Local sisters offer challenge to end hunger for Catholic Sisters Week

Laura Keener
Editor

As part of Catholic Sisters Week, March 8 – 12, the Benedictine Sisters of St. Walburg Monastery, Notre Dame Sisters U.S.A. and Sisters of Divine Providence, Melbourne, are teaming up to bring awareness to food insecurity and a challenge to end hunger. They are inviting everyone to join them.

The three religious communities are challenging its members, parishes and friends to make a donation to end hunger or to share their generosity and support by posting on social media as a way to honor Catholic Sisters Week. The monetary donation can be made to any food bank, meal center, food pantry or organization that serves the hungry.

“We don’t want to spotlight any particular organization because we would then lose out on so many others,” said Divine Providence Sister Barbara Rebe, provincial superior. “We just want to be aware of the great hunger and food insecurity that so many people in the world experience, but also in the U.S. Right now, the need seems overwhelming when you hear the news and see people in long lines to get food.”

While the sisters are not designating any particular organization, they are certainly supportive of the local service agencies and food pantries sisters are presently or formerly involved. Some of those include Catholic Charities, Diocese of Covington’s Parish Kitchen, Covington; Mary Rose Mission, Florence; Holy Spirit Outreach, Newport; and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Northern Kentucky.

This year, Governor Andy Beshear signed a proclamation declaring Jan. 28, 2021 “Hunger Free Day” in Kentucky. During the signing, he said 600,000 Kentuckians rely on food from charitable organizations. Additionally, he said that one in six Kentucky households is food insecure, and the pandemic has dramatically increased food insecurity. “Some in Kentucky also have the highest rate of food insecurity among adults ages 50 to 59,” he said.

“Food insecurity is more rampant than people would believe,” said Father Marc Zengel, executive director of Catholic Charities, Sister Joan began volunteering at the Parish Kitchen when she could have hands on experience of the ministry; being with the guests was a part of the ministry she loved.

The Mary Rose Mission serves a hot dinner to anyone who shows up at its kitchen. Typically the Mission offers a sit-down dinner three times a week. That has changed to drive through service during the pandemic. Mrs. Carris said that it is good that the no-contact service has allowed them to continue its ministry but volunteers and guests are missing the social interaction. Guests are especially missing Benedictine Sister Andrea Collippy, Sister Andrea and two other Benedictine Sisters would regularly volunteer but had to suspend their activities when the pandemic struck. Sister Andrea was in charge of “working the exit” and would collect prayer intentions from the guests.

“Everybody loved her. There would be a line all the way through the dining room waiting to talk to her,” Mrs. Carris said. “It was such an honor to have the sisters here, their presence adds a holy- ness to the service that wouldn’t be there otherwise.”

As Karen Zengel, executive director, finished this year’s annual report for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Northern Kentucky, she noticed what she describes as “a modern day miracle.” In 2020, the Society provided $5,000 more in groceries than the previous year. The large spike was due to the first months of the pandemic and the lockdown. During that time people were uncertain about the economy and their personal income. Wisely, they began to hold on to any cash they had on hand for use to pay mortgages, rent and utilities and began seeking assistance for food.

“We had no idea how we were going to provide for the demand and God provided for us. It was terrible and awesome at the same time,” Mrs. Zengel said. “Our Vincentians are an awesome, committ- ed group of people who just continued to answer the call when peo- ple reached out in need.”

Notre Dame Sister Judith Niewahner fills an integral role in the Society’s food outreach. She is the Conference Relations Manager and Food Pantry Manager, overseeing the Society’s 26 food pantries. Two pantries are operated by the diocesan council with stores locat- ed in Erlanger and Florence. A third SVDP Food Pantry is sched- uled to open March 7 in Cold Spring. The other 24 food pantries are operated at parishes by parish conferences.

“Having Sister Judith on the team, I feel like she is this beacon of hope all the time,” said Mrs. Zengel. “She’s always up for a chal- lenge and an exciting project. She figures out how to make things happen. She’s a shining example of how we can do all things with God.”

Sister Judith and Notre Dame Sister Michelyn Beckorich also volunteer at their parish food pantry, Holy Spirit Outreach, Newport. The small, neighborhood pantry served 1,400 people since last April, said Msgr. William Cleves, pastor. People can also get assistance for rent and utilities if they register at the center.

“Everyone who comes in those tiny little bags of groceries, we never ask for money or donations,” Msgr. Cleves said. Instead, the pantry recovers food from govern- ment agencies and is funded by the generosity of Holy Spirit parish- ioners. In addition to monetary donations, each month, parish- ioners are asked to provide a spe- cific, needed pantry item. This month it’s Mac ‘n Cheese. During the summer, the parish cultivates a community garden located promi- nently on the space between the church and the parish center.

“We have a very generous parish; we have a great little com- munity here,” Msgr. Cleves said. At the Parish Kitchen, Maria Meyer, manager, said that not only they have seen an increase in the number of guests — about 200 lunches per day this year, versus 150 lunches last year — but the demographics have also changed.

The Parish Kitchen moved from its his- toric location on Pike Street to a more prominent location on Madison Ave, Covington. Before the move, the guests of the Parish Kitchen were predominately male. And while they still see many familiar faces, now, more women and families are being served. It’s difficult, Ms. Meyer said, to gauge whether or not the changes are due to the pandemic or the location change.

Since last March, due to the pandemic, the Parish Kitchen has had to transition from sit-down lunches to grab and go meals. But another challenge — the move nor the virus — has shut down the Parish Kitchen down.

“We haven’t missed a day and we have been able to keep our guests, volunteers and staff safe through the pandemic,” Ms. Meyer said.

Before the pandemic hit, Divine Providence Sister Joan Boberg regularly volunteered at the Parish Kitchen. In 1987, when she was executive director of Catholic Charities, Sister Joan began volun- teering there once a month. In a 2013 interview for the “Breaking Bread” newsletter, Sister Joan said she began volunteering so that she could have hands on experience of the ministry; being with the guests was a part of the ministry she loved.

Ms. Meyer understands and misses that connection, noting that it is harder to connect with people when they are not being served in the dining room. She said, talking about life’s struggles and suc- cesses is a big part of what the Parish Kitchen offers its guests, not- ing the economic diversity of the people who experience hunger.

“Not all of our guests are homeless, some have a place to stay but still struggle to make ends meet. Some people have a job and some have a car but they are food insecure,” she said.

“The pandemic has left a cloud of depression because it’s harder to connect with people. At the Parish Kitchen, we see people first, not second. Hearing about what’s going on in their life is a big part of our mission that we are missing.”

To join the Catholic Sisters Week challenge to end hunger follow the Sisters on Facebook: CDPKentucky and SNDKy.
Don’t resist the temptation — follow Jesus into the desert

David Cooley
Manager Contributor

Lent is such a powerful time and if we open ourselves up to the graces of God it can be a time of great spiritual enrichment. Lent is so many things, but the Catechism of the Catholic Church offers us a concise reflection: “By the solemnity of days of penance the Church unites herself each year to the mystery of Jesus in the desert.” (CCC, 546)

The mystery of Jesus in the desert is just that — a mystery — but that doesn’t mean revelation hasn’t given us a lot to ponder while reading over these intriguing passages. What is the desert first of all? More to the point, what is it not? Well, it’s not the Garden of Eden!

If Eden was a walled, beautiful garden where all your needs were met and the chaos of the wilderness was kept at bay, then the desert is its direct opposite. In his book, “Jesus of Nazareth,” Pope Benedict XVI wrote that by going into the desert Jesus was not just fleeing the perils desert- ting mankind … (p. 36).

Jesus had gone to the Jordan to be baptized by John in order to enter into solidarity with us sinners. The first thing the Holy Spirit does is lead him into the desert “to be tempted by the devil” (Matt 4:1). What this means is that the Lord subjected himself to all the risks and threats of human existence (cf. Heb 4:15). Ultimately, Jesus came to battle with the forces of evil and so, in the midst of his solitude, he is met by the prince of evil himself.

That, before we get to the temptations of Christ, is a good note to start with — the temptations of going to the desert are not all negative. We are meant to follow Jesus wherever he goes and if he goes into the desert, then we should too. Going to a desolate land, for us, means getting rid of all the noise and distractions that often come between us and God. We must rid our lives of clutter; focus on what is truly important, living simply enough so that we can hear God’s voice and find joy. Sin has a lot of negative consequences — one of the minor ones is that it complicates everything in our lives and leaves us trying to hide from God. Going into the desert is all about not hiding from what scares us and seeking God. With paradise lost, it is a place of reconciliation and healing.

Often times, when we face temptation it is something that comes from within. Satan had to approach our Lord from the outside and because of this Scripture is able to give us a glimpse of Jesus’ struggle to stand against all the distortions of his mission. Remember that these temptations and the devil himself are with Jesus every step of the way to Calvary. Pope Benedict points out that the story of the temptations is an “anticipation that condenses into a single expression the struggle that he endured at every step of his mission.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, p. 27).

In his book, “Life of Christ.” Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen calls the temptations of Jesus “three short cuts from the Cross.” It is important to recognize the difference between temptation and sin. Since Jesus had a human nature he had to go through the human experience of withstanding temptation, but being tempted is not the same as giving into temptation. Archbishop Sheen wrote, “The temptations were meant to divert our Lord from his task of salvation through sacrifice. Instead of the Cross as a means of winning souls of men, Satan suggested three short cuts to popularity: an economic one, another based on miracles, and a third, which was political.” (“Life of Christ,” p. 65)

With the first temptation (Matt 4:3), Satan challenges Jesus to turn stones into bread. On the one hand, we can reflect on this as a temptation toward instant physical gratification. The virtue, then, we learn from Jesus’ response is the importance of self-sacrifice. However, both Pope Benedict XVI and Archbishop Sheen go further with their interpretation and they see it as a temptation for Jesus to become the savior of the world by ending hunger “If you solve the people’s physical, material needs they will be great strength to the world as the reality of saving power. In power of his resurrection presupposes the Cross, his death. The earthly kingdoms that Satan was able to put before our Lord will all fall away, but the glory of Christ — the humble, self-sacrificing glory of his love — will never pass away.

That first temptation reminds us that the worship of false idols; the worship of power, politics and the idea that man can create a perfect world without God, is a dangerous proposition that inevitably leads to a tragic downfall.

To worship Satan, to serve Satan, means you are a slave to sin. To worship God, to serve God, is true freedom. Jesus, for a third time, quotes Deuteronomy: “You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.” (Matt 4:10; Deut 6:13).

After his 40 days in the desert, when he appeared to be in a weakened state, Satan tried to get him to avoid the Cross and search for “a better way” Christ is always the model we should follow. Those temptations didn’t make Jesus weaker, they made him stronger. If we follow Jesus into the desert these 40 days of Lent will help us prepare to battle the forces of evil once and for all.

David Cooley is co-director and office manager of the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization in the Diocese of Covington.

Notre Dame Academy president resigns for new role with SND USA

Notre Dame Academy (NDA) Board of Directors announced Wednesday, Feb. 24, Dr. Laura Koehl had resigned from her position as President of Notre Dame Academy to take on a new role as Executive Director of the SND National Sponsorship and Network Office and Chief Operating Officer of the National Ministry Corporation.

Dr. Koehl will continue to serve as President of Notre Dame Academy assuming her new position with SND USA on Sept. 1, 2021. At that date, she will serve as NDA President Emerita to provide continuity to the institution if a new president has not yet been named and to assist in the transition when a new president is hired.

Dr. Koehl, a 1979 ND graduate, has served in many capacities at the Academy since coming to Notre Dame Academy in 2006. She began as a science teacher and later served as Dean of Students and Principal from 2010-2015. Dr. Koehl became NDAs first lay President in 2014 and has served in that capacity since that time.

The Board is extremely grateful for Dr. Koehl’s service and the direction she has provided at Notre Dame Academy, said NDA Board Chair Amy Quinn Dye. “Throughout her 15-year tenure at Notre Dame Academy, Dr. Koehl has provided exemplary leadership to our high school and our community,” Ms. Quinn said. “She conveys the mission of NDA and the charism of the Sisters of Notre Dame in all she does. She will be greatly missed by our institution.”

The NDA Board of Directors will lead the process to search for a new President of NDA.

Dr. Koehl will join SND USA in her new role less than a year after the Sisters of Notre Dame united their four North American provinces — located in Covington, Ky., Thousand Oaks, Cal., Chardon, Ohio, and Toledo, Ohio — into a national organization on July 5, 2020. As the Executive Director of the SND National Sponsorship and Network Office, Dr. Koehl will take a lead- ership role in supporting the Catholic identity and mission integration and effectiveness of SND sponsored ministries including education, health care and elder care.

The creation of this new office organization allows the congregation’s more than 500 sisters nationwide to combine resources and personnel to focus on its three broad ministry initiatives:

— The education and healthcare institutions founded by the sisters in its four geographic provinces;
— Ministries serving new needs of people on margins;
— Young adult and vocation ministries

Bishop Roger Foy offered his congratulations to Dr. Koehl on the new appointment and gratitude for her commitment to Catholic school education.

“I congratulate Dr. Koehl on her new appointment for the Sisters of Notre Dame U.S.A.”, said Bishop Roger Foy.

“From the last 15 years she has faithfully served Notre Dame Academy with distinction. I certainly wish her the best and promise her a place in my prayers.”

Notre Dame Academy president resigns for new role with SND USA
Cardinal prays on CNN program marking 500,000 COVID-19 deaths in U.S.

Richard Szczepanski

Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — During a Feb. 22 evening program on CNN, Washington Cardinal Wilton D. Gregory offered a prayer for those who have died from COVID-19 asking God to “grant eternal peace to all our sisters and brothers lost to this disease.”

“May we now open our hearts to recall those who have died from the coronavirus,” Cardinal Gregory prayed. “Strengthen those families and friends who remain behind, to comfort one another and to wipe the tears from our eyes. May each one find peace and let the memory of our loved ones itself be a blessing.”

The cardinal called it “a great honor and privilege” to offer the prayer at the invitation of Jake Tapper, CNN anchor and chief Washington correspondent on the program “We Remember 500,000: A National Memorial Service for Covid-19.”

It commemorated the milestone reached Feb. 22 when the United States surpassed 500,000 deaths due to the coronavirus. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as of March 5, over 500,000 Americans have been infected by the virus. Also, as of Feb. 22, close to 13 percent of the U.S. population has received the first round of the COVID-19 vaccine, and about 4 percent of Americans have received both shots.

“We pray that, regardless of race, age, religious heritage, economic or immigration status — all people are able to receive the vaccine even when the access to it is an end to our common suffering,” Cardinal Gregory prayed.

He also said that “our hearts are filled with gratitude for our doctors, nurses and emergency personnel” and prayed that “they remain well and be strengthened.”

“May the one who fashioned us help us to focus on our mutual humanity,” Cardinal Gregory prayed. “Although weary from so many months of isolation, help us not to lose hope, help us to continue to care for our neighbors as we remember those we have lost in this pandemic.”

Before he said the prayer, the cardinal pointed out that “the poor, the elderly, people of color have experienced a disproportionate amount of sadness” due to the coronavirus and he added that the pandemic “has increased our awareness of our common humanity.”

“We have been brought to a deeper awareness we are one people and this illness, this disease, this virus is no respecter of persons,” he said.

When was asked by Tapper what the Catholic faith teaches about helping one another when it is not safe to physically come together, Cardinal Gregory said: “We Catholics are grateful that we have each other, even under these limited and painful moments when we cannot be with each other, to reach out and embrace and be in the presence of those who are suffering.”

He added that the pandemic “has strengthened the need for everyone for those who have died of the coronavirus as well as their families and friends and to get the vaccine when it is made available to them.”

Ky. General Assembly update — beyond halfway with much to go

Jason Hall

Messenger publisher

The 2021 Regular Session of the Kentucky General Assembly is moving fast. After being unable to meet last week due to weather, legislators are now convening five days a week to complete their work. This is a significant change from the first few weeks of this year as we are past the halfway point.

The regular Legislative Line can be reached at 1-800-372-7311. Call that number any time to leave a message for your state representative or state senator. If you don’t know who you are, the operators can connect you with the right member based on your address.

As we head into the remaining days of session, here are updates on bills that CCK is working on and that we hope will make it through the process and become law.

HB 210 — Requires employers to provide the same leave for a military parent as an employee who has a birth parent. Has passed the House and now awaits action in the Senate.

HB 105 — Known as the “Baby Box.” This bill provides a safe, anonymous opportunity for someone to surrender a newborn to a public authority for care. HB 105 is awaiting a vote on the House floor.

There are also a number of criminal justice reform bills that have received significant support and are moving through the process. As a member of the Catholic Coalition for the Kentucky Death Penalty, CCK supports the following bills that are moving through the process.

HB 126 — Raises the threshold for a theft to be a felony to $1,000, closer to the national average (KY’s threshold is currently a very low $500 for most types of theft). HB 126 has passed the House and awaits action in the Senate.

SB 84 — Establishes requirements to help ensure that Kentucky workers who are incarcerated and pregnant receive access to critical resources and have safe and healthy pregnancies. Has passed the Senate and now awaits action in the House.

SB 4 — This is an effort to limit the use of no-knock warrants, an issue which has received increased attention since the killing of Breonna Taylor. SB 4 has passed the Senate and is awaiting action in the House.

SB 10 — Increases the mandatory transfer of some cases from juvenile court to adult court. Has passed the Senate and awaits consideration in the House.

HB 4 — Improves police accountability by establishing a duty to intervene and lay out policies to root out officers who break the law or engage in misconduct. Has passed the Senate and awaits action in the House.

And finally one bill has already become law. SB 9, the Born-Alive Infant Protection Act passed the General Assembly in January.

Jason Hall is executive director of the Catholic Conference of Kentucky. The CCK represents the Catholic Church and Kentucky’s four Roman Catholic bishops in public policy matters on both the state and federal level.
The imperialism of the human soul

In his autobiography, Nikos Kazantzakis shares how in his youth he was driven by a restlessness that had him searching for something he could never quite define. However, he made peace with his lack of peace because he accepted that, given the nature of the soul, he was supposed to feel that restlessness and that a healthy soul is a driven soul.

Commenting on this, he writes: “No force anywhere on earth is as imperialistic as the human soul. It occupies and is occupied in turn, but it always considers its empire too narrow. Suffocating, it desires to conquer the world in order to breathe freely.”

We need to be given permission, I believe, to accept as God-given that imperialism inside our soul, even as we need always to be careful never to trivialize its power and meaning. However, that is a formula for tension. How does one make peace with the imperialism of one’s soul without denigrating the divine energy that is stoking that imperialism? For me, this has been a struggle.

I grew up in the heart of the Canadian prairies, with 400 miles of open space in every direction. Geographically, that space let one’s soul stretch out, but otherwise my world seemed too small for my soul to breathe. I grew up inside a tight-knit community, in an isolated rural area, where the world was small enough so that everyone knew everyone else. That was wonderful because it made me feel, when I was a young soul, that I could breathe in spaces bigger than where I was breathing. Moreover, growing up with an acute religious and moral sensitivity, I felt guilty about my restlessness, as if it were something abnormal that I needed to hide.

In that state, as an 18-year-old, I entered religious life. Novitiate in those days were quite strict and secluded. We were 18 of us, novices, sequestered in an old seminary building across a lake from a town and a highway. We could hear the sounds of traffic and see life on the other side of the lake, but we were not part of it. As well, most everything inside our sequestered life focused on the spiritual so that even our most earthly desires had to be associated with our hunger for God and for the bread of life. Not an easy task for anyone, especially a teenager.

Well, one day we were visited by a priest who gave my soul permission to breathe. He gathered us, the 18 novices, into a classroom and began his conference with this question: Are you feeling a little restless? We nodded, rather surprised by the question.

He went on: Well, you should be feeling restless! You must be jumping out of your skin! All that life in you and all those fiery hormones stirring in your blood, and you’re stuck here watching life happen across the lake. You’ll be going crazy someday, but that’s what’s going on. That’s what you should feel, you should be feeling healthy. Stay with it. You can do this. It’s good to feel that restlessness.

That day the wide-open prairie spaces I had lived in my whole life and the wide-open spaces in my soul touched our hearts: indeed, they have a ‘right’ to appeal to our heart and soul. They are our brothers and sisters, and as such we must love and care for them” (Fratelli Tutti, n. 194).

Fratelli Tutti’s convictions are rooted in Catholic social teaching — human dignity, solidarity and subsidiarity “Every human being has the right to live with dignity … Unless this basic principle is upheld, there will be no future either for fraternity or for the survival of humanity” (Fratelli Tutti, n. 107).

In “Let Us Dream,” he writes, “Solidarity acknowledges our interconnectedness, we are creatures in relation, with duties toward one another, and all are called to participate in society. That means welcoming the stranger, forgiving debts, giving a home to the disabled and allowing other people’s dreams and hopes for a better life to become our own.”

On the other hand, subsidiarity, he writes, “involves recognizing and respecting the autonomy of others as subjects of their own destiny. The poor are not the objects of our good intentions but the objects of change. They do not just act for the poor but with them…”

The “World Day of the Poor,” the pope held on November 1, gathered a perfect opportunity to practice these values.

In his message for this year’s celebration, the Holy Father reflects on the healing power of relationships. We must strive to create “a covenant between those in need of care and those who provide that care,” he writes, “a covenant based on mutual trust and respect, openness and availability.”

Pope Francis reminds us that it is Jesus himself who bestraddled each other a little. And that friendship continued to grow as I did my studies and read authors who had bestraddled their souls. Among others, these spoke to me: St. Augustine (‘You have made us for yourself, Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you’); Thomas Aquinas (The complete adequate object of the human intellect and will is All-Being); Iris Murdoch (The deepest of all human pains is the pain of the inadequacy of self-expression); Karl Rahner (In the torment of the insufficiency of everything attainable, we ultimately learn that here, in this life, there is no finished symphony); Sidney Callahan (We are made to ultimately sleep with the whole world, it is any wonder that we long for this along the way?); and James Hillman (Neither religion nor psychology really honors the human soul. Religion is forever trying to save the soul and psychology is always trying to fix the soul. The soul needs neither to be saved nor fixed; it is already eternal — it just needs to be listened to.)

Perhaps today, the real struggle is not so much to accept sacred permission to bestraddle the wild instabilities of the soul. The greater struggle today, I suspect, is not to trivialize the soul, not to make its infinite longings something less than what they are.

During World War II, Jesuit theologians resisting the Nazi occupation in France published an underground newspaper: The first issue opened with this now-famous line: “France, take care not to lose your soul.” Fair warning, this imperialism is imperialistic because it carries divine fire and so it struggles to breathe freely in the world. To feel and to honor that struggle to be healthy.

Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser is a theologian, teacher, and award-winning author.

One of my favorite expressions has taken on new meaning during the COVID pandemic: “There’s a silver lining to every cloud that saith about the heavens if only we could see it.”

Without forgetting the terrible suffering of so many people, I’ve been amazed by those who have found a silver lining in these dark times by using their social isolation to learn a new skill, delve into a long-held interest, produce new works of literature, music and art, to create meaningful connections with others.

Pope Francis is one of these inspiring people. Despite his advanced age, he has penned both an encyclical and a book before the close of 2020. Both works, Fratelli Tutti and “Let Us Dream,” focus on combatting the throwaway culture with a culture of encounter, tenderness and care for those on the peripheries.

“What is tenderness?” the pope asks. “It is love that asks us to stop and listen to those who are sick or disabled. It asks us to establish personal relationships with them, to feel empathy and compassion, and to let their suffering become our own as we seek to serve them.”

The pope lauds “healthcare personnel, volunteers, support staff, priests, men and women religious, all of whom have helped, treated, comforted and served so many of the sick and their families with professionalism, self-giving, responsibility and love of neighbor.”

The pope describes this closeness to suffering as a precious balm of consolation. I think of it as a silver lining in the dark clouds that still hover over us nearly a year after the onset of the pandemic. To honor the World Day of the Sick, this year let’s ask ourselves how can we become a silver lining to someone passing through this COVID storm. We might take the time to make a call or express some words of encouragement, or to reach out to a sick relative or neighbor, offering whatever assistance they may need.

Through our compassion, may the sick who are passing through darkness find a silver lining by realizing how much they are loved and cherished by others.

Sister Constance Veit is a director of communications for the Little Sisters of the Poor.

Be a silver lining to those in darkness

In Exile

Father Ron Rolheiser

Sister Constance Veit, L.S.P.
The Gospel looks good on paper

The readings for the third Sunday of Lent — Cycle B are: Exodus 17:3-7; Romans 5:1-2, 5-8 and John 4:43-42.

This coming weekend we will celebrate the Third Sunday of Lent, and as I was reflecting on the readings for this Sunday, I was reminded of a statement made in jest by an older priest friend: “The Gospel looks good on paper.”

What was going through his mind is that there is certainly a difference between the ideal and the daily lived experience of the believer. What he was not saying is that the ideal is imposs- ible. My mind also went to the famous prayer of the Trappist monk Thomas Merton when he said: “But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact move you.”

God makes demands upon us — his creation. Are we trying, every day, to live them out? Or do we just throw up our hands and say, “This is impossible!”

The first reading from the Book of Exod- us gives us the Ten Commandments. Notice that it is the first one — “I am the Lord, your God” — that has the longest expan- sion. This is because it is the most important, and if we get this one down, the rest will fall into place.

We are called to love God, with all of our heart, our mind, our soul, our very being — everything that makes us who we are should be directed towards God. Everything? Oh, and this is not easy — nor even a little bit. As human beings we are very interested in the ego — looking out for “Number One.” But the Christian life is not about the self, it is about the other; and specifically the OTHER.

Our second reading from St. Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians reminds us that even though we may think or have others convince us that, “the Gospel looks good on paper” in reality “the foolishness of God is wiser than men’s wisdom.” We should get on our knees every day and thank the Lord for that.

God desires nothing but our good. St. Thomas Aquinas defines love as, “Will- ing the good of the other.” And since we know through Divine Revelation that “God is love,” then the Lord cannot not desire anything but our good, for it would be contrary to his very nature. In my own life, that which is the most good for me is difficult and demanding. How about yours?

Finally, in the Gospel from St. John we see the real Jesus that has for the good and the just and the holy. The temple was to be a place of prayer and sacrifice, and it had become everything but that. Our only possible explanation is that Jesus received for his actions, but it had to be done. Primarily because how can we claim to honor God as God, if we don’t honor God’s law?

There is a common misconception that Christ came to abolish and replace the old laws. I have even heard of a young person saying, “Isn’t that why Jesus came? So that we can chill, have fun and not have to worry about the rules?” This is a fairly egregious misunderstanding, and it remains unfortunately prevalent today.

Jesus makes it clear that he did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it. (Romans 10:4-6), a Scripture scholar and Trappist monk puts it this way: “Christ does not reject the law but rather, intensifies it. In some sense he makes it more demanding, because he imposes conditions, not only on the externals of our lives but above all on the abiding attitude of our hearts.

External laws and external punishments are not bad. The point is that they are not enough. It’s good to not mur- der, but it’s good to punish and judge those who do. But it’s not enough.

The tax collector, the God-Man, the Word of God who, from all eternity descended into the depths of man’s condi- tion, taking on the form of man and slave and suffering vic- tim is NOT SATISFIED with the merely external. He is after the heart.

The Greek Fathers called Him “The Knower of Hearts,” for he sees our hearts and he will not be satisfied until not only our external lives and actions are cleansed from sin, but also when our very hearts and beings are cleansed from any taint, from any of the sources of sin.

How does murder happen? It begins with anger. And anger begins with contempt. Jesus, the “Knower of Hearts” tells us that it is not good enough just to refrain from exter- nal violence. We must also cleanse ourselves of the internal violence of anger and contempt.

When I reflected on this and looked inwards a few weeks ago, I realized just how much anger and contempt I have inside. It is difficult to not view everything in relation to the unbelievable events that occurred last year. But if you’re anything like me, you have been putting its mark inside me — ves- tiges of anger and contempt, which may not always be on the surface but, like the fires of Gehenna, constantly smolder and burn in the background of my mind.

Even for those of us who refrained from getting into heated arguments in grocery stores or raging political bat- tles on social media, how many of us escaped last year unscathed with no anger or contempt left in our hearts? I have realized that I have plenty of anger and contempt inside of me and that Jesus won’t be satisfied until I get rid of it.

Contempt for ideas, movements, ideologies and actions that threaten the Good are one thing. But contempt for human beings — any human being — is forbidden. In fact, if we harbor any we make ourselves liable to Gehenna.

On the other hand we remember that, with grace noth- ing is impossible and that Lent is the perfect time to work on this. Let us turn to the sacraments — to confession, to Eucharist, and to the sacramental of anointing, perhaps, any contempt we have for ourselves. It is not ours to hold on to it. We are not permitted. We are commanded to let it go, to love even our enemies.

When and if finally we do let go of all contempt — can you imagine the freedom?

Brenda Torline is associate director for the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization, Diocese of Covington, Ky.

Inauguration Day – Anger in America

Reaching for the heart

Bradley Torline

GO AND GLORIFY

Father Daniel Schomaker

Inauguration Day – Anger in America

“Hope has two beautiful daughters — their names are Anger and Courage, anger at the way things are, and courage to see that they do not remain the way they are.” — St. Augustine

What we are experiencing at this time in our country is a lot of anger; seemingly about everything personal, social, environmental; restrictions on our liber- ties, disparity within our souls. How shall we listen to this? How shall we react? How do we pray? Anger is not the problem in itself. Misdirected expressions of anger that result in vio- lence are.

As St. Augustine reminds us, anger is a natu- ral response that rises in us when we know that things are not as they should be. The greatness of the situation calls forth a more or less intense feeling of anger. The good news is this is the root of justice making. It is trying to us to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, and of all those persecuted for standing up for the poor and marginalized such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. whom we celebrated earlier this year. They have shown us that actions flowing from Holy Anger are meas- ured by the cost to themselves — not damage to another. Let us remember that Holy Anger is not violence. Courage calls out our fears, “What fear?” we might ask today. If we look deep within us we may find many specific answers. Brené Brown, author of “Daring Greatly” suggests that a basic fear shared by many is that of “scarcity,” that is, there is never enough time, never enough money that we are not pretty enough, rich enough, good enough. The heart of scarcity is greed, shame, comparison and disapproval. She further poses the question that we can ask of our nation today: “Do we lack the empathy to be com- passionate? Do we fear that America is too small for all of us?” Too inadequate for all that God asks of us?”

I am hoping that it is not. My prayer is that all of us who are citizens and those to aspire to be will discover that our connections are truer and stronger than what separates us. May the Holy Spirit give us the wisdom to discern in the way forward, to discover what unites us and helps us trust rather than fear each other.

The mother of Anger and Courage is Hope. Let us put on the garment of hope — give it to us, let it comfort us, warm us and enable us to open our arms to receive each other as the family we truly are.

St. Dorothy Schuette is a professor of the Benedictine Sisters of St. Walburg Monastery Villis- Kils, Ky.

VIEWPOINT

Bradley Torline

Guest

Sister Dorothy Schuette, O.S.B.

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A story of hope from El Salvador — meet Edwin Carlos

Matthew’s Gospel invites us to remember that we are responsible for helping all our sisters and brothers, even those who are strangers to us. When we do this, we care for Christ. Through its Lenten “Stories of Hope” Catholic Relief Services invites us to reflect and make room in our hearts to welcome the stranger. This week we meet a young man from El Salvador.

Some young people in Ahuachapán in eastern El Salvador think that being a farmer is a thing of the past. Their families have farmed for generations, but climate change and soil erosion have caused harvests — and therefore, their incomes — to shrink considerably. Edwin Carlos, a 17-year-old eager to support his parents and two little brothers, did not see farming in his future. However, after a teacher told him about new techniques and technology were changing the way farming was being done to help restore the environment, he changed his mind. Edwin Carlos decided to join a group of 220 students who are learning skills like the importance of distancing when plowing and how burning harvest residue can harm the land and air.

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Newsworthly

Happy birthday to Msgr. John Schulte, retired, March 18; Msgr. Gerald Teaddelt, chaplain and professor, Thomas More University, March 23; Father Trinity Knight, parochial vicar, St. Agnes Parish, Ft. Wright, March 24; Father Jeffrey VonLehmen, pastor, St. Patrick Parish, Taylor Mill, March 26; Msgr. William Neuhause, retired, March 29; Father James Schaepper, parochial vicar, Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Burlington, March 30.

The following students have been named National Merit Finalists in the 2021 National Merit Scholarship Program: Covington Catholic High School — Pete Williams; Villa Madonna Academy High School — Jackson Bond and Emily Richardson.

Fish Fry

Like everything else this year, fish fries are going to be different. In order to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19, all parish fish fries must be drive-thru or carryout only. There will be NO dine-in fish fries. Workers and guests will need to follow the safety protocols of wearing a mask and practicing safe social distancing of at least six feet apart. For the health and safety of all, everyone is encouraged to make patience and charity a part of their Lenten practices while waiting for your order.

St. Augustine Parish, Augusta, March 5, 12, 19, 26, 5-7 p.m. Carry-out only.
St. Augustine Parish, Covington, Every Friday in Lent, 5 – 7:30 p.m. Drive-thru and carry-out.
St. Bernard Parish, Dayton, March 5, 12, 19, 26, 5-7 p.m. Drive-thru only.
St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Ft. Thomas, March 5, 12, 19, 26, 4:30-7 p.m. Drive-thru and walk-up only.
St. Cecilia Parish, Independence, March 5, 12, 19, 26, April 5, 5-8 p.m. Drive-thru only.
Knights of Columbus, Father Bualler Council, Elmire, March 5, 12, 19, 26, Lunch: 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Dinner: 4:30-8 p.m. Carry-out only.
605 Lytle Ave.
Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Burlington, March 5, 12, 19, 26, 4:30-7:30 p.m. Drive-thru only.
St. John the Evangelist Parish, Carrollton, March 19, 4:30-7 p.m. Carry-out and drive-thru only.
St. Joseph Academy, Walton, March 5, 12, 19, 26, 4:30-8 p.m. Drive-thru only.
St. Paul Parish, Florence, March 5, 12, 19, 26, 4:30-7:30 p.m. Carry-out only. Drive-thru, order online or call ahead.

Ring ceremony at Covington Latin School

(left) Twenty-eight juniors participated in the Covington Latin School Junior Ring Ceremony, Feb. 22, at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington. Bishop Roger Foys blessed the rings and (far left) John Kennedy, headmaster, distributed the rings to the students, carrying on a tradition that originated in the early 1980s. The rings are personalized by each student. Some receive the rings of their parents or even grandparents.

Faith Formation courses. Short instruction time online and independent study assignment. Cost is $35 per course. Open to teachers, parish catechists, deaconate aspirants and any adult who would like to expand their knowledge of the Catholic faith. Course details and online registration available at covdio.org/catechesis-and-evangelization.

Holy Cross District High School Mulch and Pine Strale Sale. Three kinds of mulch in 2 cubic foot bags for $4.25 per bag and pine straw for $8 per bale. All prices include free delivery and sales tax. HDCS students will deliver mulch to homes, businesses or rental properties anywhere in Kenton, Boone and Campbell Counties starting April 15 and continuing for at least three weeks. All proceeds benefit Holy Cross District High School. To visit hcmulch.com or call 392-8899.

“The Eucharistic Miracles of the World display.” St. Henry’s Church, Edgewood, a display created by the work of Blessed Carlo Acutis available for prayer and meditation through Lent; the church is open daily 9 a.m.–6 p.m., masks and social distancing required. Sisiters of Notre Dame Women’s virtual retreat March 27-28;Learn about various forms of prayer; discuss ways to integrate the prayers into your life, and meet other women interested in expanding their prayer life. Link with all details are at https://www.snd.org/newsfeed/e ntry/women’s%27s weekend retreat-2020/
ACCOUNT MANAGER
St. Joseph Academy, a private school operated by the Sisters of St. Joseph the Worker in Walton, KY is currently hiring a part-time Account Manager with the potential of being full-time. The position requires accuracy, attention to detail, and a thorough understanding of basic accounting procedures. Competency with Quickbooks, the ability to create well-organized spreadsheets, knowledge of or a willingness to learn DonorPerfect, QuickPay, and F.A.C.T.S. is also required. This position supports some administrative needs that are important to ensure we operate within budget and plan effectively for our future needs. Organizational skills are a must. A flexible work schedule will be considered. Interested applicants can submit a resume and cover letter to Sister Patricia Jean, S.J.W., Principal at principal@stjwilton.com.

CLINICAL DIRECTOR OF COUNSELING PROGRAMS
The Roman Catholic Diocese of Covington's Catholic Charities ministry is seeking to hire a full-time Clinical Director for our faith-based counseling programs. Fifty percent of the Clinical Director's responsibilities involves the administrative and clinical supervision of our counseling programs, and supervising our mental health, pregnancy, and addiction programs. Duties include staff coaching, training, accountability and evaluation, programmatic quality, and quality assurance measures. The remaining fifty percent of the Clinical Director's responsibilities involves providing direct service outpatient counseling. Candidate requirements include:

- actively practicing Roman Catholic in good standing with the Church;
- a Master's degree in Social Work (preferred) or Counseling;
- a minimum of five years' clinical counseling experience;
- three years of management or supervisory experience;
- Licensed Clinical Social Worker certification (preferred), or Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor (preferred), or Licensed Professional Clinical Social Worker (required), or Counselor with supervision designation or relevant certification eligible;
- previous experience with diverse populations, which may include children, adults, couples, families, those with mental illness and substance use disorders, life transitions, all income levels, and various cultural backgrounds.
- experience with DM; $;
- an ability to perform all the duties of an independent therapist, and to work either independently or collaboratively;
- Salary and benefits are competitive. To apply, or to nominate a candidate, e-mail or fax a letter of interest, C/V or comprehensive resume with compensation history, and a minimum of five references with their contact e-mail addresses to Stephen Koplyay, SPHR at skoplyay@covdio.org, fax 859-392-1589.

ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
The Roman Catholic Diocese of Covington, KY (www.covdio.org) is seeking qualified candidates for the position of Assistant Superintendent of Catholic Schools. The Assistant Superintendent assists the Superintendent in carrying out the primary Diocesan educational mission of transmitting the Catholic faith through quality Catholic education. The Assistant Superintendent's role is broad, multi-dimensional, and multi-layered, including such responsibilities as acting as a representative of the Bishop of Covington and being an advocate for Catholic schools in the Diocese; monitoring the quality of the academic programs in schools; maintaining frequent and positive communications with Pastors, principals, and boards (where appropriate); collecting and aggregating specific statistical data for each school; managing Diocese-wide testing at the elementary school level; overseeing, monitoring, and supporting Diocesan professional development activities; and coordinating the Diocesan response to data requests by state and federal agencies. The Assistant Superintendent also assists with the educational administration of the Alliance for Catholic Urban Education (ACUE) schools. Overall, the position encompasses a wide diversity of work situations and involves a high degree of complexity with responsibility for advising and decision making in many areas. Candidates must be practicing Roman Catholics in good standing, able and willing to give witness to the Catholic faith at all times, with a Master's degree in Education/Administration and previous experience in school administrative leadership. Interested individuals should submit a letter of interest, a comprehensive resume or C/V, recent Baptismal certificate indicating sacramental preparation, and a list of at least five professional references to Stephen Koplyay, SPHR: skoplyay@covdio.org, FAX 859-392-1589, or mail to 1125 Madison Avenue, Covington, KY 41011-3115. EOE

DELIVERY DRIVER WANTED
Edible Arrangements currently has an open position for a Driver.
Apply at: 104 Pavilion Parkway, Newport KY

PRINCIPAL
Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic School (www.ihm-ky.org) located in Burlington KY, is seeking a new principal to begin July 1, 2021.
We are a 2006 and 2018 National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence, deeply rooted in our Catholic faith. Immaculate Heart of Mary School cooperates with parents in providing quality education to its students, regarding their religious, physical, emotional, social and educational development. Together we foster Catholic values that will guide students to become responsible citizens who embrace the Gospel Message of Jesus Christ.
We strive to develop a positive school climate that is built on a culture of safety, respect, trust and social and emotional support.
The successful candidate will be a practicing Roman Catholic who has Kentucky certification or can become eligible for certification. The principal will oversee a staff of 36 and a student body of over 400 in preschool and grades pre-K through 8.
Salary and benefits are competitive. To apply, or to nominate a candidate, e-mail or fax Stephen Koplyay at skoplyay@covdio.org, (859) 392-1589. Candidates should include a letter of interest, a comprehensive resume, and a minimum of five (5) professional references.
Sister Margaret Mary Gough (1899-2021)

Sister Margaret Mary Gough was born on Nov. 28, 1930 to Francis M. Gough and Catherine Volkening Gough. She was the seventh of 13 children—seven brothers and five sisters. Her youngest brother died shortly after birth. Her sisters, Sister Denise and Sister Stella Marie are members of the Benedictine community.

Margaret Mary entered St. Walburg Monastery in 1950. She became a novice in 1951 and received the name Sister Mary Bartholomew. First profession followed in 1952 and perpetual profession in 1955. Sister Margaret Mary celebrated her silver jubilee in 1977, her golden in 2002 and her diamond in 2012.

Sister Margaret Mary taught in elementary schools of the Covington diocese from 1952 to 1983. She served as dorm mother in the boarding school at Villa Madonna Academy for four years. Sister Margaret Mary completed her B.A. from Villa Madonna College in 1964 and received her teaching certificate. Three years later she completed work for a Master’s in Education from Xavier University; and returned for a second Master’s in Theology in 1986.

Sister Margaret Mary served as Assistant Registrar at Villa Madonna College 1964-67. When the college moved to Crestview Hills and changed its name to Thomas More College (now University), Sister Margaret Mary was its Registrar from 1968-1976. She served in the same capacity at Edgewood College from 1976-1981. From 1981-1996 she worked in the Covington diocesan office of Pastoral Planning and Research, serving as its Director for the final 11 years. In 1997 she became Associate Director of Development for Madonna Manor, the position from which she retired in 2005.

Sister Margaret Mary made lasting friends at each workplace, and kept her connections active. She valued her friendship with Bishop William Hughes, inviting him to the monastery to play cards in his later years. On Saturday nights Sister Margaret Mary hosted a regular game of cards, with pizza and a drink, for a small group of sisters. They will sorely miss her.

Sister Rita Bilz (1926-2021)

Sister Rita Bilz was born on July 6, 1926 to John Lawrence and Margaret Bilz. Rita Philomena was the fifth of six children, the youngest of whom died as an infant. The family were members of Holy Guardian Angels Church in Sandfortown, Ky., where Rita attended the parish school.

While living at home, Rita kept a garden which reflected her love for order. She liked to keep things “neat as a pin.” Always a spiritual person, she had a grotto at home which is now at the home of her nephew, Jim Bilz.


In 1962 Sister Rita began a lifelong ministry of culinary artistry in the monastery kitchen. She trained novices as they took 6-week tours of duty in the kitchen. Her “honey-dear” was preparatory to a correction. Sister Rita welcomed Sister Veronica Weibel to the kitchen in 1968. They enjoyed many years working together.

In the early kitchen years, Sister Rita traveled to several cooking workshops at Stonehill College and the University of Notre Dame. She was an avid reader of Southern Living and relied on a variety of cookbooks.

Sister Rita liked to try new things. She was more a class-cook than a trendy one, not going in for food fads. When the days of table waiting gave way to buffet style, Sister Rita was quite particular about the appearance of the table. A delicious meal relies on color and texture as well as taste. Monastery photo albums attest to that.

Wednesday was pie night. Rita served at least three kinds, all in her own pie crust. Wednesday was the evening the sisters invited guests.

Sister Rita retired at year’s end, 2005, after 43 years of service to St. Walburg Monastery. She was now freer to (Continued on page 10)
(Continued from page 9)

indulge in special interests, particularly listening to “real” bluegrass music. Rita had her standards. She was well known to local radio station personnel, calling in her opinions, her appreciation and making requests. When co-workers and sisters took her to bluegrass concerts, she insisted on the front row. She bought their CDs, too. On her 90th birthday, who should come to the party but a bluegrass band in which Rita’s own great-niece performed. She was totally surprised and delighted.

At age 94 Sister Rita’s life began winding down. She died peacefully in the evening of Feb. 3, 2021. Nieces Charlotte Decker and Barbara Blackwell preceded her in death. She is survived by her nieces and nephews, six great-great nieces and nephew, and her Benedictine community.

Mass of Christian Burial was held Monday, Feb. 22 with interment following in St. Walburg Cemetery.

Sister Charles Wolking (1924-2021)

Sister Charles Wolking was born on Dec. 10, 1924 to Charles and Antoinette Mueller Wolking and named Jeanne Therese. She was the fourth of six girls, all of whom became Benedictine Sisters of St. Walburg Monastery.


Sister Charles taught elementary grades in schools of the Covington diocese for about ten years. In 1965 she graduated with a B.A. in Occupational Therapy from the College of St. Catherine in St. Paul, MN. She worked at the United Cerebral Palsy Center (now Redwood) with pre-school and elementary students. She received an M.Ed. from Xavier University in 1965.

Sister Mary Rabe’s recent Leaven article on Sister Charles gives a loving tribute to her skills at Redwood: “Sister Charles’ gentle and effective approach to handling difficult situations . . . made her a most respected member of the team.” She continues: “Her loving and caring, gentle but firm, warm and sympathetic personality led her to her next ministry as administrator of Madonna Manor. Her successful career lasted 33 years during which time she endeared herself to the residents with their many wishes and needs.” During those years Sister Charles kept her Nursing Home Administrator’s License renewed by attending numerous workshops.

Sister Charles retired to the monastery in 1999 and assisted where needed. She volunteered at the Manor as sacristan and continued to visit the residents.

Until very recently Sister Charles made the rounds with her rollator every day, getting her exercise, sharing her wit, and sometimes trying to go out the front door to go “home” to the Manor.

Sister Charles was preceded in death by her five sisters, Sisters Mary Anne, Teresa, Amelia, Mercedes, and Consolata. What a reunion they are having!

Sister Charles died peacefully on the morning of Feb. 3, 2021. She is survived by her cousins, friends, and her Benedictine community. Mass of Christian Burial was held Monday, Feb. 22 with interment following in St. Walburg Cemetery.

Sister Charles Wolking, O.S.B.

Résumé of Life:

Jeanne Wolking entered the monastery in 1942. She became a novice in 1943 and received the name Sister Charles. First profession followed in 1944 and perpetual profession in 1947. Sister Charles taught elementary grades in schools of the Covington diocese for about ten years. In 1965 she graduated with a B.A. in Occupational Therapy from the College of St. Catherine in St. Paul, MN. She worked at the United Cerebral Palsy Center (now Redwood) with pre-school and elementary students. She received an M.Ed. from Xavier University in 1965. She worked at the United Cerebral Palsy Center (now Redwood) with pre-school and elementary students. She received an M.Ed. from Xavier University in 1965.

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Obituaries

Sister Charles Wolking, O.S.B.

(Continued from page 9)
At least 18 die in Myanmar coup protests; nun protects demonstrators

YANGON, Myanmar — Cardinal Charles Bo of Yangon called for patience and tolerance on a day when at least 18 anti-coup protesters were shot dead by Myanmar security forces. Media reported Sister Ann Nu Thawng, a member of the Sisters of St. Francis Xavier, stood in front of troops Feb. 28, the bloodiest day since the Feb. 1 military coup. Eyewitnesses said she got on her knees, raised her hands toward heaven and implored: “Don’t shoot, don’t kill the innocent. If you want, hit me.” Her actions shocked the agents, who did not shoot and stopped their advance. “Today, the riot has been severe nation-wide,” said a tweet on @CardinalMaungBo, an unofficial account with a web link to the Archdiocese of Yangon. “The police are arresting, beating and even shooting at the people. With (eyes) full of tears, Sr. Ann Nu Thawng begs & halts the police to stop arresting the protesters.” The tweet said about 100 protesters escaped from police because of the nun. In a homily earlier, Cardinal Bo said the streets of Myanmar have seen so much pain, suffering and resistance, reported ucanews.com. “Let us all believe in the power of love and reconciliation,” Cardinal Bo said in his homily. “We are all sons and daughters of the same land, same mother Myanmar, and we need to exercise patience and tolerance.”

Reports of women prisoners being abused are ‘disgusting, shameful’

CLINTON, N.J. — The women housed at the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility in Clinton, the only women’s prison in the state of New Jersey, seem to have the cards stacked against them. Already facing isolation, suspended visitations and restricted gatherings — all to minimize the potential spread of the coronavirus and exposure to it — the women incarcerated there are facing another challenge: the fear of abuse. In the early morning hours of Jan. 12, just nine months after the U.S. Justice Department issued a report denouncing past abuses at the prison, calling the abuse of the women there “severe and prevalent,” two women were reported to have been allegedly assaulted and several others were victims of abuse inflicted by correctional officers. Bishop James F. Checchio of Metuchen, who has made regular past visits to the prison to meet and pray with the women there, called the situation “dire” and the offenses against the women “disgusting and shameful.” In a letter shared with local media, Catholics of the diocese, the prison administrator and the chaplain supervisor, Bishop Checchio wrote that “no person, no matter their past offenses or circumstance in life, should have to endure such abuse.” The full text of Bishop Checchio’s letter can be found online at diometuchen.org.

Bishops defend property after Spain claims irregularities in registration

MADRID — Spain’s Catholic Bishops defended their Church’s property rights, after the government accused the Church of improperly claiming ownership of thousands of buildings and parcels of land. “The Church has registered goods which Catholic people have created and entrusted to it over centuries, so it could carry out its work of proclaiming the Gospel, celebrating the faith and exercising charity,” said a statement on the bishops’ conference website. “It has also registered assets received through bequests and inheritances, which have been used, one way or another, for the same purposes. It has an obligation to safeguard and maintain these goods, using them for its own purposes and making them available to society. Historic churches and cathedrals with no property titles were not included in Spain’s first property register, established in 1901 following a wave of confiscations by radical governments and reaffirmed under laws in 1909, 1915 and 1946. Under a 1990 law, the Catholic Church was invited to register its assets by a simple ownership declaration. However, in a 3,000-page report published Feb. 16, the government said the 34,961 assets registered before the law was modified in 2015 had included many nonreligious assets, including residential buildings, homes, businesses, and vineyards. The report gives the Church until 2023 to provide proof of ownership of the assets.

Catholic agencies welcome access to Ethiopia’s Tigray region

NAIROBI, Kenya — Catholic relief agencies in Ethiopia welcomed a move by the government to allow more access in Tigray, the semi-autonomous region in the north, where a military operation displaced millions and left an unspecified number of people dead. Amid increased international calls for unrestricted access, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali announced Feb. 24 that 135 personnel from bilateral and multilateral organizations had been cleared to travel and undertake aid work in the region. Seven international media organizations, including The New York Times, the BBC and Reuters, also were granted access. “This is all what the humanitarian agencies have been seeking. They have been asking for access to the region so that they can provide the much needed services to the people,” Andre Atsu, the Jesuit Refugee Service regional director in Eastern Africa, told Catholic News Service. JRS is one of the agencies providing humanitarian assistance in the region, where half of the 6 million population is reportedly displaced.

THE ‘CODEFATHER’ MAKES AN OFFER YOU CAN’T REFUSE...

IT’S FISH FRY TIME
RECOGNIZED BY THE CINCINNATI ENQUIRER AS ONE OF THE REGION’S FINEST FISH FRY’S AND RECOGNIZED BY CITYBEAT AS ONE OF THE TOP 101 THINGS EVERY CINCINNATIAN SHOULD DO.

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6 FRIDAYS IN LENT
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TWO OPTIONS FOR PLACING YOUR ORDER
GO TO WWW.MQHPARISH.COM TO PLACE A PREPAY CURBSIDE ORDER. PARK IN THE AREA DESIGNATED FOR CURBSIDE PICKUP. YOUR ORDER WILL BE BROUGHT TO YOUR CAR.
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ELIZABETH’s CARE CENTER
U.S. House passes Equality Act in a 224–206 vote; USCCB issues Action Alert

Julie Asher
Catholic News Service
WASHINGTON — The House of Representatives passed the Equality Act in a 224–206 vote Feb. 25.

A couple days ahead of the vote, the chairs of five U.S. bishops’ committees said its mandates will “discriminate against people of faith” by adversely affecting charities and their beneficiaries, conscience rights, women’s sports, and sex-specific facilities.

The bill, known as H.R. 5, and recently reintroduced in the House, will also provide for taxpayer funding of abortion and limit freedom of speech, the chairs said in a Feb. 21 letter to all members of Congress.

H.R. 5 amends the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in employment, housing, public accommodations, public education, federal funding, the credit system and jury duty.

Human dignity is central to what Catholics believe because every person is made in the image of God and should be treated according to that image of God, the bishops said.

“Human dignity is central to what Catholics believe because every person is made in the image of God and should be treated according to that image of God,” they said.

“This includes dismissing sexual difference and falsely anointing individuals and organizations,” they said.

“Tragically, this act can also be construed to include an abhorrent mandate, a violation of precious rights to life and conscience,” the committee chairmen added.

“Discriminate against individuals and religious organizations based on their different beliefs by partially repealing the bipartisan Religious Freedom Restoration Act, an unprecedented departure from that law and one of America’s founding principles,” the bishops said.

“The measure first passed the House May 17, 2019, in a bipartisan 236–173 vote, but the Senate did not act on the bill after receiving it. President Donald Trump had threatened to veto the measure if it ever reached his desk.

House leadership pledged to see it reintroduced in the 117th Congress. On Feb. 18, Rep. David Carstensen, D-Rhode Island, reintroduced it.

Five committee chairmen of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in a Feb. 23, 2021, letter to members of Congress oppose the reintroduced Equality Act. The chairmen are Bishop David A. Konderla of Tulsa, Okla., Subcommittee for the Promotion and Defense of Marriage; Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City, Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development; Bishop Michael C. Barber of Oakland, Calif., Committee on Catholic Education; Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City, Kan., Committee on Pro-Life Activities; and Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York, Committee for Religious Liberty.