel 3:57-61
Luke 21:5-11

Wednesday, November 29
Daniel 5:1-6, 13-14, 16-17, 23-28
(Response) Daniel 3:62-67
Luke 21:12-19

Thursday, November 30
St. Andrew, Apostle
Romans 10:9-18
Psalm 19:8-11
Matthew 4:18-22

Friday, December 1
Daniel 7:2-14
(Response) Daniel 3:75-81
Luke 21:29-33

Saturday, December 2
Daniel 7:15-27
(Response) Daniel 3:82-87
Luke 21:34-36

Sunday, December 3
First Sunday of Advent
Isaiah 63:16b-17, 19b; 64:2-7
Psalm 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19
1 Corinthians 1:3-9
Mark 13:33-37

Question Corner/Jenna Marie Cooper

Church requires precious metals to be used in vessels used at Mass

My parish recently returned to Communion under the second species. An extraordinary minister of holy



Communion holds one cup and one cloth and does one wipe after each serve. Most people are still not receiving it for fear of COVID or other illnesses.

Why can't the Church simply use disposable plastic cups with the wine already in it? The priest could say the same blessing and an extraordinary minister of holy Communion could still distribute, but holding a tray instead of a cup. The empty cup could be disposed of with the passing of germs reduced to almost nothing. (Indiana)

What you describe—with the elements of communion pre-portioned in individual disposable packaging—is not uncommon in many non-Catholic Christian communities. However, there are several reasons why this would be inappropriate for Catholic worship.

For context, we need to recall that the Catholic theology of the Eucharist is

radically different from the vast majority of Protestant understandings of holy Communion. Many Protestant communities occasionally distribute bread and wine (or even grape juice) as a way of simply recalling and remembering Jesus' last meal and the friendship he shared with his disciples.

In contrast, a core central teaching of the Catholic faith is the doctrine of the "real presence," meaning that bread and wine literally become the body and blood of Christ at Mass when the priest prays the prayer of consecration. A centuries-old theological and philosophical term for this is "transubstantiation." Because of this belief, the prayer of consecration is much

more radical and impactful than a simple blessing would be.

Because we believe that Jesus is physically, bodily present in the "sacred species" (our term for the bread and wine which have been turned into the body and blood of Christ), we have several laws and customs pertaining to the Eucharist which ensure a sufficient degree of protection and reverence for Jesus' presence in the Blessed Sacrament.

For instance, it is required that the vessels used during the Eucharist such as the ciborium, paten and chalice (the "plates" and cup) be made from worthy and suitable materials.

The "General Instruction of the *Roman Missal*" tells us that "sacred vessels should be made from precious metal. If they are made from metal that rusts or from a metal less precious than gold, they should generally be gilded on the inside" (#328). Clearly, this directive is incompatible with the use of disposable communion cups.

Additionally, during the Mass the priest must take care that every particle of the host and every last drop of the precious blood are reverently consumed. This is why, at the end of Communion, the priest "purifies" the chalice, rinsing it with water that he then drinks himself. Even if disposable materials were allowed, there would be no way to be sure that absolutely all of the precious blood was actually consumed.

As a result, it would be impossible not to have some of the precious blood wind up in the trash. This would be at least *de facto* sacrilege.

It is certainly understandable that some Catholics might long for the fuller symbolic value of receiving Communion under both kinds, while still having legitimate concerns about germs and the spread of illness. Still, it's good to keep in mind that few things worth doing are ever 100% risk-free. Most things in this life involve some sort of tradeoff of risks versus benefits.

Catholics who piously desire to receive the precious blood should prayerfully consider whether, in light of their own personal health status and spiritual needs, it might make sense for them in their own circumstances to brave the possibility of catching a bug in order to receive from the chalice.

In any case, we should always remember that in receiving the Eucharist under only one species, bread or wine, we nevertheless receive the entirety of Christ.

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

My Journey to God

God Will Provide

By John DeSantis

God created the universe
And everything we see
All the creatures on Earth
And the ones in the sea
He invites everyone to come
To his table of plenty
Where he bestows gifts
That are varied and many
God always provides
For everything that we need
Things that he deems necessary
For us to succeed
Sometime we pray for
Other things we desire
But God in his wisdom
Doesn't allow us to acquire
If we want things based
Only on our human nature
Our wants may be denied
By our all-knowing Savior
God invites us all
To the bountiful feast at his table
If we partake of his feast
Our salvation is attainable



(John DeSantis is a member of St. Pius X Parish in Indianapolis. Photo: Arek Szura of Philadelphia kneels before a crucifix at St. Adalbert Church in Philadelphia, accompanied by his 7-year-old son Adrian and 10-year-old daughter Alexandra on April 8. Szura traveled to the church crawling on his hands and knees in thanksgiving for Adrian's recovery from chemotherapy-related cardiac arrest in October 2022.) (OSV News photo/courtesy Izabela Szura)

Day, weekend passes now options for Eucharistic Congress

(OSV News)—Attendees of the National Eucharistic Congress on July 17-21, 2024, in Indianapolis now have the option of purchasing single-day and weekend passes in order to make attendance more affordable and flexible, the bishop overseeing the congress announced on Nov. 15.

Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) fall plenary assembly in Baltimore, Bishop Andrew H. Cozzens of Crookston, Minn., also said scholarship funds may help ease the costs for some attendees, via the bishops' Solidarity Fund.



"We have heard well the concerns of some, that they find the length or the cost [of the congress] difficult, and we've worked hard over the last year to find ways to make it affordable and accessible, so that it can be a gathering of the whole Church, so that we can literally open wide

the doors to Christ for people to come," Bishop Cozzens, chairman of the National Eucharistic Congress Inc. (NEC) and chairman of the USCCB Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis, told the assembly of bishops.

Standard passes for the five-day congress are \$299-\$375 for adults and

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Advent penance services are scheduled at parishes throughout the archdiocese

Parishes throughout the archdiocese have scheduled communal penance services for Advent. The following is a list of services that have been reported to *The Criterion*.

Batesville Deanery

Dec. 1, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. at All Saints, St. Martin Campus, Dearborn County
 Dec. 5, 7 p.m. at St. Mary, Greensburg
 Dec. 6, 6:30 p.m. at St. Vincent de Paul, Shelby County
 Dec. 12, 6:30 p.m. at St. Catherine of Siena, St. John the Evangelist Campus
 Dec. 12, 6:30-7:30 p.m. at St. Michael, Brookville
 Dec. 13, 6-8 p.m. at Immaculate Conception, Millhousen
 Dec. 14, 7 p.m. at St. Louis, Batesville
 Dec. 14, 7 p.m. at Holy Family, Oldenburg
 Dec. 15, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. at St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Aurora
 Dec. 15, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. at St. Joseph, Shelbyville
 Dec. 19, 6:30-7:30 p.m. at St. Michael, Brookville
 Dec. 20, 6-8 p.m. at St. John the Baptist, Osgood
Additionally, recurring opportunities for reconciliation in the Batesville Deanery are as follows:
 Weekends of Dec. 9-10, 16-17 and 23-24 before and after weekend Masses at St. Maurice, Napoleon

Bloomington Deanery

Dec. 6, 6 p.m. for St. Charles Borromeo, St. John the Apostle and St. Paul Catholic Center, Bloomington, at St. Paul Catholic Center
 Dec. 12, 6 p.m. at St. Martin of Tours, Martinsville

Dec. 12, 6:30 p.m. at St. Vincent de Paul, Bedford
 Dec. 13, 6:30 p.m. at St. Jude the Apostle, Spencer
 Dec. 14, 7 p.m. at St. Agnes, Nashville

Connersville Deanery

Dec. 1, 5:30 p.m. at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Holy Family Church, Richmond
 Dec. 13, 6:30 p.m. at St. Gabriel, Connersville
 Dec. 14, 6 p.m. at St. Mary, Rushville

Indianapolis East Deanery

Dec. 11, 9 a.m.-7 p.m. at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., no appointment needed

Indianapolis North Deanery

Dec. 17, 2 p.m. at St. Thomas Aquinas
 Dec. 18, 7 p.m. at St. Matthew the Apostle
 Dec. 19, 7 p.m. at St. Lawrence

Indianapolis South Deanery

Dec. 5, 5-6 p.m. for St. Ann and St. Joseph (West Deanery) at St. Ann
 Dec. 6, 7 p.m. for St. Jude, Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ and St. Mark the Apostle at St. Jude
 Dec. 13, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. at Our Lady of the Greenwood, Greenwood
 Dec. 14, 6:30 p.m. for Holy Name of Jesus, Beech Grove, and Good Shepherd at Holy Name of Jesus
 Dec. 16, 8:30-10 a.m. at SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi, Greenwood

Indianapolis West Deanery

Dec. 5, 5-6 p.m. at St. Ann (South Deanery) and St. Joseph at St. Ann

New Albany Deanery

Dec. 5, 6:30 p.m. at St. Michael, Bradford
 Dec. 5, 7 p.m. at St. Mary, Lanesville
 Dec. 14, 7 p.m. at Our Lady of Perpetual Help, New Albany
 Dec. 15, 6:30 p.m. at St. Anthony of Padua, Clarksville
 Dec. 15, 6:30 p.m. at St. John Paul II, Sellersburg
 Dec. 15, 7 p.m. at St. Mary-of-the-Knobs, Floyd County
 Dec. 19, 6:30 p.m. at St. John the Baptist, Starlight
 Dec. 20, 7 p.m. at St. Michael, Charlestown (English and Spanish)
 Dec. 21, 6:30 p.m. at St. Francis Xavier, Henryville

Seymour Deanery

Dec. 14, 6-8 p.m. at Prince of Peace, Madison
 Dec. 20, 6:30-8:30 p.m. at St. Ambrose, Seymour

Tell City Deanery

Dec. 10, 2 p.m. CT at St. Paul, Tell City

Terre Haute Deanery

Dec. 5, 7 p.m. at St. Benedict, Terre Haute
Recurring opportunities for reconciliation in the Terre Haute Deanery are as follows:
 Thursdays 6:30-8:30 p.m. and Saturdays 3:30-5 p.m. at St. Joseph University. †



Please give to those who have given a lifetime.

Retirement Fund for Religious

Elderly religious need your help.

Like those pictured, nearly 25,000 senior sisters, brothers and religious order priests have dedicated their lives to serving others through praying for us, ministering to us, educating the young, caring for those who are sick and more—most for little or no pay, leaving a profound shortage in retirement savings. Your donation will make a real difference by providing essential care, medicine and other necessities. Please give generously.

Please donate at your local parish

December 9-10 or by mail at:

Archdiocese of Indianapolis
 Mission Office
 1400 North Meridian Street
 Indianapolis IN 46202

Make check payable to Mission Office with Religious Retirement on the memo line.

retiredreligious.org

Visit retiredreligious.org/2023photos to meet the religious pictured.
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Investing with Faith/Jolinda Moore

Consider available options for your stress-free, year-end giving

Most of us wish we had more time to savor the holidays with family and friends. We hope to be busy in all the right ways, but without feeling stressed or overwhelmed. Even more, we want the words of the Christmas carols to ring true for us without having to choose between “Joy to the World”



and “All is calm, all is bright.” The good news is that we can have the holidays both ways—especially if we check off a few of our end-of-the-year boxes before the chaos gets into full swing. While we may not be able to wrangle everything under our control, there are some things we can manage in advance and with plenty of time to spare. Year-end giving is a perfect example.

Sooner is always better than later
Planning is the key to finding an effective strategy for coordinating tax benefits with a commitment to charitable giving. That why it’s beneficial to

anticipate the end of the year now and begin fine-tuning your adjustments to changing tax laws and shifting economic realities. Completing a gift by Dec. 31 can reduce taxable income or minimize tax liability in other significant ways. Remember, however, gifts must be postmarked by Dec. 31, 2023, in order to count for this year. And the Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center in Indianapolis will be closed from Dec. 22, 2023, through Jan. 1, 2024.

Find your best options for giving
Planning a charitable gift is not a one-size-fits-all proposition. Determining the right amount to give is only part of the equation. Finding the right vehicle is equally important, and there are more ways to give than there are lords a-leaping or maids a-milking. —Cash is the simplest and most popular form of charitable gift. —Appreciated stock gifts or mutual fund shares can bring even greater tax savings. —Long-term gifts can often be put into place before the end of the year. Including the mission of the Church here

in central and southern Indiana in your will is one way to ensure that everyone will have a share in the hope Christ brings to the world. It is also possible to name the archdiocesan Catholic Community Foundation (CCF) as a beneficiary of a living trust, life insurance policy, or retirement account which may pose tax problems for loved ones.

Additional tips to consider
—**Check or credit card:** A check mailed to us and postmarked by Dec. 31 can be deducted this year, even if we don’t cash it until early 2024. A gift by credit card is deductible in the year the charge is made. —**Pledges and letters of intent:** Pledges to charity are deducted in the year the pledge is satisfied. —**Stock:** A gift of stock can be made by electronic transfer. Ownership is then registered to the charity. —**Appreciated property:** Deduct the full value of what you give but never pay capital gains. —**Loss property:** Consider selling property that would generate a tax-deductible loss and donating the proceeds. Then, deduct the loss and the charitable gift.

—**Sponsored gifts:** If your employer offers to match your charitable gift, you can have even more impact. —**And a partridge in a pear tree:** Donors who wish to give stock, or make a gift from their IRA or donor-advised funds, must complete forms that notify of their impending gift and how to carry through their intentions. These forms can be found on the top right corner of the CCF website at www.archindy.org/CCF. Create the space you need for a happy and holy Christmas season. Avoid the rush and reach out to the Catholic Community Foundation now at 317-236-1482 or ccf@archindy.org.

(Jolinda Moore is executive director of the archdiocesan Office of Stewardship and Development and the Catholic Community Foundation [CCF]. Tax or legal information provided herein is not intended as tax or legal advice. Always consult with your legal, tax or financial advisors before implementing any gift plan. If you would like to learn more about including your parish in your estate plans, please contact us any time. We exist to exclusively serve you and your parish in planned giving.) †

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

\$99 for children ages 2-18 traveling with their family. The cost covers admission for congress events at Lucas Oil Stadium, which include general sessions, breakout sessions, liturgies, the vendor hall and unique congress tracks. The cost does not include housing, transportation or meals related to the congress.

Registration is open for standard passes, which also include access to premium seating and digital access to congress content.

The single-day passes will range from \$49-\$95 depending on the day, and weekend passes will be \$125. Registration for day and weekend passes will open in January. A limited number of discounted single-day passes will be available for early registrants.

The congress’ Solidarity Fund was created by the bishops this summer to provide scholarships covering the congress’ full registration cost for attendees who express financial need, and it now includes more than \$750,000, contributed by dioceses, private donors and foundations. NEC’s executive team also is working to identify affordable housing in and around Indianapolis for attendees.

“The biggest challenge that we’ve had has been the availability of housing in Indianapolis,” Bishop Cozzens told the bishops. “A higher-than-anticipated

early demand on hotels for the congress, coupled with a lower-than-expected inventory from the early estimates of the hotel community in Indianapolis have created a crunch on available housing for us.”

However, the challenge also is an opportunity, he said, because “one of the things we want to do is to allow the Church to welcome the Church, and to make the congress a true pilgrimage.”

The congress’ team members are working to identify accommodations at local college dormitories, parishes, schools and retreat centers, he said.

Organizers have said they expect the event to draw tens of thousands of Catholics to Indianapolis.

The National Eucharistic Congress is the pinnacle of the National Eucharistic Revival, a three-year initiative the USCCB launched in 2022 to renew and strengthen Catholics’ understanding of and love for Jesus in the Eucharist. The revival’s first year focused on diocesan leadership. Its second year, now underway, focuses on parish life, with its final year focused on missionary discipleship. The revival’s website, eucharisticrevival.org, contains a number of multimedia resources that support the revival’s aims.

The revival includes a National Eucharistic Pilgrimage, which will include pilgrims walking across the country with the Eucharist along four

designated pilgrimage routes, converging in Indianapolis for the congress. The pilgrimage routes begin in Brownsville, Texas; New Haven, Conn.; northern Minnesota; and San Francisco, on May 17-19, the weekend of Pentecost. Catholics are invited to join the routes’ “perpetual pilgrims”—young adult Catholics walking the entire route—for daily Mass and processions, or join the “Eucharistic caravans” for hours or days.

“We expect hundreds of thousands of people to join some portion of this

pilgrimage, and we’re delighted to announce that the Apostolic Penitentiary will be issuing a decree granting a plenary indulgence to anyone who participates in one of the four legs of the pilgrimage, as well as those who participate in the National Eucharistic Congress,” Bishop Cozzens said.

The National Eucharistic Congress website, www.eucharisticcongress.org, also was updated on Nov. 15, with a complete schedule expected to be released in January. †

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Employment

Administrative Assistant
St. Pius X Catholic Church
7200 Sarto Drive, Indianapolis, IN 46240
ksweeney@spxparish.org

St. Pius X is looking for a full-time Administrative Assistant to join the parish staff. As the point of “first contact,” this position is vital to the integrity and professionalism of the Parish Offices. It is critical that this position supports the goal of ensuring efficient operation of the Parish Offices. It is also important that this employee understands and supports the Mission and purpose of the Roman Catholic Church and St. Pius X Parish and be able to participate fully in the practice of the Roman Catholic Faith.

The basic job functions include daily opening and closing of parish administration office. Receiving and placing telephone calls. Greeting guests and parishioners to the parish office. This person should have excellent people and organizational skills with the ability to multi-task: Handle a high volume of telephone calls with courtesy, speed, accuracy and patience. Some other tasks include:

- Work independently with minimal supervision. Self-motivated, and a sense of discretion.
- Computer proficiency (MS Office —Word, Excel and Outlook).
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills.
- Maintains office record filing system.
- Able to maintain a friendly and professional presence in person, on telephone, email and written correspondence.
- This position will need to be flexible as new tasks come up. Perform auxiliary duties for the parish as requested.

For immediate consideration email: parish@spxparish.org.

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