

THE  
*Eucharist*  
GOD'S GREATEST GIFT

 **The Criterion**

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In anticipation of the National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis on July 17-21, this special issue celebrates the impact of the Eucharist and eucharistic adoration on people's lives of faith.



San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone elevates a monstrance as he blesses the California city as part of the beginning of the western route of the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage on May 19. (OSV News photo/Bob Roller)



A display showing Blessed Carlo Acutis and a monstrance is seen near his tomb at the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Assisi, Italy, in this Oct. 3, 2020, file photo. The U.S. bishops chose Blessed Acutis as the patron of the first year of a three-year National Eucharistic Revival. The Italian teen, who is set to be canonized by Pope Francis, had a great love of the Eucharist and used his technology skills to build an online database of eucharistic miracles around the world. The National Eucharistic Congress will be held on July 17-21 in Indianapolis. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

## Embracing the Journey: ‘The Eucharist is the highway to heaven’

*“The Eucharist is the highway to heaven. When people sit in the sun, they become tan, but when they sit before Eucharistic Jesus, they become saints.”*  
—Blessed Carlo Acutis

Those words from soon-to-be-saint Carlo Acutis speak beautifully about the Eucharist, which another saint of our time, Pope St. John Paul II, called our Catholic faith’s “greatest gift.”

Acutis, who died at age 15 in 2006, spoke profoundly in his short life about his love for the Eucharist and his devotion to the Blessed Mother. Drawing from these sources, he was able to use his computer skills to create an online database of eucharistic miracles around the world. In that effort and in his life, he offers a prophetic witness of how all people, young and old, can live their vocation in service to the Gospel—no matter how long or short their earthly journey.

His life also offers affirmative affirmation that today’s young people—Acutis would be in his 30’s if he were alive today—have a saintly role model who grew up in their lifetime. And his devotion to the Eucharist is something people of all ages can learn from and embrace.

As we approach the National Eucharistic Congress (NEC) scheduled for July 17-21 in Indianapolis, the staff of *The Criterion* has compiled a special issue focusing on the Eucharist. Many are new articles written by our staff; others are stories from past issues that have strong eucharistic ties that we felt are worth sharing again.

Among the new stories is a conversation with our shepherd Archbishop Charles C. Thompson about the NEC. He talks extensively about the impact that the Eucharist and eucharistic adoration have had in his life and can have in people’s lives, including helping them draw others closer to Christ.

The regular July 5 issue of *The Criterion* is the center 12 pages of this commemorative issue. The majority of our weekly features are included there.

We hope and pray the stories shared in this commemorative publication help each of you on your eucharistic journey. Blessed Carlo Acutis, pray for us!

—Mike Krokos, editor



Catholics joining the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage’s visit to the National Shrine of Our Lady of Champion on June 16 in Champion, Wis., begin a 1.7-mile eucharistic rosary procession. An estimated 2,000 people turned out for the day’s events. (OSV News photo/Sam Lucero)

**“Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me.’ ”**

—Jesus (Luke 22:19)

# Deepening 'a eucharistic heart' guides Archbishop Thompson's faith and his hopes for the Eucharistic Congress

By John Shaughnessy

Looking back across the years, Archbishop Charles C. Thompson remembers the moment as a pivotal time in his life.

Similar to most people at some point in their lives, the archbishop—then a young seminarian—was experiencing a moment of anxiety in which he knew he had to turn to God for help.

"I was very shy when I went to seminary," the archbishop recalled about his early days at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad in the early 1980s. "I was supposed to read at Mass the next day for the first time in community, and I was very anxious.

"I just went and sat before the Blessed Sacrament for an hour that night. I remember saying, 'God, if you want me to be a priest, you have to help me get over this fear.' I just remember a peace came over me. And that's what I've experienced over the years."

The archbishop shared that story during a conversation with *The Criterion* about the upcoming National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis on July 17-21, a conversation in which he also talked extensively about the impact that the Eucharist and eucharistic adoration have had in his life and can have in people's lives, including helping them draw others closer to Christ.

Here are key insights from that conversation.

## The need for the Eucharist in our lives

"At confirmations, I sometimes remind people that we have the Indianapolis 500, and these cars zoom around the track. But they have to come in for pit stops. Because without the fuel, they can't make it to the finish line," the archbishop noted. "The Eucharist is our fuel.

"That's why it's not a mere symbol for us. That's why it's so important for us to understand that the Eucharist is the body and blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ. This is what nourishes and sustains us to carry on the mission entrusted to us—to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to others. We don't get to the finish line on our own without God's grace and without the grace of the Eucharist."

## A recommendation for making the most of eucharistic adoration

"It's a surrender," Archbishop Thompson began. "For me, I think of John the Baptist, 'I must decrease. He must increase' [Jn 3:30]. I have to surrender myself. Ultimately, we're pouring out our hearts and our minds to Christ.

"I love the Emmaus story, how Jesus appears to the two disciples, and lets them pour out their hearts. Once they've emptied themselves, he now can speak to them, and they hear. How do we empty ourselves so we're ready to be filled with his grace, his peace, his mercy, his wisdom—whatever we need to recognize God's plan at work in our lives, even amidst the hardship and pain, the suffering and uncertainty? It's being able to be silent and patient and let him speak to us."

## The importance of eucharistic adoration in his life

"Praying before the Blessed Sacrament has always been a part of my life for as long as I can remember," the archbishop said. "I remember moments in my life, whether in seminary, as a priest, as a bishop, that I take my concerns—whatever's weighing on my heart or my mind—and sit before the Blessed Sacrament. How do I give it over to him?"

"It's not so much a power I feel as a peace, that I'm not alone in this. Christ takes it upon himself. Just as we share in the Eucharist, we share in the responsibilities and the challenges and the hopes and the fears and the concerns. I've had a great peace come over me very often. It's pretty much a daily thing."

## His experience of celebrating Mass for the first time 37 years ago and now

"In some ways, the first time was almost surreal," the archbishop said. "You know who you are as a human being. You know your faults and your weaknesses and



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson elevates the Eucharist during a Mass on June 29, 2020, in SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis. In describing the impact of the Eucharist, the archbishop says, "It's Jesus at work here in the lives of people." (File photo by Sean Gallagher)

your humanness. You see other priests that you admire as being holy men of God, men who seem so dedicated and faith-filled and spiritual. And all of a sudden, you're now the one doing it. And you're thinking, 'How can this be? I'm not near to what those guys seem to be.'

"There are many ways to appear holy, but authentic holiness is when we're in full communion with the will of God. I remind myself that it's not how we feel or our own way of thinking, but how are we truly in communion, discerning the will of God. That's what fills us, what's lacking in us.

"So, as I'm consecrating the host, I'm reminded that—as the saints have said through the centuries—it's not the merit of the man. It is God's grace working through me, despite all the limitations of my humanity, that fills me as I consecrate the host. I knew that 37 years ago, and I think of it even today."

## The gift and the experience of sharing the Eucharist with the faithful

"The great thing for any priest, hopefully, is the reminder that something greater than ourselves is at work here, something much greater than anything I can conceive, let alone manufacture—that is, Christ himself," Archbishop Thompson said. "It's Jesus at work here in the lives of people. Jesus is being presented through my hands, but it's Jesus that they take with them.

"As Jesus said at the Last Supper, 'This is my body, this is my blood. Do this in memory of me' [Lk 22:19-20]. He gave us that grace. He made that reality possible to us by his own institution of the Eucharist for all time, not just on that night. Obviously, that's what gives meaning to Good Friday. When he dies on the cross, and blood and water flow from his side, it represents that what he did on Holy Thursday is now being given to us for all time, that it's perpetuated throughout the course of salvation history."

## His hopes for the National Eucharistic Revival and Congress

In talking about his hopes, Archbishop Thompson emphasized a thought shared by Bishop Andrew H. Cozzens of the Diocese of Crookston, Minn., who is the chairman of the board of the National Eucharistic Congress Inc.

"I love the words that Bishop Cozzens has used as a key focus of the revival and the Congress: 'We are cultivating a eucharistic heart.' What we want to do is cultivate a eucharistic heart in the people of God, within ourselves. The Eucharist derives from a Greek word that means to 'give thanks.' So, how are we as a people rooted in a deep awareness of gratitude—that all we are and all we have is a gift from God?"

"Our life, our being, our dignity, everything about us, is rooted in God's grace—having been created in God's image, and having been given his Son and his passion, death and resurrection for our salvation.

"I like those words, 'cultivating a eucharistic heart.' That's a good way to think of how this revival and congress will hopefully instill in us a deeper awareness of that eucharistic heart—as individuals, as families, as parishes, as dioceses, as a Church throughout the United States."

## Connecting the National Eucharistic Congress to the larger community

"One of the things we've talked about around here is how does this connect not just to Catholics but our larger community," the archbishop said. "Every time we come to Mass, there is a transformative aspect to that. We really never leave the same as we came in. In opening ourselves to receiving grace through word and sacrament, we're transformed. So, the eucharistic revival and congress is all about being transformed.

"We need to be open to encounter and conversion. Conversion is a lifelong process for all of us. And that conversion happens by our willingness to be open to encounter. To encounter, first and foremost, the person of Jesus Christ in word, sacrament and service. To encounter him in our relationships, whether it's a stranger, someone we meet or a longtime friend, or someone with whom we work or for whom we work.

"So, there's that transforming aspect of impacting our community and our world. It's how will this lead to the deepening of our eucharistic heart. Our faith in the Eucharist should underlie how we go about transforming the world with the good news of Jesus. Our conversations have been about, 'What will the community look like after the Eucharistic Congress? Will our community, our city, be any better off?'"

See ARCHBISHOP, page 4A

**"Jesus has made Himself the Bread of Life to give us life. Night and day, He is there. If you really want to grow in love, come back to the Eucharist, come back to that Adoration."**

**—St. Teresa of Calcutta**

# Joy marks a Cinderella moment and 'the greatest love ever'

By John Shaughnessy

It was a touching moment of communion—on a day when children were about to receive their first Communion.

In the hours before the Mass a few years ago, a group of mothers held a brunch for their daughters, a time of bonding before this life-changing moment.

As all the first-arriving girls glowed like visions of angels in their white dresses, tights, shoes and veils, one of their second-grade classmates came in and immediately noticed how she didn't fit in with the way her friends looked.

"She was coming into the Church on her own," recalls Kerry Schlimgen, parish catechetical leader for St. Simon the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis.



Kerry Schlimgen

"Her dad is a single dad, and he's not Catholic. And he did not understand that the girls wear white dresses. He had his daughter in a beautiful dress, but it wasn't white. When she walked in, she recognized that she didn't have a white dress on. And while it's not about the dress, it is important for a little second grader to fit in.

"All the moms noticed that, and within—it seemed like 10 minutes—these moms came in with white dresses, tights, shoes and headpieces. We had a Cinderella moment with her. She picked the dress she wanted. She found the shoes that fit and the tights that fit. She found the perfect thing she wanted for her hair. Her dad got her dressed. All the girls were waiting outside the door, and when she came out, they all just clapped and hugged her.

"It was such a sweet little moment of unity, of how our community is just one."

### 'There's nothing more beautiful we can give these kids'

Even as she shares that touching story, Schlimgen knows in her heart that there was a greater moment of unity and beauty awaiting the girls and the boys in the sacrament of the Eucharist that day.



Savannah Cagna glows on the day this spring that she received her first Communion at St. Simon the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis.

It came later when the children received the body and blood of Christ for the first time.

And that moment of unity and beauty occurred again at St. Simon Parish on the weekend of April 27-28 when 99 children received their first Communion in three Masses at the parish church.

"The theme we really concentrate on is living through Christ, with Christ and in Christ," says Schlimgen, who prepares the children for the sacrament with the help of her assistant, Ashley Hyre. "I want them to know who they are receiving. I tell them, 'You are receiving Jesus Christ, the greatest love ever. Let Jesus dwell in you all the days of your life.'"

The impact of receiving Communion for the first time left its mark on the second-grade students.

"Receiving the Eucharist felt like I was hugged by Jesus," said Olivia Perry. "To receive the Eucharist, you feel like you are brave, and it is amazing."

Rhys Braun noted, "I had Jesus in my body and heart, and it was wonderful."

The joy for Skylar Parsons was overwhelming: "Receiving the Eucharist made me feel loved, so so so loved."

Simon Hull said, "It was really like a miracle to receive Jesus."

Witnessing the children receive the Eucharist still touches Schlimgen, even after 10 years of preparing them and their families for the sacrament.

"I am weeping the whole time, the Holy Spirit is inside of me, and I'm trembling because I am just overjoyed," she says. "It's overwhelming and unbelievable that we have a Savior who has done what he has done for us, and he remains in this holy, catholic Church."

"I want them to hold on to Jesus Christ all the days of their life. Christ is the pre-requisite to a successful life. I mean, you could go on and do whatever you want, but if you do it without Christ, you haven't completed your mission. Because we were created for Jesus. It's the greatest love that will ever enter you and dwell inside of you. There's nothing more beautiful we can give these kids."

Her love of the Eucharist—and the children receiving that sacrament for the first time—also shows in the special way she helps prepare the second graders and their families for the sacrament of reconciliation.

### 'We see emotions. We see joy'

"We used to do one or two reconciliation nights when all the families would come, but it would be more social than a holy experience," Schlimgen notes. "We wanted to make it to be realistic, of what it was meant to be—very sacred."

Now, each family has their own dedicated time in church for the sacrament of reconciliation. The lights are turned down low, creating a sense of calm. In that atmosphere, the child preparing for his or her first Communion lights a candle, drawing the flame from a larger candle that's called "the Christ candle."

"We tell them that Jesus is the light of the world.



Elle Dalesandro of St. Simon the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis receives the Eucharist from Deacon James Wood as part of her first Communion at the parish church this spring. (Photos courtesy of Jennifer Driscoll Photography)

And we remember that we are a part of Jesus Christ, and we are called to be his disciples and be the light of the world," Schlimgen says. "So, the flame burns within us because Jesus lives within us, and the more we receive the sacraments and the more we stay close to God, the brighter that light will shine."

As life-changing as the sacrament of the Eucharist can be, so is the impact of the sacrament of reconciliation in this moment for the children and their families.

"I could write a book about the stories that have happened during this moment of reconciliation," Schlimgen says. "We work just as much with the families as we do with the children. We see emotions. We see joy."

"It's tender to see a mom and dad who have had some issues in their relationship come together for their child and see them say the family prayer together and how it impacts them. They will reach out and talk about Christ and forgiveness for themselves and their marriage and their relationship. We've seen reconciliation happen in families because of the way we do this. It's so beautiful to be there and watch God moving the wind as he does."

That thought leads Schlimgen back to a focus on the Eucharist and the impact she wants it to have on people's lives. She talks about how she stresses to families the need to make their child's first Communion a continuing presence in their lives, to keep them coming back for Mass to deepen their relationship with Christ.

"I believe in Jesus Christ," she says. "I believe in family, and I believe in each soul. And I believe in the holy, catholic Church and the sacraments. And I see Jesus reaching down, presenting himself to us in every sacrament, every minute."

"I just wish every soul would come to know their Creator and live for the greatest love ever, and that is Jesus Christ." †

## ARCHBISHOP

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### Connecting the congress to the mission of the universal Church

"As the host bishop, I'm part of the National Eucharistic Revival and Congress board," the archbishop noted. "One of the things I've tried to keep before us is that the eucharistic revival and congress have to be connected with everything else about the Church."

"How is this connected to synodality? When Pope Francis talks about synodality, he always connects it to the Eucharist. We need to make sure we're connecting the eucharistic revival and congress with

synodality. And also with 'Laudato Si,' care of creation, and all of our social justice teachings and all of our respect life principles. It all has to connect."

### Being involved in the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage and hosting the congress

Since the celebration of Pentecost on the weekend of May 18-19, the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage has been making its way to Indianapolis along four routes—north, east, south and west—across the country.

Archbishop Thompson will take part in the St. Juan Diego route coming from the south on July 9, as a monstrance containing the Holy Eucharist is passed to him by Archbishop Shelton T. Fabre

of the Archdiocese of Louisville, Ky., the place where Archbishop Thompson grew up, was ordained a priest and served for 24 years before being named bishop of the Evansville Diocese in Indiana in 2011.

"They requested that I'd be on the Louisville side, since I'm a son of the Archdiocese of Louisville, and walk across the bridge with Archbishop Fabre from Louisville—where I came from, to where I am now," said Archbishop Thompson, who has led the Church in central and southern Indiana since 2017. "I'm humbled that Louisville would want me to be involved like that. I've been gone from there 13 years. That connectedness is very important to me."

After receiving the monstrance from

Archbishop Fabre, Archbishop Thompson will lead a eucharistic procession to Jeffersonville, first for a planned prayer service with Archbishop Fabre at Big Four Park and then to St. Augustine Church in Jeffersonville.

On July 16, Archbishop Thompson will celebrate a noon Mass at St. John the Evangelist Church in Indianapolis for the pilgrims who have traveled from the four points of the country. The congress begins the next day, on July 17.

"It's an honor that the congress will be in Indianapolis," the archbishop said. "A little overwhelming, too. We're a little anxious. We want to make sure everything gets done well and represents the local Church and the local community well." †

Dear young people, do we want to be happy and joyful? Let us love Jesus in the Sacrament with all our hearts.

—St. John Bosco

# From heartbreak to love, woman embraces the Eucharist's grace in her life, her work

By John Shaughnessy

She apologizes for crying, but the tears are fitting and natural as Jessica Inabnitt talks about the greatest loss in her life.

Sitting in her office, with a wall sign behind her desk proclaiming, "Do small things with great love," Inabnitt points to a nearby framed photo of her son Tyler on his graduation day from high school.

"My son passed away in 2009," she says, wiping tears from her cheeks. "He was 18 when he passed, a freshman at Ivy Tech. He committed suicide. Very tragic and unexpected."

She then shares a thought that has grown deep in her heart since her son's death.

"We had fallen away from Mass and making it a priority. There was a lot of guilt I had to work through. But the Lord is so good to us," says Inabnitt, a member of St. John the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis.

"There's some good coming out of this. The Lord makes good out of everything."

That goodness began to grow for her about 10 years ago when a friend invited her to share a holy hour of eucharistic adoration—at 11 p.m. on Fridays.

"At first, I said, 'What are we doing? This is Friday night. I'm not going to want to go.' But very quickly that changed. Just the peace that happens during eucharistic adoration," she says. "There's nowhere else where you find that peace."

"When you've reached the end of the week and you've worked through the struggles of life and work, and you just sit in that time and reflect, it changes your heart. It changes your whole outlook on things that you stress about, that you're anxious about, that you're angry about. You take those things to the Lord, and you let them go. I became more grounded in all those things because of that holy hour."

Her conversations with God have included some tough ones about Tyler.

"I got to express myself to the Lord," she says.

"Nobody thinks you should go in there and yell at him, but



The deep love between a mother and her child shines through in this photo of Jessica and Tyler Inabnitt. (Submitted photo)

he already knows you're mad at him, so you might as well get it off your chest. You ask all these questions, but there's also the beauty and the grace that come from eucharistic adoration and prayer in front of Christ. You start to recognize the graces. There was a lot of peace in there."

The grace and the peace have blossomed even more in her appreciation of receiving the Eucharist, a time that draws her close to Tyler. In her readings about the faith, she has embraced the thought that when people receive Communion, not only is Christ present, but they are also surrounded by "all the angels and the saints and the cloud of witnesses" during that time.

"All those who passed before us are right there with us," she says. "I always imagine Tyler with me at Mass, receiving Christ at the same time as I am."

Her relationship with Christ has also led to a deep commitment to two of the principles he has asked all people to embrace—to serve others and to strive to bring them closer to him.

She served as the director of mission and discipleship for women at St. John the Evangelist Parish for six years.

"During my time at St. John, it was a lot about building my prayer life and building my relationship with the Lord so that I could inspire others and bring others to understand the Lord is there for them in a very personal relationship—and how to engage that relationship, how to stay in that relationship and lean on the Lord for all things.

"It was a life-changing experience for me. It was a time of great growth for my faith, and it was also spiritually rewarding to watch the growth of the women in the parish in their faith journeys, too."

For the past three years, she has worked as the director of refugee services for the archdiocese's Catholic Charities Indianapolis, helping people from around the world make the transition to life in the United States after fleeing from such countries as Afghanistan, Congo, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Venezuela.

"These refugees have been invited by the U.S. government to come here and resettle here," she says, noting that Catholic Charities Indianapolis will assist about 500 refugees this year, providing help with housing, health care, employment, cultural orientation and education for their children.

"Everything we do is to help them toward their



As the director of refugee services for the archdiocese's Catholic Charities Indianapolis, Jessica Inabnitt uses her love of the Eucharist to guide her in helping refugees from around the world make a successful transition to life in the United States. Here, she poses for a photo with two members of her staff, Ahmad Ghaznawi, center, a job placement specialist who is a refugee from Afghanistan, and Anthony Khual, a cultural orientation specialist who is originally from Myanmar. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)

self-sufficiency. We are helping them resettle so they can be successful here."

She views the work as a mission of human dignity.

"We serve folks from all different religions and cultures. My growth and my love of the Eucharist have grounded me to understand that, at the very core, we serve because of human dignity and respect of life.

"Refugee resettlement doesn't always get included in sanctity of life discussions, but it is absolutely part of it. If we fight against the death penalty and we support life in the womb, we also need to put refugees and immigrants in that category as right to life."

Her devotion to the Eucharist and eucharistic adoration has her looking forward to the National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis on July 17-21.

Besides attending the event each day, she also plans to volunteer at St. John the Evangelist Church, which will serve as a perpetual adoration chapel during the congress, with the Eucharist being exposed each day for 24 hours.

She also plans to be in Lucas Oil Stadium when tens of thousands of people come together for eucharistic adoration.

"Just to think that Jesus is going to be in Lucas Stadium with so many people in adoration—the power of that prayer is overwhelming. I get emotional about it—how life-changing it will be, and possibly how world-changing it will be. All those prayers in the presence of Jesus."

She anticipates that moment will bring her even closer to two of the most cherished relationships she has known in her life.

"I am Christ's beloved daughter," she says. "His love for me is greater than I can ever imagine. He brings good out of everything. Even through my stubbornness, he's there for me, and he loves me."

"And I get to know Tyler better through knowing the Lord, through my relationship with Christ." †

## A desire for the Eucharist leads a young adult home to his faith

(This story is a shortened version of the one that first appeared in The Criterion on May 3, 2024.)

By John Shaughnessy

We all want that feeling of home—a place where we are welcomed, where we feel we belong.

On a cold night of sleet and rain in early April of this year, 26-year-old Kevin Bedel entered a place that has provided a sense of home for him.

He walked into the brightly-lit gym of St. Luke the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis, smiling as he anticipated

the connection of friendship, community and faith that has unfolded nearly every Wednesday night this spring for him and another 159 young adult Catholics who participate in the IndyCatholic volleyball league.

And while Bedel's involvement in the league gives him a setting where he feels he belongs, it also reflects an even more significant homecoming for him—his return to his Catholic faith.

"I was part of a Protestant group for a while, and I found there was something missing from their worship," says the red-hair, bearded Bedel.

"You'd go to church, and it was

very feel-goody. But something was missing.

"And what was missing was the body and blood of Jesus Christ. The Catholic reverence and our celebration of the Eucharist is what I was missing—the real, true presence of Jesus Christ. It hit me at a Good Friday service at St. Monica two years ago. Getting to adore the cross, it was like, 'Yep, this is home. This is where I grew up. I was away, but now I'm home.'"

The reconnection to his faith became a bridge to increased friendships for Bedel, a member of St. Christopher Parish in Indianapolis.

"I said, 'Well, if I'm going to pursue

my faith, I need to be involved in the community.' And coincidentally, it worked out to get into volleyball. I found out about it through a friend at St. John the Evangelist Parish downtown. He said you should sign up for volleyball.

"I had a lot of fun and made a lot of really good connections. You know by nature of everyone being Catholic that they all have the same values, and that they generally have the same morals. You know it's a good group of people before you even step foot into the building. After being around the community only a few times last year, I was so welcomed by everyone." †

**"Out of the darkness of my life, so much frustrated, I put before you the one great thing to love on Earth: the Blessed Sacrament. ... There you will find romance, glory, honour, fidelity and the true way of all your loves on Earth, and more than that: Death."**

—J.R.R. Tolkien, author

# Putting Jesus at the center: Bloomington parish experiences fruits of a decade-long eucharistic revival

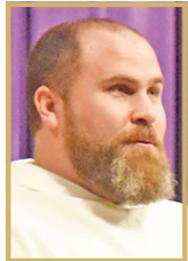
By Sean Gallagher

Tens of thousands of Catholics from across the United States are expected to take part in the National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis on July 17-21.

The event promises to be the culminating event of the National Eucharistic Revival, launched in 2022 with the goal of renewing the life of the Church in the U.S. through deepening Catholics' relationship with Christ in the Eucharist.

A parish that has already embraced that goal is St. Paul Catholic Center in Bloomington, which primarily serves Catholic students at Indiana University (IU).

"We made a conscious decision to put Jesus Christ at the center of it," says Dominican Father Patrick Hyde,



Fr. Patrick Hyde, O.P.

St. Paul's pastor. "And Jesus comes to us primarily in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist."

The parish's revival, 10 years in the making with that emphasis on the Eucharist, has led to several transformative results.

More than 20 IU graduates have served as missionaries for the Fellowship of Catholic University students (FOCUS). At least a dozen graduates have become seminarians or entered religious life. And just in the past year, Father Patrick officiated at 11 weddings of IU alumni.

"For me, the most rewarding part is to see that what we gave them here was something that could feed them forever," he said. "To see the myriad ways that they're living out their faith in participation in parishes, in young adult ministries, in working for the Church, as professionals, as husbands, wives, mothers and fathers is the really neat part."

The eucharistic revival that's taken place at St. Paul, Father Patrick added, is something that he believes can happen anywhere—at urban, suburban and rural parishes of any size.

"If you make that generous gift of self and time and effort for the Lord, he will never be outdone in generosity," he said. "The beautiful thing about the eucharistic revival is that the Lord is not calling an inner-city parish to have the same kind of revival as a Newman center or a rural parish."

## Receiving and sharing the Eucharist

When the staff at St. Paul sought a decade ago to put Christ at the center of an attempt to renew its campus ministry, it began this effort by making the Mass, eucharistic adoration and the sacrament of penance more available for IU students.

The purpose of the revival at St. Paul was ultimately to renew the faith of IU students, to form "young men and women to have their own eucharistic renewal and revival, a conversion of heart, mind and life to Christ," said Father Patrick.

Jackie Parkes experienced such a conversion when she was a student at IU from 2016-20.



Jackie Parkes

That power of a relationship with Christ in the Eucharist washed over her in the June after her freshman year on the feast of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, traditionally known as *Corpus Christi*. That's when the fact hit her that the Church's belief in Christ's real presence in the Eucharist "wasn't just some random teaching that someone made up.

"Jesus himself taught it," she said. "If this is true, this will radically change our lives. If Jesus himself was here, we would be filling football stadiums. People would be camping out. People would be traveling to come and see Jesus in the flesh, in person."

This led her to "wrestle with the question of how my time could best be spent." As a college student, many demands were made on her time, and countless opportunities for both fun and personal growth abounded. But Parkes' experience of Christ in the

Eucharist focused her use of her time like a laser.

"My time was best spent growing in relationship with the Lord, particularly through the Eucharist," she recalled. "He was giving himself fully to me in the Eucharist and I wanted to receive that.

"And I wanted to help other people do the same, to understand the truth and reality of Jesus' full presence in the Eucharist. If I've been given this great gift, I wanted that for other people, too."

Other people at St. Paul were experiencing that draw to Christ. During her time at IU, Parkes noticed attendance at the parish's mid-day Mass increase from a handful of worshippers to dozens, "and, on a good day, closer to 100 people."

## 'To know and love Jesus as a person'

Since graduating from IU in 2020, Parkes has served as a FOCUS missionary for the past four years in Wisconsin, following in the footsteps of FOCUS missionaries who mentored in the faith at IU. Later this summer, she will go to work as a regional program director for FOCUS at its Denver headquarters.

And she's not alone in experiencing the transformative power of the Eucharist at St. Paul.

Augie and Gabi Bigot are starting to explore how their Catholic faith, which was deepened at St. Paul, will shape their lives as spouses.

Married last December at St. Alphonsus Liguori Parish in Zionsville, Ind., in the Lafayette Diocese, Gabi is currently a medical student at Marian University in Indianapolis, while Augie works as a business information technology consultant.

Gabi, who graduated from IU a year ago, was attracted to spending time at St. Paul in her freshman year because of students she met there, but also because of the power of Christ's presence in the Blessed Sacrament in eucharistic adoration.

"I knew that that was where truth was and where Christ was," she said.

Augie, who had been active in his faith while growing up in Carmel, Ind., still "felt like something was missing" when he went to IU. Getting involved at St. Paul and opening himself to the Mass, eucharistic adoration, Bible studies and retreats helped him realize that what had been missing was an understanding of the purpose of it all, which he discovered was "to know and love Jesus as a person, because he is one."

Focusing on this relationship with Christ led Augie to him in the Eucharist.

"Jesus knew that to be really good friends you have to see each other, so he physically brings himself to me and everyone under the appearance of bread and wine in the Eucharist," he said. "But because I knew him who loves us so, he invited me to reach out to others and share that same love with them."

The love he experienced in Christ he shared in a special way with Gabi, whom he met when they were both IU students.

They realized early on that their relationship might be important to them both, so they took it to prayer.

"At the end of a 54-day novena, we were like, 'Yep, we're supposed to be together,'" recalled Gabi.

Seeking God's guidance was important to Gabi because of the eucharistic revival she experienced at St. Paul through adoration and daily Mass.

"There was an abundance of peace that I had never had before in my life," she said. "My complete viewpoint on how I look at daily living really changed. My days became, 'How does God want me to live today?' instead of, 'What's my to-do list?' What am I actually supposed to be doing to glorify God and not necessarily what I think is the right thing to be doing?"

The faith that Augie and Gabi share, centered on a love for Christ in the Eucharist that was deepened in them at St. Paul, is now at the heart of their marriage.

"I thank God every day for the wonderful gift of my wife and recognize that he put Gabi in my life to help me grow closer to him, but also put me in her life to help her grow closer to him," Augie said. "However easy it is to lose sight of him amidst the craziness of daily life, we want to strive to keep him at the middle of everything."



Augie and Gabi Bigot, married last December, are graduates of Indiana University in Bloomington who had their faith renewed at St. Paul Catholic Center during a eucharistic revival that's been going on in the parish during the past 10 years. (Submitted photo)

"I'm quite of the opinion that if we can spend our time and energy working on that, he can take care of the rest."

## Being one with Christ in the Eucharist

Although St. Paul is a parish primarily focused on college campus ministry, Father Patrick said that the eucharistic revival it has experienced during the past decade can happen at parishes of all sizes in big cities and small towns.

What's key, though, is for parish leaders to avoid responding to proposed changes in ministry with "We've tried that before, and it didn't work" or "That's just not how we do things."

"If we continue down the path that we have been following for the past 30 to 40 years in terms of young Catholics leaving the Church and us continuing the same programs that [haven't] stemmed that tide, then we're, in a sense, signing our own death warrant," Father Patrick said. "If we're going to go out, let's go out boldly and courageously."

Starting a eucharistic revival in parishes can involve adding the Eucharist to programs already happening. But it takes determination and sacrifice to do that, Father Patrick said.

"We're holding everyone to a higher standard," he said. "Are we willing to spend time together as a parish pastoral council praying before the Blessed Sacrament for 15 to 30 minutes before we have a meeting?"

While aspects of a eucharistic revival in parishes can vary from community to community, Father Patrick is certain it can happen because of Christ's gift of himself in the Eucharist that he offers to all.

"The Lord is calling us to be one with him and become one with him in his body in the realities that we face," Father Patrick said. "This is the gift that he offers to the whole Church in all times and in all places." †

**"Know for certain that the time you spend with devotion before this most divine Sacrament will be the time that will bring you the most good in this life and will console you the most in your death and in eternity."**

**—St. Alphonsus Mary Liguori**



# 'An amazing opportunity': High school's eucharistic procession touches hearts

(Editor's note: This story is a revised version of the one that first appeared in The Criterion on January 26, 2024.)

By John Shaughnessy

Katie Hibner is often moved by the way high school students live their faith, but there are still times when they exceed even her hopes.

One of those moments occurred when Roncalli High School in Indianapolis held its first eucharistic procession on Nov. 3, 2023.

"Honestly, I was amazed that we pulled it off with so many people," said Hibner, the director of campus ministry at Roncalli where about 1,100 students attended during the 2023-24 school year. "We had never done it before. The students were prepped really well, but really what was so amazing—and I got teary-eyed quite often during it—was just the extreme reverence that our students and our staff showed. It was unbelievable."

Hibner was also thrilled by the impact it had on the students.

"A lot of students said they'd never done it before, and they enjoyed it. In fact, it was a half day of school when we did it. Students told me, 'Man, I really thought about not coming to school because it was a half day, but I really wanted to see what this is all about.' So, they came, and they were pleasantly surprised. It was a really cool experience."

Being part of the procession also was powerful for Hibner, who watched it unfold from a defining perspective.

"I was very fortunate enough to stand in the back of the line," she said. "As the students were weaving into the procession, I followed the back of the line. As I looked in front of me, I thought, 'O my gosh, I am so lucky to be part of it!' It was such a humbling, very cool feeling for me that I got to be involved in the planning of it.

"It's just a reminder that the Church is so big, and our faith is so much bigger than us."

Roncalli strived to keep the momentum of the eucharistic procession continuing forward during the school year.

"We have adoration twice a week before school," Hibner said. "On Wednesday mornings, we have students who lead music during it. On Fridays, it's a silent adoration. Both are really well-attended. Once



Father Stephen Giannini, pastor of SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi Parish in Greenwood and St. Martin of Tours Parish in Martinsville, carries a monstrance on Nov. 3, 2023, during a eucharistic procession at Roncalli High School in Indianapolis. (Submitted photo)

they go the first few times, it's like, 'O my gosh, I really do need this!'

Ava Maled is a Roncalli student who has embraced every part of the school's efforts to celebrate the importance of the Eucharist in a person's life. She said she loves eucharistic adoration because she's able "to look at God and have God look back at me because he's truly present in the Eucharist."

She also views the school's eucharistic procession

as a taste of the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage that is headed to Indianapolis for the National Eucharistic Congress on July 17-21.

"People are processing to it from all four corners of the country," Ava said. "I thought it was cool to have a mini-experience of what will be happening in our country. It was an amazing opportunity to worship and see all of your classmates gathering to worship the same God as you." †

## New Catholics speak of the power of receiving their first Eucharist

By Natalie Hoefler

Each year since I started working as a reporter for *The Criterion* in 2013, I've been blessed with telling the stories of individuals throughout central and southern Indiana who have been received into the full communion of the Church, primarily during a parish Easter Vigil Mass.

One of the most touching moments for me as I interview these new Catholics is the awe and love they express for Christ in the Eucharist.

Many share the anticipation and eagerness they felt receiving their first Communion. Some shed tears at the memory of the moment. Others struggle to find words that adequately convey the experience.

Here are quotes from new Catholics who shared the impact of their first Communion and what Christ's true presence had come to mean to them after a lifetime without the Eucharist.

"A lot of people don't understand the huge pull and desire to have the Eucharist. ... You have no idea how happy I am, how excited I am to be receiving the Eucharist. The

sacraments, to me, are very dear."  
—James Foutz, *St. John the Apostle Parish in Bloomington, 2014*

"It was really emotional. After Communion, I sat in the pew and I felt something. I just started crying. It's hard for me to cry, but it happened. I felt that power."  
—Gilles Nouns, *St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis, 2015*

"My first holy Communion was beautiful. I came back to my pew, and all I could say over and over was, 'Thank you, thank you, thank you.'"  
—Daniel Tews, *Annunciation Parish in Brazil, 2016*

"I like the feeling of God being present [in the Eucharist], that I'm actually worshipping the living God."  
—Cassandra Guerra, *St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Fortville, 2019*

"You're taking in the body of Christ—it's not a symbol. You're literally ingesting Christ into your soul and body to be one of his disciples."  
—Brian Hall, *St. Lawrence Parish in Indianapolis, 2021*

"After Communion, I just felt happiness."  
—Judy Townsend, *St. Gabriel Parish in Connersville, 2021*

"Not being able to take Communion every day was the worst! I wanted that so bad, especially after understanding what it meant. [Upon receiving Communion at the Easter Vigil Mass,] I'm crying. And Father says, 'Adam, the body of Christ.' I said, 'Finally! Amen!'"  
—Adam Scott, *St. John the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis, 2022*

"[Receiving the Eucharist] was amazing—the sanctity of that and understanding that every little, tiny morsel is God and Jesus. To realize that is very profound. If you think about it, if you pray about it, if you're really earnest about it, it can be life changing. You can feel whole again, transformed."  
—Gayle Blackburn, *St. Malachy Parish in Brownsburg, 2022*

"[Receiving the Eucharist] was like receiving my first kiss from my

beloved. It was grace on grace."  
—Gayle Griffiths, *All Saints Parish in Dearborn County, 2022*

"[Receiving the Eucharist] was the most beautiful thing. I actually felt it heal my soul. I felt I was in my deepest bond with the Lord, and I felt my soul being healed."  
—Olivia Smith, *St. Paul Catholic Center in Bloomington, 2023*

"It was joyful, it was amazing—I was overwhelmed with emotions. I was so happy—I couldn't believe how happy I was! I went back to the pew and just started crying. I've never cried when I was happy before, but I couldn't stop."  
—Aubrey Bihl, *St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Richmond, 2024*

"[Receiving Communion] was everything I'd been waiting for. To think—Jesus' body and blood. There is something so beautiful and intimate about it."  
—Jessica McClain, *SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi Parish, Greenwood, 2024* †



**" 'Well, if it's a symbol, to hell with it.' ... I realize now that this is all I will ever be able to say about it, outside of a story, except that it is the center of existence for me; all the rest of life is expendable."**

**—Flannery O'Connor, author**



Father Michael Keucher, pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Shelbyville, carries a monstrance holding the Blessed Sacrament at the head of a eucharistic procession on June 23, 2019, at the Batesville Deanery faith community. The procession ended with the blessing of the Divine Mercy Chapel, a new perpetual adoration chapel in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. (File photo by Sean Gallagher)



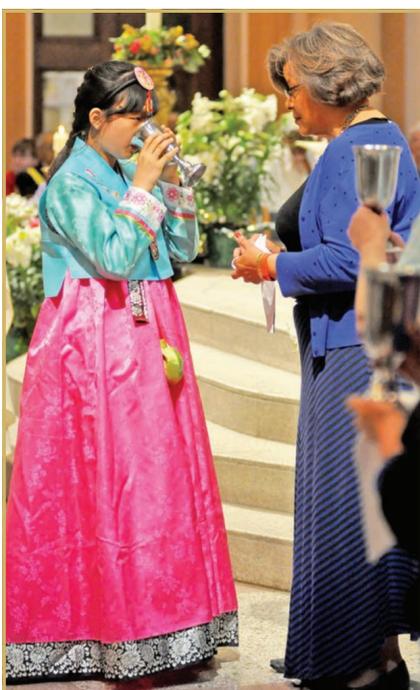
Father Josh Johnson of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, La., presides over Benediction on Nov. 22, 2019, during a night of eucharistic adoration during the National Catholic Youth Conference at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis. (File photo by Sean Gallagher)



Bishop Hre Kung, left, of the Hakha Diocese in Myanmar, celebrates Mass at St. Barnabas Church in Indianapolis on Aug. 4, 2019. Concelebrating is parochial vicar Father Eustace Thang, who ministers to the Chin Catholics of the parish. (File photo by Natalie Hoefler)



A priest incenses a monstrance as part of an evening of adoration on Jan. 5, 2019, during the SEEK 2019 conference in the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis. Behind the priest, approximately 17,000 college students, religious, campus ministers and others knelt in worship of Christ's presence in the Blessed Sacrament within the monstrance. (File photo by Natalie Hoefler)



A woman wearing traditional Korean attire receives the Eucharist during a Mass for Asian and Pacific Islanders at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis on April 12, 2015. (File photo by Natalie Hoefler)



Father Jonathan Meyer, pastor of All Saints Parish in Dearborn County, second from left, and Deacon Robert Decker, join several altar servers and other parishioners in praying before the Blessed Sacrament on March 1, 2017, in the Batesville Deanery faith community's new perpetual adoration chapel on its St. John the Baptist campus in Dover. (File photo by Sean Gallagher)



Father Vincent Lampert, pastor of St. Michael Parish in Brookville, joins in a photo with the children of the parish who received their first Communion on April 21. Spring is traditionally the time when parishes throughout central and southern Indiana celebrate the milestone of children's first Communion (Submitted photo)



Marianhill Father Jean Bosco Ntagwisira, administrator of Holy Angels and St. Rita parishes in Indianapolis, offers the Eucharist to a woman during a Mass celebrating Africa Unity Day at St. Rita Church on June 4, 2023. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)



Father Jayaseelan Sengolraj, pastor of St. Michael Parish in Charlestown, holds a monstrance with the Blessed Sacrament as he leads members of the parish in a eucharistic procession on June 2, the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ, or *Corpus Christi*. (Submitted photo)



A eucharistic procession is seen making its way around the campus of Roncalli High School in Indianapolis as part of the National Zomi American Eucharistic Congress held at the school on July 8-10, 2022. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)



"O boundless charity! Just as you gave us yourself, wholly God and wholly man, so you left us all of yourself as food so that while we are pilgrims in this life, we might not collapse in our weariness but be strengthened by you, heavenly food."

—St. Catherine of Siena



"Very beautiful and joyful too is the spectacle of Christian brotherhood and social equality, which is afforded when men of all conditions, gentle and simple, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, gather round the holy altar, all sharing alike in this heavenly banquet."

—Pope Leo XIII



# Family gives up sleep, makes time to rest with God



(Editor's note: This story is a shortened version of the one that first appeared in The Criterion on April 5, 2024.)

By John Shaughnessy

As the parents of seven children ranging in age from 2 to 17, Meg and Brian Bauer always appreciate a night of good sleep. Yet once a month, they set that dream aside for something they consider more essential for themselves and their family.

On first Fridays at St. Michael Church in Greenfield, the members of the Bauer family take part in eucharistic adoration from 11:30 p.m. to 12:30 a.m.

"Sometimes, it's my husband. Sometimes it's me. Sometimes it's our eldest daughter," Meg says. "Often times, we'll even take the younger ones with us, even if they end up falling asleep.

"It's a good, quiet, restful period to try to listen to God, listen to Jesus, and be there in his presence—to

make the effort to show up and be there with Jesus. I'm really thankful that my husband and I work to make that happen. But it does take effort to show up and be there."

Their 12-year-old daughter Mary speaks for her siblings when she shares how her family has embraced the blessing of eucharistic adoration in their lives.

"For me, it gives an opportunity to know you're in the presence of God completely in the Eucharist," Mary says. "That's your time where you can just freely listen to him and ask him for help."

That monthly commitment connects to a daily ritual in the family life of the Bauers, who gather around a family altar in their home to pray together every night.

"We do special prayers for different things going on in our family's life," Meg says. "It helps raise and recognize the importance of prayer and seeing God in everyday life." †



For Meg and Brian Bauer and their seven children, members of St. Michael Parish in Greenfield, a focus on eucharistic adoration brings them closer to Jesus. (Submitted photo)

## Hispanic Ministry / Felix Navarette

### What is the power of the Eucharist in your life?

The Eucharist is everything, and without him I have nothing!

Since my childhood, faith has been an essential part of my life, I remember attending church frequently, and visiting Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament's chapel accompanied by my grandmother, who continues to be a source of inspiration to me despite



not being physically among us. She introduced me to eucharistic adoration on Thursdays every week. There began a love story that will have no end.

In the relationship that God wants to maintain with us—even knowing that he does not obtain any benefit—there is, in a certain way, a kind of mutual thirst. It's there on our part toward him, as an almost instinctive response, typical of

our mortal nature, as also from him to us. In the latter case, God not only wants to communicate or reveal his lordship to us, he also seeks to dwell among us and remain forever under the appearance of bread.

The words of St. Thomas Aquinas in his well-known hymn "Adoro te devote" perfectly describe the feeling that wells up in my heart when I contemplate the presence of Jesus in the sacred host. This experience of "submitting the heart completely and surrendering completely when contemplating him" has been a great help in my adult life, both in the development of my vocation as a husband and father of four children, and in the exercise of my ministry through the last 12 years.

That help has especially been apparent in the moments of tribulation when everything seemed to collapse around me. All hope seemed to be extinguished after my wife seriously suffered the

consequences of medical negligence during the birth of our youngest son, which left her in intensive care for a week and having to stay almost a month in the hospital. Although that situation seemed to be a slow ordeal, and in the face of not very encouraging prognoses, God acted miraculously, as he sometimes does.

Leaving many people speechless, my wife recovered her health after dozens of procedures. What happened? How did that occur? Well, during all this time that seemed not to pass, in the moments that I could escape from the hospital, I visited Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament in a nearby chapel. My prayer consisted of two things: the recovery of my wife, and the spiritual strength that I needed to move forward. And Jesus listened to me, I'm sure of that!

All that time in his presence was an opportunity for comfort and renewal. I remember it as if it were yesterday, even though almost nine years have passed since that opportunity in which Jesus

wanted to make himself known more deeply to us. How great is God!

How do we stay standing in the midst of difficulties? Where does the strength to move forward come from? How are we so resilient? These are very common questions of our limited humanity. Amid such questions and our humanity, the Eucharist is food for the soul.

Pope Urban IV expressed that reality in the bull that instituted the feast of *Corpus Christi*: "The Eucharist truly restores and nourishes, it satisfies to the highest degree not the body, but the heart; not the flesh, but the spirit; not the viscera but the soul."

Meanwhile, if in my life there is suffering, sadness or anxiety, the recipe will always be the same: frequently consume a small *piece of bread* that is transformed into the body of Christ—and give up completely. It's practical, personal and powerful.

(Felix Navarette is the coordinator of Hispanic ministry in the archdiocese.) †

## Ministerio Hispano / Felix Navarette

### ¿Qué poder tiene la Eucaristía en tu vida?

¡La Eucaristía lo es todo, y sin Él no tenga nada! Desde mi niñez, la fe ha sido parte esencial en mi vida, recuerdo asistir a la iglesia con frecuencia, y visitar la capilla del Santísimo Sacramento acompañado de mi abuela materna —quien continúa siendo hasta hoy, a pesar de no estar físicamente entre nosotros, una fuente de inspiración para mí— ella era *Dama Salesiana* de nuestra Parroquia San Juan Bosco, y me introdujo a la adoración eucarística los jueves de cada semana. Ahí comenzó una historia de amor que no tendrá final.

En la relación que Dios quiere mantener con nosotros —aún sabiendo que El no obtiene ningún beneficio— existe, de cierta forma, una especie de sed mutua, tanto de nosotros hacia Él, como una respuesta casi instintiva, propia de nuestra naturaleza mortal, como también de El hacia nosotros. En este último caso, Dios no solo quiere comunicarse o revelar su Señorío a sus creaturas, sino que busca

morar entre nosotros, y permanecer por siempre bajo las apariencias del pan.

Las palabras de Santo Tomás de Aquino en su muy conocido himno *Adoro te devote* —que de hecho es uno de mis favoritos— describen perfectamente el sentimiento que brota de nuestros corazones al contemplar la presencia de Jesús en la Sagrada Hostia. Esta vivencia de "someter el corazón por completo y rendirnos totalmente al contemplarlo", ha sido de gran ayuda en mi vida de adulto, tanto en el desarrollo de mi vocación como esposo y padre de cuatro hijos, como en el ejercicio de mi ministerio por los últimos 12 años, pero, sobre todo en los momentos de tribulación cuando todo parecía derrumbarse a mi alrededor, y la esperanza parecía apagarse luego que mi esposa sufría gravemente las consecuencias de una negligencia médica durante el nacimiento de nuestro menor hijo, que la dejó en cuidados intensivos

por una semana, y casi un mes internada en el hospital. Aunque aquello parecía ser un calvario lento, y ante los pronósticos no muy alentadores —que caracterizan a algunos profesionales de la ciencia— Dios obró milagrosamente, como suele actuar a veces, dejando a muchos sin palabras y mi esposa recobró la salud tras decenas de procedimientos. ¿Qué sucedió? ¿Cómo ocurrió aquella proeza? Bueno, durante todo este tiempo que parecía no transcurrir, en los momentos que podía escaparme del hospital, visitaba a Jesús en el Santísimo Sacramento en una capilla cercana, mi oración consistía en dos cosas, la recuperación de mi esposa, y la fortaleza espiritual que necesitaba para seguir adelante, y El me escuchaba, ¡de eso estoy seguro! Todo ese tiempo ante su presencia, era una oportunidad de consuelo y renovación, ¡lo recuerdo como si fuese ayer! Han pasado casi 9 años desde aquella oportunidad en la que Jesús

quiso darse a conocer más profundamente a nosotros. ¡Qué grande es Dios!

¿Cómo nos mantenemos en pie en medio de las dificultades? ¿De dónde provienen las fuerzas para seguir adelante? ¿Cómo somos tan resilientes?, son preguntas muy comunes de nuestra humanidad limitada. La Eucaristía es alimento para el alma, lo he escuchado muy a menudo —aunque solo logré comprobarlo al atravesar situaciones complejas— sí, ¡es cierto! "*La Eucaristía restaura y nutre verdaderamente, sacia en sumo grado no el cuerpo, sino el corazón; no la carne, sino el espíritu; no las vísceras sino el alma.*" Papa Urbano IV dijo en la bula que instituyó el *Corpus Christi* en 1264. En tanto, si en mi vida hay sufrimiento, tristeza, o ansiedad, la receta será siempre la misma: Tomar con frecuencia un *pedacito de pan* y rendirse por completo. Es práctico, personal y poderoso. †

**"The effect proper to this Sacrament is the conversion of a man into Christ, so that he may no longer live, but Christ lives in him; consequently, it has the double effect of restoring the spiritual strength he had lost by his sins and defects, and of increasing the strength of his virtues."**



—St. Thomas Aquinas

# A grandparent's desire: Sharing a lasting inheritance across the generations

By John Shaughnessy

While grandparents will gleefully admit that they enjoy spoiling their grandchildren, they have even greater desires for this generation of their family:

They want their grandchildren to know how much they love them. Just as meaningful to them, they hope their grandchildren will embrace the values they have built their lives on—qualities they hope will live in their grandchildren's hearts forever.

That reality shines through in three notes from grandmothers to *The Criterion*, grandmothers who shared their joy in witnessing their grandchildren receive their first Communion—the foundation of the Catholic faith.

At 89, Connie Schneider sent a handwritten letter, apologizing that her arthritis might make it difficult to read. But it was crystal clear from her words how blessed and touched she felt to see her youngest grandchild receive the Eucharist for the first time.

She wrote, "On May 20th, Clara Evelyn Rose Borgert with her classmates processed into St. Pius X Church in Indianapolis singing, 'This Little Light of Mine.' At St. Pius, each family has a whole pew. Parents and child sit at the end, and grandparents, godparents and other family members sit with them. At Communion time, mom, dad and child go up and receive Communion as a family.

"Each family is the only one receiving. Does it take longer? Yes. Is it worth it? Absolutely. Family is the root of faith so making first Communion a family affair is only natural."

Schneider has the same belief about the power of prayer in a person's life, a gift she is pleased that her granddaughter Clara has embraced.

It's easy to imagine Schneider's smile and joy as she wrote, "Clara would come in every night and say her prayers—'God bless mommy and daddy, grandma and me, and all my aunts, uncles, cousins, friends, and all the children that need help.' Then she would add, 'And Fritz, Goldie, Ruby [pets that had died] and Frances, Izzy and Honey [living pets]. I think she has a little St. Francis [of Assisi] in her.'"



Janine Schorsch and her granddaughters Eden, left, and Brooke are all smiles on April 14, the day that Brooke received her first Communion at St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross Church in Bright. (Submitted photo)

In closing, Schneider wrote, "Clara is my last grandchild to make her first Communion. At 89 years old, I never expected to see this beautiful ceremony. Thank you, God."

Judy Hagedorn of St. Mark Parish in Perry County in southern Indiana also sent a short note about the first Communion of her great-grandson, Gabriel Foley. It took place on May 5 at St. Alphonsus Liguori Church in Zionsville, Ind., in the Lafayette Diocese.

Hagedorn also included a photo of her and Gabriel beaming together with three other great-grandchildren.

"It is so wonderful to see how serious and responsible they take the sacrament," she wrote. "It gives you faith that our Church will survive."

Janine Schorsch of St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross Parish in Bright began her note, "I love the Eucharist. I love being a grandmother. I love teaching. On April 14, I was blessed to celebrate all three."

As a volunteer for the family faith formation class at St. Teresa, Schorsch helps with children in kindergarten through the second grade. She helped the second-grade children prepare for their first reconciliation and their first Communion, a class that included her granddaughter, Brooke.

"I was included in the joy—and sometimes the anxiety—felt as they prepared for these sacraments," she recalled. "Brooke was so concerned with 'doing it right'—afraid that she would make a mistake. I remember pointing to Jesus on the crucifix. 'Brooke, do you see Jesus with his arms stretched out? He loves you so very much and is just waiting for you to come to him for a big hug.'"

Focusing on that day of first Communion, Schorsch wrote, "Entering the church that Sunday, I was met by Brooke. She was radiant in her long, white dress, with a white veil draped over her beautifully curled hair. We hugged in joy. I reminded her that when she left church, she would be carrying God within her.

"When it came time for Communion, I witnessed such innocence, such reverence shining forth from them! I was overwhelmed with the love that I felt for these children and the love in which Jesus holds us all."

In the joy of that day for Brooke, Schorsch also spent some time focusing on Eden, her 12-year-old granddaughter and Brooke's older sister.

"Eden made her first Communion during the COVID restrictions," Schorsch wrote. "Only her mother was able to attend. There were no group photos, no congregation in attendance. It was a stark contrast to the experience of her younger sister.

"After Mass, I asked to go to a quiet place with Eden. I shared with her the ways that I have seen her grow spiritually, and, especially, how she has carried God into the world through her actions. I was able to celebrate with her the fruits of her own first Communion."

Summing up that day, Schorsch noted, "As God's plan always is, it was beautiful. All praise and glory to God!"

A faith embraced across the generations—that's the true inheritance that many grandparents long to share with their grandchildren. †



After Clara Borgert received her first Communion at St. Pius X Church in Indianapolis on May 20, she posed for a photo with her grandmother, Connie Schneider, second from right, and her three godparents, Carol Untrauer, left, Annette Rhine and Mark Borgert. (Submitted photo)



Judy Hagedorn beams with her great-grandson, Gabriel on May 5, the day he received his first Communion at St. Alphonsus Liguori Church in Zionsville, Ind., in the Lafayette Diocese, sharing the moment also with her great-grandchildren, Abigail, Elizabeth and Noah. (Submitted photo)

"This is the logic of the Eucharist: we receive Jesus who loves us and heals our fragilities in order to love others and help them in their fragilities."

—Pope Francis

# Couple shares smiles, stories and struggles in bringing the Eucharist to the vulnerable

By John Shaughnessy

Their smiles keep coming as they take turns sharing stories.

Tom Meier begins with the memory of a woman he visited at Franciscan Health hospital in Indianapolis, where for years he has brought the Eucharist to Catholic patients as an extraordinary minister of holy Communion.

"There was this little Asian woman that I visited not too long ago," Tom says, his face glowing in appreciation. "I asked her if she wanted to receive Communion, and she goes, 'Oh, to receive my Jesus would be the best thing today!'"

"Her faith was so obvious. It touched my heart."

Jane Meier had the same feeling when she recently entered the hospital's maternity unit. She walked into a room where a young couple felt blessed by the arrival of their child.

"It was so thrilling to be able to share the Eucharist with a couple who just had a new baby," Jane says, beaming. "They're receiving the Eucharist, and they know they want to be good parents. That's awesome. I love that. I told them, 'Jesus is with you, walking with you.'"

Yet perhaps the best story from Tom and Jane, who are both 85, is their own.

How they met in first grade. How Jane told her mom in the fifth grade that she was going to marry Tom and become a nurse. How they became even closer to Jesus when their daughter nearly died. How they recently celebrated their 62nd wedding anniversary. How their embrace of the Eucharist has been a journey, including serving the past 40 years as eucharistic ministers.

And how even that journey toward Christ has been—and still is—a struggle at times.

## 'We're trying, we're trying'

Having any struggles about his faith seems odd for Tom when his background is considered.

A retired pharmacist, he has a master's degree in theology. He has served as a eucharistic minister, a pastoral assistant and a parish life coordinator at Good Shepherd Parish in Indianapolis, where he and Jane are longtime members. For about 15 years, he was also a chaplain at Franciscan Health, where he and Jane began bringing Communion to Catholic patients in 2020.

"One of the things that I think many Catholics struggle with—and we're no different—is I hear about people who say, 'I couldn't live without the Eucharist, the Eucharist is everything to me.' They have such a sense of the reality of the Eucharist—the body and blood, soul and divinity of Christ—that they're almost filled with it," Tom says. "But I'm no different than many others.

I say, 'I believe, Lord, but help my unbelief.'

"We talk about this a lot. How can we develop a greater appreciation for the Eucharist? Well, everything that we read says that if you want to grow closer to Jesus, pray more. So, we spend a lot of time in prayer—the rosary, morning prayer, evening prayer. And we do an Ignatian Examen at the end of the day. I don't know if it's getting me closer—she's always been there—but we're trying. We're trying."

Jane nods and notes that their efforts to draw closer to Christ through the Eucharist have increased through the years, in the challenges and joys of life.

"Part of it is growing older," she says. "When you're young, you have so much going on, so many things that you're thinking about and doing, and raising kids—all that. As we have aged, we have dealt with some things in our family. Our daughter had sepsis and almost died when she had her second child. Things like that make you closer to Jesus. When we need Jesus, he's there. That's what we've found out. And we continue to find that out."

Their years of bringing Communion to Catholic patients in the hospital have been part of that journey, that growth.

"Probably one of the best blessings we get is that our faith grows through the faith we see in others," Tom says.

Jane adds, "To be able to take Jesus and give him to people who are suffering and see what that means to them, it's an incredible blessing."

## 'How can I not be grateful?'

Tom and Jane made their last rounds as eucharistic ministers at the hospital on June 25. As that day of retirement neared, they reflected on that volunteer experience and what it has meant to them.

They view the experience as a gift, getting to share that time together, getting to share stories with each other of the patients they have met, knowing it has brought them even closer to each other. Those reasons are why they encourage other couples to volunteer together as eucharistic ministers in a hospital ministry.

At the same time, they have seen a trend among patients that saddens them.

"One of the things I've been aware of is that older people really want to receive the Eucharist," Jane says. "Middle-aged people not so much. And younger people not so much even more. I've been discouraged by that."

Still, they try to keep the focus on their own journey, including an emphasis on being more grateful for the blessings they have.

"A lot of times my prayers are, 'Forgive me for being so ungrateful when I see all the suffering I see,'" Tom says. "How can I not be grateful for my blessings of



In their 40 years as extraordinary ministers of holy Communion, Tom and Jane Meier have shared the Eucharist with many people, drawing closer to Christ through their efforts. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)

health when I see someone who is in fair worse straits than I am, when they're hooked up to all kinds of equipment, when they're stage 4 cancer patients who have just a little time left?"

When he receives the Eucharist at Mass, Tom shares this thought with Jesus, "Thank you for the opportunity to receive you into my body. Help me to be part of your body."

In that spirit of drawing closer to Christ, Tom notes, "One of the things I've done recently is say, 'Jesus, touch my tongue. Let my words be your words—kind words, not critical. Guard my tongue, and guard my eyes. Keep my eyes focused on what you want me to be focused on. And most of all, make my heart as tender as your Sacred Heart.'"

He laughs and adds, "That's one of the things that has evolved. A lot of it is the age I am. Jesus says, 'Hey, Tom, you don't have that much time left. Don't screw around.'"

Despite retiring from the hospital, the couple plans to bring the Eucharist to their friends with health issues, who are homebound.

"I do believe that getting close to the Eucharist is a journey," Jane says. "It's such a blessing the more I realize what I'm receiving. When we go to bed at night, we thank God that we were able to receive the Eucharist."

"The more things that happen in your life, you realize that it's Jesus who has given his life for us. And before he gave his life for us, he said, 'I'm going to do this for you. I'm giving you my body to live with you, to walk with you. I will be with you physically.' It's a hard concept, but the older you get, the more it feels real. It's such a gift." †

## Worship and Evangelization Outreach / Anita Bardo

### 'My faith is no longer a gift to keep to myself'

As I think back to my younger years, I did not fully grasp the significance of the Eucharist. When I received the sacrament in second grade, I knew it represented Jesus' body and blood, his true presence.



Yet understanding the importance of prayer before and after receiving the Eucharist was crucial. Before receiving, it

was acknowledging his sacrifice for us, and after, it was expressing gratitude for his sacrifice.

As I began to pray more frequently through the years, my understanding of the significance of the Eucharist has deepened. Serving as the director of faith formation and youth ministry for my

parish gives me the opportunity to share my insights on the sacraments with others. Teaching Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) classes has helped me recognize the eagerness of candidates and catechumens to learn more about the Eucharist. Their curiosity and enthusiasm has motivated me to examine in greater detail the teachings of the Church.

The impact of my sharing has been revealed to me through the years.

Most recently, I had a 60-year-old woman in my RCIA class. She shared with me that it was always her desire and prayer to join the Catholic Church. Her family and children weren't supportive. It was her own conviction that allowed her to say yes. She thanked me for sharing my faith story, adding that my encouragement and patience helped her as she walked through her journey.

During one class, she was having

trouble understanding about the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. She also asked me to explain the part in the Our Father where we say, "Give us our daily bread." I told her that God gives us nourishment each day to sustain us through the concerns and challenges of our lives. She told me she is grateful for each day and that she shares that perspective with others. She now has a group chat with her family and friends, sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with them.

The value of sharing my faith has enriched my life in ways I cherish deeply. Every Sunday and during Mass, being in the tabernacle's presence is a blessing for me. The tabernacle gives me a deeper understanding of my faith. It encourages me to keep growing in my faith. I strive to live in a manner that reflects the importance of my faith to me. I also strive to share my

beliefs and experiences with others.

The act of sharing my faith is valuable to me because it allows me to be vulnerable, where I was not always. I began to feel even more empowered to share my faith with others when I began working for the archdiocese. My faith is no longer a gift to keep to myself, but to share it with family, friends and other people who come into my life.

I have accepted that I am being formed. It's a feeling I have embraced and enjoy. God's grace is beautiful, and I will continue spreading my joy with all those I encounter.

(Anita Bardo is the coordinator of evangelization and discipleship for the archdiocese and the director of faith formation and youth ministry at St. Rita Parish in Indianapolis, where she is a member.) †



**"If the angels could be jealous of men, they would be so for one reason: Holy Communion."**



**—St. Maximilian Kolbe**

# New Albany Catholic selected to give video witness at National Eucharistic Congress

By Natalie Hoefler

NEW ALBANY—There is only one lay person from central and southern Indiana who will address tens of thousands of Catholics at the upcoming National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis.

The person is Mark Hublar, a member of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in New Albany and a professional speaker and advocate for respect, opportunity and inclusion of those with special needs in the workplace.

The topic is a passion of Hublar, who was born with Down syndrome in 1964.

He was one of only four people chosen nationally to offer a witness talk, each in a separate short video, to be shown during the congress' four evening revival sessions in Lucas Oil Stadium on July 17-20. Hublar's video will be shown during the evening session on July 20.

"These sessions are the main gatherings for all attendees," says Joel Stepanek, vice president of programming and administration for the National Eucharistic Congress. "We anticipate attendance on those evenings being around 47,000."

When Jaime Reyna, multicultural and inclusivity leader for the congress, asked Jenny Bryans if she knew someone associated with the archdiocese's Disabilities Ministry who might be interested in being involved in the congress, Hublar immediately came to Bryans' mind.

"I knew that Mark had done a lot of speaking engagements for many events around the country and was very passionate about his Catholic faith," says Bryans, archdiocesan Disabilities Ministry coordinator. "He spoke at one of the SPREAD [Special Religious Education and Discipleship] summer retreats and has spoken at March for Life rallies in Indianapolis. I thought he would be the perfect fit for what Jaime was looking for."

She was right.

"Mark's story is beautiful," said Stepanek. "We were moved by his faith and the faith of his family and wanted to highlight that at the 10th National Eucharistic Congress."

Hublar's witness includes his gratitude for the many gifts God has blessed him with: his talent for speaking, the ability to live on his own, the opportunity to earn a college degree and the chance to speak nationally—including at a Congressional hearing—on behalf of

"friends like me."

But three gifts top his gratitude list: God, his faith and the love and support of his family.

"I'm grateful for my mom and dad choosing not to put me in an institution like the doctor said when I was born," Hublar said while being recorded for the video in his New Albany apartment on May 29.

Mark's mother Linda Hublar, who was also filmed that day, shared her memories of that day.

"They told us he'd never do anything—walk, talk, show emotion," she told *The Criterion*. "It was sad in the beginning, only because we thought of all the things that he was going to miss out on. ... I never dreamed all this was going to happen."

Her husband Al Hublar agrees. He helps manage his son's business, Mark Hublar Speaks, and was included in the video.

"God is good," said Al in an interview after the filming. "He's just directing Mark's path. I have prayed to God to help me as Mark's father. I pushed Mark to some extent, and he pulled me. But [God] always put him in the right position."

He is in awe of his son's opportunity to share his message via video during the National Eucharistic Congress.

"Of all the places Mark has spoken around the country, this is the pinnacle," Al said.

As for Mark, he's "really looking forward" to attending the congress with his dad on July 17-21.

"I've never been up from 8 in the morning 'til 11 at night for five days and four nights before," he said. "That's going to be really something."



Casey Shaffer of Colorado-based Lux Lab Production House snaps a shot of Mark Hublar, middle, with his parents Linda and Al Hublar in Mark's New Albany apartment on May 29 for a short video featuring Mark to be shown at an evening revival session in Lucas Oil Stadium during the National Eucharistic Revival in Indianapolis on July 17-21. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)

But best for him will be tens of thousands of people hearing the message in his video:

"There's always a reason that we're alive now. I know that God has faith in [those with disabilities], and what makes me really happy is for them to succeed in their life." †

## Sight Unseen / Brandon A. Evans

### The ghostly grace of adoration

I struggle with eucharistic adoration.

As a belief that I only came to in adulthood, the reality of the Eucharist is much more challenging in practice than in intellectual assent.

I just don't know what to do in adoration or what I'm supposed to be getting out of it. It isn't natural to me, and I don't understand why it's so special to people.

After all, there are small chapels the world over where people are praying, crying, reading, singing, even sleeping. People who are sitting in serene silence.

There are grand eucharistic processions where so many seem transfixed, their eyes aglow with love and wonder.

There must be something there. This is the Church's greatest treasure laid out before us.

But I can't see it. I can't see *him*. Prayer, focus, imagination, they all fail in the end. Nothing seems to make any connection.

I stay but a few minutes in adoration and leave with the burdens I brought in: the expectation that my own efforts could force success and the expectation that I'd get something for it.

There is advice I've heard multiple times before, though, that seeks to remedy such a sorrowful, selfish ailment: that you ought to realize when sitting in the presence of the exposed Eucharist, grace comes into your soul as sunshine would warm your skin on a summer day. You walk away glowing with his divine light.

Still, I find that even such a beautiful analogy limps. It's too strong for me. Not all things that come from the sun are so bright and obvious.

Neutrinos are tiny particles blasted out of our star in such quantity that they are more numerous than anything else in the universe. 100 trillion of them hit our body every

second. And all of them pass right through. They are so slight—so insignificant—that they continue on through the Earth as though it wasn't even there.

But every great once in a while one of these "ghost particles" strikes an atom in our body and interacts with it. Yet there is no change in us, no notice given. Life carries on.

Such an event in the world of grace is different, though. Doing great things with the nearly imperceptible is one of God's favorite tricks, and Christian history is absolutely filled with his ability to pull it off.

When I sit before the Blessed Sacrament, it's not my imagination or holiness or even belief that matter. It's not my own efforts, nor does the sun have to beam blindingly. I just have to be there.

And in doing so, that ghostly grace works in its own way. Most of it may pass through without notice, on its way to someone or somewhere else, but it's no worry.

It is exactly in not expecting anything—in being happy with the smallest portion and delighting in sensing no effect—that peace is found.

Peace that when I sit, unaware, some little, *little*, part of God's life may strike my own as a small seed planted to lie dormant until its time, or as a silent power nudging my path *ever so slightly* in another direction.

The grace of God does not need a bounty: amidst that flow of invisible light bursting forth from every monstrosity there is *something* of it that will find you, even if you walk out of the door disheartened.

God smiles, because he has worked what he intended, and given you what you needed. You just might not know it yet.

(*Sight Unseen* is an occasional column that explores God and the world. Brandon A. Evans is the online editor and graphic designer of *The Criterion* and a member of St. Susanna Parish in Plainfield.) †

"Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbor is the holiest object present to your senses."

—C.S. Lewis, author

# For 34 years, grateful teacher shares one of God's greatest gifts with children

By John Shaughnessy

One of the challenges of life is to keep finding joy, beauty and freshness in your world, from the work you do to the most valued relationships you have.

For the past 34 years, Beth Summers has been a second-grade teacher at Holy Family School in New Albany, a position that also comes with the responsibility of preparing her students to receive their first holy Communion.

So Summers is aware of the dangerous slide that can come when the years pass and people start to approach their work, their relationships and their life with a sameness, a staleness that leads them to take for granted what's important, beautiful and life-sustaining—including what she considers as one of God's greatest gifts.

"I feel if you have Jesus in your life and you're receiving the Eucharist, there is always hope," says Summers, a mother of three grown sons. "Sometimes, we go up to receive Communion and maybe we're not thinking about the actual sacrifice that Jesus made for us. I believe it's so important to remember that sacrifice."

To make that sink in for her students—and fresh for herself—Summers adds a special touch to her yearlong preparations.

She used it right before 32 of her students received their first holy Communion on April 27 in the parish church.

### 'My greatest hope for the rest of their lives'

"First Communion week is my favorite time of year," she says with a joy that marks every word. "And my most favorite time is when we re-enact the Last Supper."

That process begins with a meditation exercise



Beth Summers, a second-grade teacher at Holy Family School in New Albany, helps prepare her students for the sacrament of the Eucharist by having them re-enact scenes from the Last Supper, including Jesus washing the feet of his Apostles. (Submitted photo)

during which everyone shuts their eyes and imagines they're in the room with Jesus on Holy Thursday.

"I pretend that I'm Jesus and the kids are all the disciples," Summers says. "We form our desks in a U-shape, and it's covered with purple tablecloths. We bake bread in the class, we have sparkling grape juice, and we say the words that the disciples and Jesus said. And we do the feet washing in the class. At first, they're a little nervous, and they giggle a little bit. Then they really embrace it and take it seriously. You can see they're taking such care in washing each other's feet."

"We try to give them, as close as possible, the experiences of being a real disciple of Jesus, of how those disciples felt when Jesus had them at the Last Supper. That's why I love re-creating the Last Supper. Not only does it help the children, but it helps me to stay close to Jesus. I remember what happened to him later that night on Holy Thursday. It makes me continue to be grateful for what Jesus did—sacrificing himself for us on the cross."

That feeling stayed with her students as they received their first Communion.

"It made me feel special because it was my first time receiving the Eucharist," says Grace Sanchez. "I experienced Jesus in my heart."

Her classmate, Amelia Wilburn, notes, "It made me feel safe and closer to God."

Another second-grader, Elizabeth Kaelin, says, "It made me feel good because Jesus is in my heart, and I will always be with him."

Summers hopes those feelings of gratitude and connection with Christ continue with the children.

"I actually give them a little notecard that says, 'May you keep Jesus as close to your heart as he was on your first Communion day.' That's my greatest hope for the rest of their lives—that they keep Jesus in their lives, and that they continue to come to church and receive Communion."

### 'Just a true example of Christ's love'

While Summers has kept that hope with each class, she has also continued to have the feeling of fighting back tears as she watches the girls in their white dresses and the boys in their suits approach the altar to receive the Eucharist for the first time.

"It's very hard for me not to cry," she says. "I can tell that they're very proud. They've worked hard to prepare to understand everything about the body and blood of Jesus. I tell them this is one of the most important moments of their lives."

After 34 years, Summers is now at the point where she is helping prepare a second generation of families for first Communion. She helped prepare Sara Raelson—the pre-kindergarten teacher at Holy Family—when Raelson was a second-grade student in 1994, and all three of Raelson's children.

"I have just loved Beth since I was a student of hers, and when the time came, we knew we wanted her to be the homeroom teacher for our children," Raelson says. "She has just always radiated positivity and is just a true example of Christ's love."



Beth Summers, a second-grade teacher at Holy Family School in New Albany, poses for a photo with Hadleigh Stocksdale, one of the students she helped prepare to receive the sacrament of the Eucharist on April 27 in the parish church. (Submitted photo)

Summers stays close to the Eucharist in another defining way, as an extraordinary minister of holy Communion for her school and her parish.

"I am able to distribute Communion to both my current and former students during our all-school Masses," she exclaims. "That is definitely one of the perks of my job."

Summers has never lost the joy, the beauty and the freshness of her love for the Eucharist. As she shares that love with her students, she also keeps it at the heart of her life.

"I sometimes think of all the children I've prepared for first Communion," she says. "Sometimes you feel like you want to do something that's a big, great thing for the world. Finally, I focused on trying to make small differences in small things. In my little corner of the Earth, I feel like I'm making a difference in leading the children to Jesus." †

## Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ

By Natalie Hoefler

I bow before the real and true,  
Hidden but physical,  
Mystical presence  
Of God Himself,  
The Word made flesh.  
He who created all,  
Who was, is and ever will be  
Allows me, desires me—  
A broken sinner yet treasured  
As His beloved—  
To consume Him as food.  
It is here that I meet Him,  
Here that we embrace.  
He, Love incarnate, surrounds me  
And enfolds me in His Heart.

He infuses my soul  
with grace abundant,  
With all I need and more  
To continue my journey  
And to nourish others with His love.  
Oh precious beating Heart  
Of my good and gracious Lord,  
I praise you and adore you  
For such love and mercy  
That you show your broken,  
Flawed, imperfect daughter.  
Come into the home of my heart,  
And make it to beat in unison  
With your perfect, holy Heart.  
Remain and abide there,  
And transform me, I pray,  
Into That which I consume.



(This poem originally appeared in the June 11, 2021, issue of The Criterion. Natalie Hoefler is a member of St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis and is a reporter for The Criterion. Photo: Father Leo Patalinghug incenses the Blessed Sacrament in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis on Nov. 19, 2021, during the National Catholic Youth Conference. Assisting him is Liam Hosty, then a seminarian and now a transitional deacon for the archdiocese.) (File photo by Natalie Hoefler)

**"If we eat and drink the very body and blood of Jesus, we become what we eat. We become conformed to him. We become Christified. That's why the doctrine of the Real Presence matters so much."**

**—Bishop Robert E. Barron of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester, Minn.**

# The hope of Christ's presence in our lives shines through in a eucharistic procession

*(Editor's note: Tens of thousands of people are expected to participate in an eucharistic procession through the streets of Indianapolis on July 20. The potential impact of that procession can be viewed in two scenes from the archdiocese's eucharistic procession in Indianapolis on June 19, 2022.)*

By John Shaughnessy

As the joyous sounds of church bells echoed through downtown Indianapolis on June 19, 2022—celebrating the arrival of the archdiocese's uplifting eucharistic procession along the streets of the city—about 1,000 people poured into St. John the Evangelist Church, filling it to overflowing for adoration of the Eucharist.

Being a part of that breathtaking moment at the start of a three-year eucharistic revival in the archdiocese deeply moved Jane Pollom. So did an encounter she had before entering St. John, as she followed the procession along Georgia Street.

"There was a young man standing on the street," recalled Pollom, a member of St. Pius X Parish in Indianapolis. "I asked him if he knew what was happening. When he said he didn't, I explained the Eucharist to him. I told him that Jesus is coming out to you in the streets."

"I explained to him that Jesus wants him to partake of him. He asked, 'Can I come in?' I said, 'Yes, come in and kneel down in adoration.' He did. I just told him to open his heart. He's in there kneeling down now. If all of this can win a heart, it's a success. It's an opportunity for the rest of us to invite people on the street to see the real presence of Jesus."

Pollom's story was just one of many from the sun-kissed, blue-sky day—a day when the essence of Christ's teaching about the gift of the Eucharist overflowed throughout the start of the archdiocese's eucharistic revival.

Joe Wilhelm felt both the stress and the responsibility of being the driver of the float that transported the monstrance containing the Eucharist through downtown Indianapolis and to St. John Church.

"I worried every time I hit a bump," Wilhelm said

with a relieved smile after the completion of the 1.7-mile journey of the procession from the Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center at 14th and Illinois streets to St. John. "I felt I was riding the brake the whole time."

Driving his red pickup truck, the member of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Parish in Indianapolis was also responsible for setting a comfortable pace for the estimated 500 people who participated in the procession—a crowd that swelled to nearly 1,000 by the time the procession entered St. John.

Still, through it all, Wilhelm focused on "the honor to be able to pull the float with the Blessed Sacrament on it to start this eucharistic revival."

"The Eucharist is what everything should revolve around," he said. "It keeps us on track and keeps Jesus in our lives. It's both comforting and fills me with hope—just to have the feeling that Jesus is present with us, and he's guiding our lives." †



Catholics from across central and southern Indiana follow a float carrying the Blessed Sacrament during a June 19, 2022, eucharistic procession on Illinois Street in downtown Indianapolis. The procession was part of the start of the National Eucharistic Revival in the archdiocese. (Photo courtesy of Cantaloupe.tv)

## Plan now for National Eucharistic pilgrimage parish stops and processions in the archdiocese from July 8-16

### Criterion staff report

The National Eucharistic Pilgrimages—originating from eastern, northern, southern and western areas of the United States—began on May 17.

Upon entering the archdiocese—anywhere from July 8 (south) to July 14 (north)—each route will include parish stops and processions as outlined below. For more detailed information such as times and activities, visit the link listed at the end of each list or call the parish in question. (Note: Details are subject to change.)

All routes end at St. John the Evangelist Church, in Indianapolis, on July 16, in time for a noon Mass celebrated by Archbishop Charles C. Thompson. To attend this Mass, registration is required via any of the route links listed below.

Those who wish to participate in one or more of the processions within the archdiocese might also consider registering via the links listed below. Registration is not required for the local pilgrimage events prior to the July 16 Mass, but those who do will receive e-mails with specific route and related information.

For more information on the national pilgrimage, go to [eucharisticpilgrimage.org](http://eucharisticpilgrimage.org).

### Elizabeth Ann Seton (eastern) Route

Planned stops and eucharistic processions:

—St. John, St. Martin and St. Paul churches of All Saints Parish, Dearborn County, July 8-10, with processions from St. John to St. Paul and from St. Paul to St. Martin on July 9;

—St. Vincent and St. Joseph churches, Shelbyville, July 11-12, with a 1-mile procession from St. Joseph to Sunset Park in Shelbyville on July 12;

—St. Michael Church, Greenfield, July 12-14, with a 1-mile procession around the parish grounds on July 14;

—Holy Spirit Church, Indianapolis, July 14-15, with a procession to St. Philip Neri Church, Indianapolis, on July 15;

—St. Philip Neri Church, July 15-16, with a procession to St. John the Evangelist Church, Indianapolis, on July 16.

For more detailed information, go to [tinyurl.com/NEPEastRoute](http://tinyurl.com/NEPEastRoute) or call the parish in question.

### Marian (northern) Route

Planned stops and eucharistic processions:

—St. Luke the Evangelist Church, Indianapolis (after a 9-mile procession from Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in Carmel, in the Lafayette Diocese), July 14-15, with a procession to St. Joan of Arc Church, Indianapolis, on July 15;

—St. Joan of Arc Church, July 15-16,

with a 3-mile pilgrimage to Holy Angels Church, Indianapolis, on July 16;

—Holy Angels Church, July 16, with a 3-mile procession to St. John the Evangelist Church, Indianapolis, on July 16.

For more detailed information, go to [tinyurl.com/NEPNorthRoute](http://tinyurl.com/NEPNorthRoute) or call the parish in question.

### Juan Diego (southern) Route

Planned stops and eucharistic processions:

—Big 4 Park, Jeffersonville, July 9, 6:30 p.m. prayer service with Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, followed by a procession to St. Augustine Church, Jeffersonville;

—St. Augustine Church, July 9-10, with a procession to St. Mary-of-the-Knobs Church, Floyd County, on July 10;

—St. Mary-of-the-Knobs Church, July 10-11, with a procession to Mount Saint Francis Center for Spirituality, Mt. St. Francis, on July 11;

—Mount Saint Francis Center for Spirituality, July 11;

—Our Lady of the Greenwood Church, Greenwood, July 11-12, with a 1-mile procession around parish grounds on July 12;

—St. Mark the Evangelist Church, Indianapolis, July 12-14;

—Good Shepherd Church, Indianapolis, July 14-16;

—Holy Name of Jesus Church,

Beech Grove, July 15, with a 1/2-mile procession in Beech Grove neighborhood;

—Good Shepherd Church, July 16, with a procession to St. John the Evangelist Church, Indianapolis.

For more detailed information, go to [tinyurl.com/NEPSouthRoute](http://tinyurl.com/NEPSouthRoute) or call the parish in question.

### St. Junipero Serra (western) Route

Planned stops and eucharistic processions:

—St. Patrick Church, Terre Haute, July 12, with a 1 1/2-mile procession to St. Joseph University Church, Terre Haute;

—St. Joseph University Church, Terre Haute, July 12-13;

—Sacred Heart Church, Terre Haute, July 14, with a procession around parish grounds;

—St. Susanna Church, Plainfield, July 15, with a 9-mile procession to St. Joseph Church, Indianapolis;

—St. Joseph Church, Indianapolis, July 15, with a 4-mile procession to St. Anthony Church, Indianapolis;

—St. Anthony Church, July 15-16, with a procession to St. John the Evangelist Church, Indianapolis, on July 16.

For more detailed information, go to [tinyurl.com/NEPWestRoute](http://tinyurl.com/NEPWestRoute) or call the parish in question. †



**"Every consecrated host is made to burn itself up with love in a human heart."**

**—St. John Vianney**



# At 69, woman journeys deeper into her faith on National Eucharistic Pilgrimage



By John Shaughnessy

As she talked with the grieving woman, Jan Pierson believed this was another moment when God had led her to where he wanted her to be—which is exactly why the 69-year-old Indiana woman has looked past the challenges and has embraced her once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to take part in the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage.



Jan Pierson

Ever since beginning the pilgrimage in the Connecticut community of New Haven on May 18, traveling along the eastern seaboard, crossing the Appalachian Mountains and heading across Ohio toward Indianapolis, Pierson has placed her every mile in God's hands.

"I'm always up for an adventure," says the member of St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Bloomington, a mother of four grown children and 10 grandchildren. "When I found out about the pilgrimage, I thought, 'Why not? Why not do something with Jesus?' I was all for it."

She had the same feeling of being all-in when she was approached by a woman during a eucharistic procession in Connecticut. The woman wanted Pierson's help in taking a video that showed her participating in the procession, a video the woman wanted to share with her children. That moment led to a deeper one.

"I took the video, and then I told her to double-check it, to make sure it was OK," Pierson recalls. "She did, and then she started talking with me. She told me her husband had just passed away a few months ago.

"I just looked at her. I said, 'I'm so sorry. I'm also a widow, but I've been a widow a little longer. This coming July, I'll be a widow for 32 years.' She just looked at me and said, 'Can I just hold onto you?' She just held on to my hand all the way to the end of the procession, to the last church. We walked about 8 miles together. At the end, she said, 'Thank you. Thank you.'"

### 'Everybody sees something that touches their heart'

That experience is one of Pierson's favorite moments so far from participating in the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Route of the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage, the eastern route that is named in honor of the first American-born saint.

The pilgrims on the eastern route are scheduled to meet up in Indianapolis with pilgrims from the north, south and west in mid-July for the start of the National Eucharistic Congress on July 17-21.

The pilgrimage from the east is led by Father Roger Landry, a priest from the Diocese of Fall River, Mass. He's officially joined by six young people who are called

"perpetual pilgrims." Pierson has followed them from the beginning, calling herself "their shadow."

In a phone conversation along the route, Pierson's voice exudes joy as she talks about the highlights from this adventure of faith.

She'll never forget a holy hour in a Connecticut church, part of a service where a choir sang "so beautifully" that she imagined "it would be like the way angels sounded singing in heaven."

She recalls the feeling of how "Jesus took me through Central Park," part of her four days of walking through New York City.

The joy in her voice hits an even higher level when she recalls the eucharistic processions in Washington and Emmitsburg, Md., the site of the National Shrine of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, where thousands of people walked and prayed together.

"It's just so wonderful to see all the people coming out to be part of the processions, to be there with Jesus, to show our adoration for Jesus.

"You know when you say, 'One, holy, Catholic and apostolic Church?' I am experiencing that whole thing on this pilgrimage. In this core group of pilgrims, there's about 15 people, but every time we go into procession, there's a new group of people—hundreds more people. I'm experiencing that huge Catholic Church."

She's also experiencing the camaraderie of being a part of the core group.

"It's like a family," she says. "You're not going to forget each other. This is something you're doing together, and you just get very close. Everybody sees something that touches their heart, and you tell other pilgrims about it. Things are happening in our lives, in our families that we catch up on when we have time. We ask each other to say prayers for whatever is needed."

Pierson was in great need one day when the recent heat wave that has blistered the Midwest and the East overwhelmed her as she tried to walk one 17-mile stretch of the pilgrimage.

"I couldn't finish the last 3 miles," says Pierson, who has camped and stayed in hotels along the route. "I got a ride from Patty in her van. She said she had to find her husband and Sarah Rose. Sarah Rose is 2, and she wanted to wear her special rain boots and walk with Jesus in the procession. She was walking with her grandfather. It lifted me up to see a little 2-year-old, in her own way, understanding the



Bishop Robert J. Brennan of Brooklyn, N.Y., carries a monstrance while leading a eucharistic procession across the Brooklyn Bridge to Brooklyn from Manhattan on the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage's St. Elizabeth Ann Seton (East) Route on May 26. (OSV News photo/Gregory A. Shemitz, The Tablet)

importance of walking with Jesus. Sometimes, it's the little things."

### 'It's something you feel in your heart'

In preparing for the trip, Pierson often walked back and forth from her home to St. Charles Borromeo Church for Mass, a round-trip journey of 6 miles. On the pilgrimage, she has walked as many as 18 miles a day. Other days, when the route is dangerous to follow on foot, she and the other pilgrims travel by cars, vans and RVs to the next destination for eucharistic adoration.

Each new destination always takes Pierson back to the roots of her relationship with Christ in eucharistic adoration, which began about 10 years ago.

"I still remember that first day. I felt the presence of being there with Jesus. I couldn't even look up at the cross. I only stayed five minutes. I didn't feel I was worthy of being in the chapel," she recalls. "But I kept going back. I was intrigued by that feeling of just being in the presence of the Lord. Now when I go, it's like, 'Oh my gosh, my hour is up?!' Just the feeling of not wanting to leave. Just feeling peaceful.

"Jesus is my Lord and my king. My strength comes from him. He says turn to him when you need help. Oh my gosh, I turn to him constantly. Dealing with the death of my husband Tony. Raising four kids. And now I'm doing this. I feel his graces everywhere."

The experience has also led her on a journey deeper into her faith.

"You want to have that experience with Jesus. You want that *more*. It's being open to the adventure and letting Jesus lead. It's something you feel in your heart. You talk to God deeper. It's helping somebody you see on the road or someone in the group who is struggling. Or being thankful for the little bit of shade we've had. It's just been beyond what I thought it would be.

"I don't know what God has in store for me when I get back home, but I'm ready. I'm ready and willing to do whatever I need to, whatever he wants.

"I wouldn't be where I am if I didn't have Jesus." †



The faithful depart the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception on June 8, as they follow the Blessed Sacrament in procession through the streets of the Brookland neighborhood of Washington. The procession was held as the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage's east route made a stop in the Archdiocese of Washington on its way to Indianapolis for the National Eucharistic Congress to be held in July. (OSV News photo/Mihoko Owada, Catholic Standard)

**"After having received the Lord, since you have the person himself present, strive to close the eyes of the body and open those of the soul and look into your heart."**



**—St. Teresa of Ávila**