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Universal school choice among ICC's priorities for Indiana families



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As the 2025 legislative session reaches its midpoint, the Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC) and other advocates are striving to make this the year that school choice is extended to every Hoosier family without exception.

A provision in the draft versions of the state budget proposed by Gov. Mike Braun and the Indiana House of Representatives would remove the income cap on Indiana's current Choice Scholarship Program, more commonly known as the voucher program. Under House Bill 1001, every Indiana family could take the portion of the state's budget allotted for their children to attend their local public school and apply it to tuition at a non-public school if they choose.

In the last budget year, 2023, the Indiana General Assembly expanded school choice eligibility to 97 percent of families statewide. Now, advocates want to see Indiana join the 10 states that have already passed universal school choice legislation.

"For many years, the General Assembly has said that we fund students, not systems," said John Elcesser, executive director of the Indiana Non-Public

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Meet the seven African American candidates for sainthood

Special to The Message

Editor's note: The information in this article is from *The National Black Catholic Congress'* website.

During Black History Month this February, revisit or learn more about the seven holy African American men and women on the path to sainthood.

According to The National Black Catholic Congress, seven Black Catholics are currently on the canonization journey. They are Servant of God Sister Thea Bowman, Venerable Henriette Delille, Venerable Pierre Toussaint, Venerable Mother Mary Lange, Venerable Father Augustus Tolton, Servant of God Julia Greeley and Servant of God Friar Martin de Porres Maria Ward.

Servant of God Sister Thea Bowman

Thea Bowman was born Bertha

Elizabeth Bowman in 1937, the daughter of a doctor and a teacher, and raised in Canton, Mississippi. She converted to Catholicism as a child through the influence of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration and the Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity, who taught her and nurtured her faith.

Thea learned survival skills and coping mechanisms from family and community members, which exposed her to the richness of the African-American culture: its history and stories, music and songs, customs and rituals, prayers and symbols.

Thea was cognizant that God was indeed the God of the poor and oppressed. Her community instructed her, "If you get, give — if you learn, teach." She developed a deep and abiding love and faith in a God who would make "a way out of no way!"



SISTER THEA BOWMAN

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Diocesan educators awarded Teacher Creativity Fellowship Program grants

Special to The Message

Four Diocese of Evansville educators are among the 129 educators in the state of Indiana to be approved for grants as part of the Lilly Endowment Teacher Creativity Fellowship program.

The Lilly Endowment approved grants of up to \$15,000 each to 129 educators throughout the state of Indiana. The grants will fund renewal projects the educators designed themselves, which the Endowment hopes will help restore their commitment to their profession, foster creativity and, in turn, enhance the educational experiences of their students.

Educators in the Diocese of Evansville who are awarded the grant funding this year are Annunciation School at Christ the King Principal Matthew Moore, Resurrection School Teacher Rebecca Humm and Reitz Memorial High School Teachers Elizabeth Browning and William Lismore.

Moore's project is titled "Ironman – California: Anything is Possible!" For his project, he will train for and complete a full Ironman, inspired by overcoming obstacles in life. Humm's project is titled "Saints and Sports: Inspiration from the Source." She will travel through southern Europe, from the birthplace of St. Thomas Aquinas to the birthplace of sports, reigniting a passion for athletics and seeking inspiration and renewal of body and spirit.

Browning's project is titled "Alaskan Dreams: My Cross-Continental Odyssey from the Hoosier State to the Land of the Midnight Sun." She will explore and photograph wild spaces and offbeat places on a 5,000-mile journey from Indiana to Alaska. For his project, Lismore will return to his homeland of England to experience the literary and lexicographical landmarks of Oxford and London and reunite with family. Lismore's project is titled "Renewal by Definition."

Check a future edition of *The Message* for more information on the educators and their projects.

Pope Francis to U.S. bishops: Dignity of migrants comes first



CNS photo by Lola Gomez

Pope Francis smiles during his general audience in the Paul VI Audience Hall at the Vatican Feb. 12.

By HANNAH BROCKHAUS
Catholic News Agency

Editor's note: Diocese of Evansville Bishop Joseph M. Siegel contributed to this report.

Pope Francis recently addressed the bishops of the United States regarding the country's threatened mass

deportation of unauthorized immigrants.

In reflecting on the papal message, Diocese of Evansville Bishop Joseph M. Siegel said that like Pope Francis and many other American bishops he emphasized that the debate about immigration laws, enforcement and much

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