

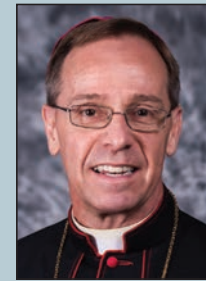


The Nativity is depicted in this 16th-century painting by Italian artist Lorenzo Lotto. The feast of the Nativity of Christ, a holy day of obligation, is celebrated on Dec. 25. (CNS/Bridgeman Images)

Christmas Message from Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

While celebrating the Christmas event that comes but once a year, the spirit of Christmas is to be lived each and every



day of the calendar. As Pope Francis exhorts, Christians must exude the joy of the Gospel in every aspect of life.

Several years ago, a parishioner commented to me that he could appreciate Christmas much more if it did not come at such a busy time of year. It's worth remembering that, while Mary and Joseph along with a few shepherds and eventually the magi took some time to ponder the birth of Jesus Christ, the world did not stop to pause and reflect on this transforming event in salvation history. In fact, most people in the world went about their business without any hint of this event, let alone its significance.

Amid busy lives, tangled relationships and worldly uncertainties, we are graced with the opportunity to celebrate the grace-filled Incarnation of the Word made Flesh that can be as transforming for us today as it was for those who existed at the time of that first Christmas. The beauty, truth and goodness of this grand moment deserve our time to pause and reflect on its meaning in every fabric of society and all aspects of our lives. In and through the birth of Jesus, salvation is made available to all of humanity. Even the slightest understanding and appreciation of this reality should spark joy in our hearts, on our faces and with one another.

Indeed, there continues to be much to concern us about all the chaos, violence and injustice in our world—all the more reason to rejoice in the Good News of Salvation in Jesus Christ! In the spirit of Christmas, may we take away from the celebration of this year's event a greater resolve to remain Christ-centered in our lives and relationships. Come, let us adore Him now and forever.

Blessed Christmas to all!

+ Charles C. Thompson

Mensaje de Navidad del Arzobispo Charles C. Thompson

Queridos hermanas y hermanos en Cristo:

Al tiempo que celebramos el evento de la Navidad que ocurre una vez al año, no debemos olvidarnos de vivir el espíritu navideño cada día del calendario. Tal como nos exhorta el papa Francisco, los cristianos debemos exudar la alegría del Evangelio en cada aspecto de nuestras vidas.

Hace varios años, un parroquiano me comentó que apreciaría mucho más la Navidad sino ocurriera en una época del año tan ajetreada. Vale la pena recordar que, si bien María y José junto con algunos pastores y posteriormente los tres Reyes Magos dedicaron algún tiempo para reflexionar acerca del nacimiento de Jesucristo, el mundo no se detuvo a contemplar este evento transformador en la historia de la salvación. De hecho, la mayoría de las personas de todo el mundo

continuó con su vida habitual sin siquiera sospechar que había ocurrido este evento, mucho menos sopesar su trascendencia.

En medio del ajetreo de nuestras vidas, lo complicado de las relaciones y las incertidumbres terrenales, se nos ofrece la gracia de una oportunidad para celebrar la bendecida encarnación del Verbo hecho Carne, una experiencia que puede ser tan transformadora para nosotros hoy en día como lo fue para aquellos que vivieron durante la época de la primera Navidad. La belleza, la verdad y la bondad de este grandioso momento merecen nuestro tiempo para detenemos y reflexionar acerca de su significado en cada fibra de la sociedad y en todos los aspectos de nuestras vidas. Con el nacimiento de Jesús y a través de este, la gracia de la salvación queda al alcance de toda la humanidad. Incluso una mínima comprensión y valoración de

esta realidad debería encender la llama de la alegría en nuestros corazones, nuestros rostros y en cada uno de nosotros.

Efectivamente, siguen existiendo muchos motivos de preocupación con respecto a todo el caos, la violencia y la injusticia que aquejan a nuestro mundo, todo lo cual es una razón todavía más grande para alegrarnos de la Buena Nueva de la Salvación en Jesucristo. Que bañados por el espíritu de la Navidad encontremos en la celebración de este año una determinación aún más fuerte para mantener a Jesucristo en el centro de nuestras vidas y nuestras relaciones. Vengan, adorémoslo hoy y siempre.

¡Que tengamos una bendecida Navidad!

+ Charles C. Thompson



Pilgrims hold up figurines of the Christ Child as Pope Francis leads the Angelus from the window of his studio overlooking St. Peter's Square at the Vatican on Dec 15. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

Pope blesses Nativity scene statues, calls them signs of God's love

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Francis blessed hundreds of figurines of the baby Jesus—ranging from tiny plastic figures to life-sized statues—and encouraged children to make sure they have Nativity scenes at home.



Pope Francis

After reciting the *Angelus* prayer on Dec. 15, the third Sunday of Advent, Pope Francis did the traditional blessing of the "*bambinelli*," or

statues of the infant Jesus, for children to put in mangers at home, at school and in their parishes.

"Raise the statues up," the pope told the children. "I bless them from my heart."

Pope Francis then quoted from his new apostolic letter on the meaning and importance of the creche: "The Nativity scene is like a living Gospel. ... As we contemplate the Christmas story, we are invited to set out on a spiritual journey, drawn by the humility of the God who became man in order to encounter every man and woman. We come to realize that so great is his love for us that he became one of us, so that we in turn might become one with him."

In his main *Angelus* address, Pope Francis spoke about the importance of answering the Advent call to conversion in preparation for Christmas.

"We are called to recognize the face God chose to assume in Jesus Christ, humble and merciful," he said.

"Advent is a time of grace," the pope

said. "It tells us it's not enough to believe in God; it's necessary to purify our faith each day."

The Advent journey is about preparing "to welcome not a character from a fable, but the God who calls us, gets us involved and who makes us choose," he said. "The baby lying in the manger has the face of our neediest brothers and sisters," who deserve the care of the Christian community.

Nativity scenes were also on the pope's mind on Dec. 16 when he met members of Italy's Catholic Action section for 11- to 13-year-olds for his annual exchange of Christmas greetings with them.

"I'm giving you some homework," he told them. "On Christmas Day, pause in prayer and, with the same awe of the shepherds, look upon baby Jesus who came into the world to bring the love of God, who makes all things new.

"With his birth, Jesus became a bridge between God and humanity, reconciling earth and heaven, restoring the unity of the whole human race," the pope said.

"And today he asks you, too, to be little bridges where you live. You know there always is a need to build bridges, right?"

"What is better, building bridges or walls?" he asked them. "Bridges," they shouted.

Being bridges, bringing people together, "is not always easy," the pope told them, "but if we are united to Jesus, we can do it."

Pope Francis also asked them to think about what "Christmas" means to Mary. "She and Joseph can teach us how to truly welcome Jesus, how to adore him and how to follow him day by day." †



Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

December 22, 2019 – January 19, 2020

December 22 – 11 a.m.

Mass, installation of pastor and dedication of renovated church at Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ Church, Indianapolis

December 24 – 10 p.m.

Christmas Eve Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis

January 8 – 10 a.m.

School Mass for St. Mary the Immaculate Conception School in Aurora and St. Lawrence School in Lawrenceburg at St. Mary the Immaculate Conception Church, Aurora

January 9 – 8 a.m.

Judicatories meeting at Indiana Interchurch Center, Indianapolis

January 9 – 10 a.m.

Leadership Team meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center, Indianapolis

January 15 – 10 a.m.

Department heads meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center

January 16 – 10 a.m.

Leadership Team meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center

January 18 – 5 p.m.

Mass and blessing of St. Theodora Guèrin Shrine at American Martyrs Church, Scottsburg

January 19 – 9:30 a.m.

Morning Prayer and Mass at Bishop Simon Bruté Seminary, Indianapolis

January 19 – 6 p.m.

Christian Unity Prayer Service at Zion Evangelical United Church of Christ, Indianapolis

(Schedule subject to change.)

Proclaim the Gospel in every language, in every land, pope tells Filipinos

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—"Continue being 'smugglers' of the faith," Pope Francis told thousands of Filipino migrants living and working in Italy.

Starting the Italian Filipino community's "*Simbang Gabi*," a novena of nighttime or pre-dawn Masses in preparation for Christmas, the pope praised the community for not only keeping their faith alive, but for enlivening the faith of the parishes they frequent.

According to Italian government statistics, more than 100,000 Filipinos live in Italy as temporary workers or permanent residents. The more than 6,000 free tickets for the Dec. 15 Mass with Pope Francis were gone in a matter of hours, said Scalabrinian Father Ricky Gente, the Rome community's chaplain.

A large Filipino choir, with members wearing their national dress, provided the music for the liturgy. The songs and readings were in Filipino, English and Italian.

In his homily, Pope Francis said the day's Gospel reading from Matthew shows how "in Jesus Christ, the saving love of God is made tangible: 'The blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them'" (Mt 11:5).

The signs of God's kingdom, he said, are not "trumpet blares" and military marches, "not judgments and condemnations of sinners, but liberation from evil and the proclamation of mercy and peace.

"And because there are still many inhabitants of the existential peripheries"—the poor, the fragile and those thirsting for justice—"we must ask the Lord to renew the miracle of Christmas each year, offering ourselves

as instruments of his loving mercy toward the least ones," the pope said.

Pope Francis praised the Filipino community for bringing with them to Rome the tradition of *Simbang Gabi*.

"Through this celebration," he said, "we want to prepare for Christmas in accordance with the spirit of the Word of God we have heard, remaining constant until the definitive coming of the Lord.

"We want to commit ourselves to manifesting the love and tenderness of God," he said. "We are called to be leaven in a society that often is not able to savor the beauty of God and experience the grace of his presence.

"Brothers and sisters, you who have left your homeland in the search for a better future have a special mission," the pope told them. "May your faith be 'yeast' in the parish communities you belong to today. I encourage you to multiply the opportunities of encounter to share your cultural and spiritual richness, allowing yourselves at the same time to be enriched by the experiences of others."

All Catholics, everywhere in the world, he said, are called "to build together that communion in diversity that is a distinctive feature of the kingdom of God." †

Correction

In the Dec. 13 article in *The Criterion* about the fire affecting two pro-life organizations in Indianapolis, we incorrectly spelled the last name of Magnificat Family Medicine practice manager Lori Pluchar.

Also, the correct web address for The Gabriel Project is www.goangels.org. †

The Criterion and Catholic Center are closed from Dec. 20 to Jan. 5 for Christmas holiday

This week's issue of *The Criterion*, which is our annual Christmas publication, is the last issue of 2019.

The Criterion will be published again on Jan. 10, 2020, and resume its weekly schedule.

The Archbishop O'Meara Catholic Center will be closed from Dec. 20 through Jan. 5 in observance of the holidays.

Archdiocesan agencies will reopen at 8 a.m. on Monday, Jan. 6, 2020. †



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Bishops say ‘ad limina’ meeting strengthens bond with pope

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Inspiring “missionary disciples” rather than Church maintenance workers and building up the unity of the Church in a polarized world were some of the topics on the table when 26 U.S. bishops met Pope Francis on Dec. 12.

Even though the pope was running 40 minutes late—and apologized profusely for it—the bishops of Indiana, Illinois and Wisconsin spent “two hours and 18 minutes” conversing with him, said Archbishop Jerome E. ListECKI of Milwaukee. Archbishop Charles C. Thompson of Indianapolis was among the bishops attending the meeting.

“Here’s one of the most important figures in the world and he gives us two hours and 18 minutes,” Archbishop ListECKI said. “That says a lot about his pastor’s heart, about his generosity, about the fact that he likes being with bishops and talking about the things that matter to the Church.”

Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Ind., said that thinking about the meeting, “I could imagine Peter sitting down with the Apostles and sharing some of their concerns and challenges, some of their strategies for evangelization, whatever—I kind of felt that.”

Every bishop was free to ask questions or talk about this diocese, the bishop said. The pope “would respond with his observations or his counsel, his experiences—that was very neat because he would share his experiences as bishop or other experiences back home in Argentina.

“I feel a strengthened bond with the Holy Father,” Bishop Rhoades continued, especially after “feeling that care that he has for us. It’s genuine. There was a real sense of solidarity or communion.”

Some Twitter accounts and media reports continue to feed a narrative that the U.S. bishops are divided among themselves and that Pope Francis and many U.S. bishops aren’t exactly on the same page, but Archbishop ListECKI said, “You couldn’t tell that from the meeting.”

While the pope and some bishops may disagree on some issues, he said, the media takes that, amplifies it and labels it “polarization” or “division” when it is really “a frank and open discussion about the Church.”

“The media need to grow up a little bit,” the archbishop said.

Open discussion and, “occasionally, a properly placed criticism,” he said, “are healthy for the Church.”

Archbishop ListECKI said the “ad limina” visit gives bishops an opportunity to dialogue with the pope,



Pope Francis poses for a group photo with U.S. bishops from Indiana, Illinois and Wisconsin—including Indianapolis Archbishop Charles C. Thompson—making their “ad limina” visits to the Vatican on Dec. 12. The bishops were making their visits to the Vatican to report on the status of their dioceses to the pope and Vatican officials. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

“understand and affirm him in so many things he has done,” and to ask for clarification of things that may be unclear.

Bishop Rhoades said the topic of divisions between the bishops and pope didn’t come up “because it’s not true.”

“The issue of unity did come up; the importance of unity within the Church at large,” he said. “Being instruments of unity is really important,” but that does not mean all bishops have to think alike, but they always must speak with love for one another.

“There is a polarization in our culture and, in my opinion, that seeps into the Church and it is not healthy,” Bishop Rhoades said. “The Lord himself prayed for his disciples that they may be one, and we need to continue to pray that prayer and to work for unity.”

The bishops raised questions, concerns, asked advice and, several times, thanked Pope Francis for his teaching and ministry, especially his document on young people, “Christus Vivit,” and the message he sent to the National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis.

Bishop Rhoades said that in the meeting, like in the document, Pope Francis emphasized the need to

accompany young people, who are always on the move, and “the importance of authenticity.”

Archbishop ListECKI said Pope Francis urged the bishops to draw hope from “seeing the light” that shines forth from Catholics who are living and practicing and sharing the faith.

“Evangelization was a very important issue” and was brought up repeatedly during the meeting, he said. Everyone in the room agreed that bishops, priests and laity all “have to take charge for the mission of the Church and not only remain in a maintenance mode.”

The pope’s teaching during the meeting, he said, “was peppered with his personal experience” as a priest and bishop, so the bishops heard not only what the pope thinks but “what is driving his understanding” of various situations.

The clerical sexual abuse crisis was discussed, Archbishop ListECKI said, but mostly from the point of view of how other priests are hurting because of the crimes of their brothers.

One thing the pope emphasized, he said, was the need for bishops to be a father to their priests, not just their superior or supervisor. They have a right

to have a bishop interested and engaged in their personal well-being.

The abuse crisis and the Church’s need to continue responding vigorously and vigilantly came up repeatedly during the bishops’ meetings at Roman Curia offices, he said.

Pope Francis repeatedly told the bishops, “primero” or first, is prayer, Archbishop ListECKI said. On their “ad limina” visits to Rome, the bishops celebrated Mass at the Basilicas of St. Peter, St. Paul Outside the Walls, St. Mary Major and St. John Lateran.

The bishops of Indiana, Illinois and Wisconsin also spoke to the pope about the Latino communities in their dioceses and were invited to concelebrate Mass with Pope Francis on Dec. 12 for the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. “That is special to me,” Bishop Rhoades said. “That will be the icing on the cake, so to speak.”

Like any Catholic who makes a pilgrimage to the four basilicas, the bishops can receive a plenary indulgence if they recite the Creed, pray for the intentions of the pope, go to confession and receive the Eucharist. “I’m counting on that—wiping away those sins,” Archbishop ListECKI said. †

Mary is loving mother, humble disciple, pope says on Guadalupe feast

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Celebrating the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Pope Francis said she reminds Catholics of her true essence as a woman, a mother and a “mestiza” or person of mixed race.

She revealed herself to St. Juan Diego as a “mestiza” to show “that she is everyone’s mother,” and she speaks to everyone as she spoke to this indigenous saint five centuries ago, with tenderness and motherly love, the pope said in his homily during a Mass in St. Peter’s Basilica on Dec. 12.

Seminarians and priests from Rome’s Pontifical Latin American College alternated singing their traditional guitar-accompanied songs with the Sistine Chapel choir singing parts of the Mass in Gregorian chant.

The pope and concelebrating cardinals and bishops processed into the basilica dressed in white. Among the concelebrants were U.S. bishops from Indiana, Illinois and Wisconsin who were in Rome as part of their Dec. 9-13 “ad limina” visits to report on the status of their dioceses.

Pope Francis stood before a replica of St. Juan Diego’s *tilma*, which bears the image of Mary, who appeared to the saint in 1531.

In his homily, which the pope delivered off-the-cuff in Spanish, he reflected on the way Mary appears in the Gospels and in the apparitions to St. Juan Diego.

She is first and foremost a woman who has been given many titles—many which

contain the title “Our Lady”—which underlines her womanhood, he said.

But, he said, “she doesn’t try to be something else: she is a woman disciple,” the pope said.

She is humble and faithful to her teacher, her son, “the only Redeemer,” he said.

She never asked and “never wanted to take something of her Son for herself. She never presented herself as a co-Redemptrix, but as a disciple” who served him and gave life, he said.

Pope Francis’ mention of Mary and the role of co-Redemptrix was a reference to the fact that, for decades, some Catholics, including specialists in Mariology, have requested that Mary be officially proclaimed co-Redemptrix for her cooperative role with Jesus, the redeemer. However, St. John Paul II and popes Benedict XVI and Francis declined to do so.

Mary is the mother of Jesus, she is “our mother, the mother of our people” and the Church, Pope Francis said in his homily.

Understanding the Church through Mary is essential also for understanding the role of women in the Church, he said, because their role is more than just “functional.”

Like Mary, women make the Church maternal and transform it into the “holy mother Church,” he said.

It is also important, Pope Francis said, that Mary appeared to St. Juan Diego as a woman of mixed race.

That way she shows she is the mother of all peoples; she became one with the people and, by bringing Jesus into the world, she also made God one of the people with Jesus as both true God and man.

At the end of the Mass, Cardinal Marc Ouellet, head of the Vatican Congregation for Bishops and president of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America, gave special thanks and congratulations to Pope Francis for the 50th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood on Dec. 13.

After applause from the congregation, Cardinal Ouellet thanked the pope for the way he lives the priesthood, “in a spirit of humility and mercy, in a spirit of reform and holiness, giving priority and great charity to those most in need.”

“Not everyone understands fully” the pope’s gestures, words and decisions, he said, “but I can assure you that the people of God who walk in faith are inspired and consoled by your example and magisterium.” †

Pope Francis’ prayer intentions for January



- **Promotion of World Peace**—We pray that Christians, followers of other religions, and all people of goodwill may promote peace and justice in the world.

(To see Pope Francis’ monthly intentions, go to www.popesprayer.va.) †



The Criterion

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Editorial



The Adoration of the Magi is depicted in this 17th-century painting by French artist Claude Vignon. The feast of the Nativity of Christ, a holy day of obligation, is celebrated on Dec. 25. (CNS/Bridgeman Images)

We must do all we can to keep 'Christ' in Christmas

"The angel said to [the shepherds], 'Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a Savior has been born for you who is Christ and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: 'Glory to God in the highest and on Earth peace to those on whom his favor rests' " (Lk 2:9-14).

Each Christmas, we hear St. Luke's Gospel narrative about the Nativity, a story that has been a cornerstone of our faith and a teaching of many other Christian faith traditions for thousands of years.

And every year—if we're honest—this humanity-changing event should cause us to pause to reflect on the great gift our Creator gave us through Jesus Christ his Son. It should truly be a time of awe and wonder.

But sadly, because of the interference, noise and messages being spread by secularists in society, the true meaning of Christmas is getting pushed further and further from the forefront and shoved on a backburner as a secondary thought to Santa, sales and Star Wars. Sacredness is no longer a holiday necessity.

If there's one thing we Catholics and other people of faith cannot do, it is to allow society to dictate what the Christmas season is truly about.

We understand this is no easy task because merchants, store owners and countless websites are promoting the Christmas season as soon as Halloween is over—and in some instances, even sooner. If that's not troubling, then this should be: many of those same businesses do their level best to welcome consumers into their "Christmas in July" celebrations. And we believe for many of those merchants, the birth of Jesus Christ has little or nothing to do with those summer-based sales.

The Nativity is a once-in-an-eternity event that should be commemorated and celebrated on Dec. 25 and in the days following, not in July or the day after Halloween or at any other time. But those with secularist mentalities are working to

keep "Christ" out of Christmas. And we cannot let that continue to happen.

It seems almost every year a school or town is falling prey to political correctness. A school choir cannot sing religious-themed Christmas songs. A Nativity scene cannot be displayed in a town square. Employees in some stores are forbidden from wishing customers a "Merry Christmas" and instead must offer them a "Happy Holidays."

What's next? We can only wonder what will be done to push "Christ" further and further from the true meaning of Christmas.

Our response to this and all of life's challenges must have faith at its core.

Each of us is called to holiness, and our faith instructs us to preach Jesus Christ by word and example.

Our charge as Catholics is to see Jesus in others and be Jesus for others, not only in church on Sundays but every day with family, friends, co-workers, strangers—anyone and everyone who crosses our path.

We believe we can do just that if we live the title of Pope Francis' 2019 postsynodal apostolic exhortation to young people, "*Christus Vivit*," showing "Christ is alive" in our hearts, words and deeds.

As Pope Francis told young people and has said throughout his pontificate, holiness is the habit of doing good. We need to look no further than the Beatitudes (Mt 5:1-12) as a great Scriptural foundation in our call to holiness.

And that foundation also must include celebrating the Nativity every Dec. 25 and during the Christmas season through Jan. 6: "*For behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people*" (Lk 2:10).

Christmas is a time to celebrate God's infinite love for us through the gift of his Son, Jesus Christ.

May we let others know that story is at the heart of our Christmas.

And as Pope Francis wrote earlier this month in his apostolic letter, "*Admirabile Signum*" ("Enchanting Image") about the Christmas crèche, may we always remind others that this baby (Jesus) is "the source and sustenance of all life. In Jesus, the Father has given us a brother who comes to seek us out whenever we are confused or lost, a loyal friend ever at our side. He gave us his Son who forgives us and frees us from our sins" (#3).

—Mike Krokos

Be Our Guest/Greg Erlandson

Finding reason to hope in life amid the pessimism of the world

My father-in-law, Joseph, was a wonderful guy. An immigrant who passionately loved America, he was hardworking, honest and thrifty. He had a laborer's hands but a poet's mind. Joseph had seen enough of life, however, to make him a bit jaundiced about human nature.



My wife recently found a page of a magazine he had clipped many years ago. It had a series of "quotable quotes," but only one he underlined. It was attributed to George Will: "The nice part about being a pessimist is that you are constantly being either proven right or pleasantly surprised."

It feels a little bit like what being a Catholic is like these days. There are lots of opportunities for pessimism in all the headlines, and we may feel like we are too rarely being "pleasantly surprised."

That there are grounds for pessimism there is no denying. One may fervently believe that God will not desert his Church, and still feel utterly dismayed at what seems like an endless series of revelations and headlines. Looking at the past 20 years, it seems like most of our surprises have been unpleasant.

The problem with pessimism is that it can become its own addiction, its own crutch protecting us from caring too much. We start looking for reasons to validate it, and then we risk becoming anti-Pollyannas, actively seeking out the bad news. Do this long enough, and we'll all become journalists!

Nobody's made much money selling good news stories, but it might be useful if we stop looking at the forest once in a while and gaze on the trees. All around us are terrific people doing yeoman's work for the Lord without publicity or acclaim.

I'll bet that if you had to think of

someone in your parish who is selfless and admirable, holy in a rolled-up-sleeves sort of way, you could think of a person who fits that description in a nanosecond. Maybe you are one of those people.

I recently connected with an old friend, Paul Wilkes. Our friendship began when I wrote a review criticizing a book of his. He initiated contact, and over time we grew to respect our differences and appreciate what we held in common. In recent years, however, we had drifted apart, and I only recently found out what he has been up to.

About 14 years ago, during a "trip of a lifetime" to India, providence led Paul to a Salesian orphanage, where he met a little girl who had been intentionally blinded with a darning needle to make her a "better beggar." His encounter with her and many other young girls seeking shelter in this orphanage from a cruel world outside moved him to get involved.

Back in the States, his career path changed radically. He began raising funds to build for those girls what he would call a "Home of Hope."

One good deed begat another. Return trips to India made it clear that "there are millions of girls on the streets, orphans, abandoned, sex trafficked, disabled." So he kept going. He spoke at parishes, raised money and has helped to build 16 more Homes of Hope sheltering more than a thousand girls. He and his donors are providing schools as well.

If you look at the millions, you can become a pessimist. When you look at one, the surprise is that you find reason to hope. It's not a bad reminder this Christmas season. There are a lot of children out there waiting for their Magi. They might be waiting for you.

If you'd like to learn more, visit homeofhopeindia.org/about-us.

(Greg Erlandson, director and editor-in-chief of Catholic News Service, can be reached at gerlandson@catholicnews.com.) †

Be Our Guest/Father Eugene Hemrick

Christmas holidays: A special time for exchanging gifts of joy and goodness

The holiday panic of picking out the right gifts is upon us. Now comes the challenge of deciding what is best to give a beloved or dear friend.



Our materialist world is forever pointing us to worldly gifts as the way to celebrate the moment. Seldom, however, are we pointed to the very soul and ultimate end of a gift. Here are some quotes that take us in that direction.

Having children is a gift, but raising them is often a bewildering challenge. American television personality and puppeteer Fred Rogers points us to an extraordinary gift for parenting: "One of the most important gifts a parent can give a child is the gift of accepting that child's uniqueness."

Many a child has had a nightmare childhood due to parents who tried to make them into their own likeness. And yet many a child has experienced the gift of parents who promoted and supported their uniqueness.

Famed cookbook author Lidia Bastianich goes to the heart of giftedness: "Make gifts meaningful by putting the

time in creating them, whether baking and cooking, or in making arts and craft. It will all have more meaning for the giver and receiver."

In our age of instant meals, a homemade meal may be memorable, but even more memorable is when the heart and a burning desire to make it joyful accompany it.

St. Francis of Assisi tells us, "Above all the grace and the gifts that Christ gives to his beloved is that of overcoming self."

There is no greater Christmas gift than being a person who had been haunted by a bad habit and having conquered it.

On self-conquest, American poet Maya Angelou would counsel, "It's one of the greatest gifts you can give yourself, is forgive. Forgive everybody."

Author and motivational speaker Leo Buscaglia points to the essence of exchanging gifts: "Your talent is God's gift to you. What you do with it is your gift back to God."

As we learn from these quotes, a true gift is to envision a gift as a grace whose ultimate purpose is endowing another with the joy and goodness God intends for them.

(Father Eugene Hemrick writes for Catholic News Service.) †



Christ the Cornerstone

God is with us as we wait in joyful hope

“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign; the young woman, pregnant and about to bear a son, shall name him Emmanuel” (Is 7:14).

The Gospel reading for the Fourth Sunday of Advent (Mt 1:18-24) affirms what this holy time of year celebrates: God is with us. Advent is a time of hope-filled anticipation for the Lord’s return, but this time of waiting is not bereft of God’s presence.

In fact, one of the great mysteries of the Advent season is the fact that God waits with us. He remains present in the sacraments (especially the Eucharist), in our prayer, in our communion with one another and in our service to those in need, even as we look for him with eager expectation.

God the Father is with us as we wait in joyful hope for his Son’s coming again. The Holy Spirit is with us now and always to comfort us in our sorrow, to calm our fears and to encourage us in the difficulties we face, especially during this hectic and often stressful season.

One of the great figures of Advent is St. Joseph, the husband of Mary

and foster father of Jesus. St. Matthew describes him as “a righteous man” (Mt 1:19). We call someone righteous when he or she is honest, trustworthy, faithful and unwavering in fulfilling commitments. Joseph was certainly all these things. We never hear Joseph speak, but we watch as he listens attentively to God’s messengers and responds immediately to God’s will for him and for his family.

“Joseph, son of David,” the angel tells him, “do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins” (Mt 1:20-21).

Joseph’s ready acceptance of the role assigned to him as a *custos*, or steward, of the child Jesus speaks for him. He was a righteous man who must have had his doubts and fears, but who never let them prevent him from keeping his commitments as a husband, father and a faith-filled Jew, a “son of David.”

Mary’s pregnancy was the first Advent. It was a time of eager expectation, a time when God was

present to his creation in a unique way. Joseph supported Mary during this time of waiting—as did Mary’s cousin Elizabeth and her child who leapt for joy when the two unborn children, John and Jesus, were together for the first time each in their mother’s womb.

God is with us all the time, but we experience it in a distinctive way during Advent and Christmas. There is a special hopefulness at this time of year. We may be surrounded by darkness—keenly aware that there is evil and injustice all around us—but the presence of God overcomes the negative forces that threaten us. The profound hope that the Lord is coming again to affirm his victory over sin and death, and to unite us with each other and with him, stirs us from our lethargy and ignites our hearts with the fire of his love.

Advent is a time of joy. What we are waiting for has already come. In fact, it comes every day if we open our hearts to God’s presence in our lives, and it will be with us at the end of time and forever if we follow Joseph’s example and live holy and righteous lives.

We are joyful because Jesus is with us and is still to come! What a marvelous gift! God is with us even as we wait in joyful hope for his coming again!

The story of Jesus’ birth, which we will hear again in the coming days, never gets old because it reminds us vividly that God is with us, that he is present in the quietest moments of our lives as well as in the noise and confusion of daily activity.

“All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means ‘God is with us’ ” (Mt 1:22-23).

As we begin the final days of Advent and prepare to celebrate once more the birth of Christ, let’s pray for the patience and the quiet faithfulness of St. Joseph. Through his intercession, may we listen attentively to God’s Word. May we respond with joyful and generous hearts when our Lord comes again.

Above all, may we acknowledge the presence of Jesus Christ—here and now—even as we wait for him eagerly, with joyful hearts! †



Cristo, la piedra angular

Dios está con nosotros mientras aguardamos con expectante alegría

“Pues bien, será el propio Señor quien les dará una señal: Véanla, la joven está embarazada y va a dar a luz un hijo, al que llamará Dios-con-nosotros” (Is 7:14).

La lectura del Evangelio del cuarto domingo de Adviento (Mt 1:18-24) reafirma lo que celebramos en esta época sagrada del año: Dios está con nosotros. El Adviento es una época llena de expectativa esperanzada por el regreso del Señor, pero esta espera no debe excluir a Dios.

De hecho, uno de los misterios más grandes de la temporada de Adviento es el hecho de que Dios espera con nosotros. Aun cuando lo buscamos con entusiasmo, siempre está presente en los sacramentos (especialmente la Eucaristía), en nuestras oraciones, en nuestra comunión con el prójimo y en nuestro servicio a los necesitados.

Dios Padre está con nosotros incluso mientras aguardamos la nueva venida de su Hijo con expectante alegría. El Espíritu Santo está con nosotros ahora y siempre para consolarnos en el dolor, calmar nuestros temores y alentarnos en medio de las dificultades que enfrentamos, especialmente durante esta temporada tan ajetreada y a menudo estresante.

Una de las figuras más destacadas del Adviento es san José, el esposo

de María y padre adoptivo de Jesús. San Mateo lo describe como “un hombre justo” (Mt 1:19). Decimos que alguien es justo cuando se comporta de manera honesta, confiable, leal y firme en sus compromisos. José ciertamente cumplía con esta descripción. Jamás lo oímos hablar, pero lo observamos escuchar atentamente a los mensajeros de Dios y responder inmediatamente a la voluntad de Dios para él y su familia.

“José, descendiente de David—le dice el ángel—no tengas reparo en convivir con María, tu esposa, pues el hijo que ha concebido es por la acción del Espíritu Santo. Y cuando dé a luz a su hijo, tú le pondrás por nombre Jesús, porque él salvará a su pueblo de sus pecados” (Mt 1:20-21).

Algo que describe a José es su aceptación solícita del papel que se le asignó como *custos*, o mayordomo, del niño Jesús. Fue un hombre justo que sin duda habrá tenido sus dudas y temores, pero que jamás permitió que estas le impidieran cumplir con sus compromisos como esposo, padre y judío creyente, un “descendiente de David.”

El embarazo de María fue el primer Adviento; fue una época de ansiosa expectativa, un momento en el que Dios se hizo presente en su creación de una forma única. José

apoyó a María durante este tiempo de espera, al igual que Isabel, la prima de María, y el hijo que llevaba en el vientre que saltó de alegría cuando él y Jesús estuvieron juntos por primera vez, cuando todavía se encontraban en el seno de sus respectivas madres.

Dios está con nosotros todo el tiempo, pero lo sentimos de una forma especial durante el Adviento y la Navidad; se trata de una época del año en la que se vive una esperanza extraordinaria. Quizá estemos rodeados de oscuridad—y estamos profundamente conscientes de la maldad y la injusticia que se vive a nuestro alrededor—pero la presencia de Dios supera las fuerzas negativas que nos amenazan. La profunda esperanza de que el Señor viene nuevamente a reafirmar su victoria sobre el pecado y la muerte, y a unirnos a Él, nos remueve del letargo y enciende nuestros corazones con el fuego de su amor.

El Adviento es una época de alegría. Lo que esperamos ya ha llegado. De hecho, llega todos los días si abrimos nuestros corazones a la presencia de Dios en nuestras vidas, y estará con nosotros hasta el final de los tiempos y para siempre si seguimos el ejemplo de José y vivimos de una forma santa y justa.

¡Estamos alegres porque Jesús está con nosotros y está por venir!

¡Qué obsequio tan maravilloso! ¡Dios está con nosotros incluso mientras aguardamos su nueva venida con expectante alegría!

La historia del nacimiento de Jesús que escucharemos nuevamente en los próximos días jamás resulta aburrida porque nos recuerda vívidamente que Dios está con nosotros: está presente en los momentos más tranquilos de nuestras vidas, así como en el ruido y la confusión de la cotidianidad.

“Todo esto sucedió en cumplimiento de lo que el Señor había dicho por medio del profeta: Una virgen quedará embarazada y dará a luz un hijo, a quien llamarán Emmanuel, que significa ‘Dios con nosotros’ ” (Mt 1:22-23).

A medida que nos acercamos a los últimos días del Adviento y nos preparamos una vez más para celebrar el nacimiento de Cristo, recemos para tener la paciencia y la fe callada de san José. Que a través de su intercesión podamos escuchar con atención la Palabra de Dios y que respondamos con corazones alegres y generosos cuando nuestro Señor vuelva nuevamente.

Pero por encima de todo, que reconozcamos la presencia de Jesucristo, aquí y ahora, aun mientras esperamos ansiosamente, con corazones jubilosos. †

Events Calendar

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

December 24

Church of the Immaculate Conception, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Festival of Lessons and Carols**, Scripture readings, prayer, singing of carols and candle lighting, 7-8 p.m., all faith traditions welcome. Information: 812-535-2952, provctr@spsmw.org.

January 3

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

January 4

All Saints Parish, St. John the Baptist Campus Hall, 25743 State Route 1, Guilford. **Growing the Faith: Finding Time for God**, Stacey Sumereau presenting, Mass and catered meal, 6-9 p.m., freewill offerings accepted, registration requested by Jan. 2 online at bit.ly/2DdCxp6 (case sensitive) or by calling parish office: 812-576-4302.

John Paul II Parish, St. Paul Chapel, 216 Schellers Ave., Sellersburg. **First Saturday Marian Devotion**, 8 a.m. rosary, meditation, prayer; 8:30 a.m. Mass with confessions prior. Information: 812-246-3522.

January 8

Archbishop O'Meara Catholic Center, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. **Solo Seniors** (weather permitting), Catholic, educational, charitable and social singles, 50 and over, single, separated, widowed or divorced. New members welcome. 6 p.m. Information: 317-243-0777.

January 11

Providence Spirituality and Conference Center, Sisters of Providence, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Teen Volunteer Opportunity**, ages 12-18, sharing time and talent with retired Providence sisters, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. (first of several teen volunteer opportunities through April 2020). Registration and parent/guardian waver: www.spsmw.org/event/teen-volunteer-opportunity/all Information: Providence Sister Joni Luna, 361-500-9505, jluna@spsmw.org.

January 12

Sisters of St. Benedict Ferdinand, Evansville House, 2529 E. Walnut St., Evansville (Evansville Diocese), **Sundaes with the Sisters**. Receive input on discernment, visit and meet with the sisters, noon-2 p.m. CT. Information: vocations@thedome.org, 812-367-1411.

January 14

Church of the Immaculate

Conception, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **"Be Light" Monthly Taizé Prayer Service**, 7-8 p.m., silent and spoken prayers, simple music, silence. Information: 812-535-2952, provctr@spsmw.org.

January 16

St. Joseph Parish, 1401 S. Mickley Ave., Indianapolis. **Third Thursday Adoration**, interceding for women experiencing crisis pregnancy, 11 a.m.-7 p.m., with Mass at 5:45 p.m.

January 18

St. Michael the Archangel Church, 3354 W. 30th St., Indianapolis. **Ethiopian and Eritrean Christmas Mass celebrated in the Ge'ez Rite**, Father Eyassu Debessay from the Ethiopian Catholic Eparchy of Adigrat celebrating, 10 a.m. with reception to follow. Information: Samson Gebrey, akbe_g@yahoo.com, 317-869-5230.

January 26

St. Matthew School, 4100 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Open House for Prospective Families**, 1:30-3:30 p.m. Information or to request a packet: 317-251-3997, dsmock@saintmatt.org.

February 1

Providence Spirituality and Conference Center, Sisters of Providence, 1 Sisters of

Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Teen Volunteer Opportunity**, ages 12-18, sharing time and talent with retired Providence sisters, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Registration and parent/guardian waver: www.spsmw.org/event/teen-volunteer-opportunity/all Information: Providence Sister Joni Luna, 361-500-9505, jluna@spsmw.org.

February 5

Archbishop O'Meara Catholic Center, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. **Solo Seniors**, Catholic, educational, charitable and social singles, 50 and over, single, separated, widowed or divorced. New members welcome. 6 p.m. Information: 317-243-0777.

February 7

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

February 9

John Paul II Parish, St. Paul Chapel, 216 Schellers Ave., Sellersburg. **First Saturday Marian Devotion**, 8 a.m. rosary, meditation, prayer; 8:30 a.m. Mass with confessions prior. Information: 812-246-3522.

February 11

Sisters of St. Benedict Ferdinand, Louisville

House, 512 Breckenridge Lane, Louisville (Louisville Archdiocese). **Sundaes with the Sisters**, receive input on discernment, visit and meet with the sisters, 1-3 p.m. Information: vocations@thedome.org, 812-367-1411.

February 11

Church of the Immaculate Conception, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **"Be Light" Monthly Taizé Prayer Service**, 7-8 p.m., silent and spoken prayers, simple music, silence. Information: 812-535-2952, provctr@spsmw.org.

February 14-17

Providence Spirituality and Conference Center, Foley Room, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Used Book Sale sponsored by Linden Leaf Gifts**, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., books not pre-priced but donations accepted. Information: Ryan Sheehy, 866-996-2947m rsheehy@spsmw.org.

February 20

St. Joseph Parish, 1401 S. Mickley Ave., Indianapolis. **Third Thursday Adoration**, interceding for women experiencing crisis pregnancy, 11 a.m.-7 p.m., with Mass at 5:45 p.m.

February 22

East Central High School Performing Arts Center,

1 Trojan Road A, St. Leon. **E6 Catholic Men's Conference: Putting on the Armor of God**, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., speakers, adoration, confession, Mass, ages 26 and older \$40 for pre-registration or \$55 for walk-in, ages 16-25 \$25 for pre-registration or \$30 for walk-in, clergy and religious free, includes lunch and materials, free parking. Information and registration: ecatholicmensconference.com.

March 4

Archbishop O'Meara Catholic Center, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. **Solo Seniors**, Catholic, educational, charitable and social singles, 50 and over, single, separated, widowed or divorced. New members welcome. 6 p.m. Information: 317-243-0777.

March 6

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

John Paul II Parish, St. Paul Chapel, 216 Schellers Ave., Sellersburg. **First Saturday Marian Devotion**, 8 a.m. rosary, meditation, prayer; 8:30 a.m. Mass with confessions prior. Information: 812-246-3522. †

Retreats and Programs

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

January 8, January 9

Providence Spirituality and Conference Center, Foley Room, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Art to Lift your Spirit!**, Wed., 9:30 a.m. or Thurs., 6:30 p.m., Providence Sister Rosemary Schmalz presenting, \$30 membership

fee to join group, \$5 per session after. Contact Jeanne Frost, 812-535-2952 to request a brochure. Registration and information: 812-535-2952, provctr@spsmw.org or www.spsmw.org/event.

January 10

Mount Saint Francis Center

for Spirituality, 101 St. Anthony Dr., Mt. St. Francis. **Painting with the Padre**, paint with Franciscan Father Vince Peterson, 6:30-9 p.m., \$40 includes all painting supplies and assorted cheeses, bring your own beverage. Information and registration: www.mountsaintfrancis.org/event-tickets, 812-923-8817. †

VIPs

Announcements for couples celebrating 50, 55, 60, 65, 70 or more years of marriage are accepted. Go to bit.ly/2M4MQms or call 317-236-1585.



Richard and Mary Ann (Tinder) Wagner, formerly of the archdiocese and now members of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Carmel, Ind., (Lafayette Diocese), will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on Dec. 19. The couple was married at St. Matthew the Apostle Church in Indianapolis on Dec. 19, 1969. They have four children: Carmen Mendoza, Colette Myers, Kristen Schupak and Kate Swanson. The couple also has nine grandchildren. They will celebrate with a dinner for family and friends. †



John and Janet (Hawkins) Zetzl, members of St. Christopher Parish in Indianapolis, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on Nov. 7. The couple was married in St. Joseph Church in Indianapolis on Nov. 7, 1959. They have six children: Mary Rancourt, Susan, Daniel, Jim, John, Jr., and Larry Zetzl. The couple also has 12 grandchildren and one great-grandchild. The couple will celebrate with family. †



New Providence Associates

Pictured above are 16 of the 17 individuals—plus two program co-directors—after becoming Providence Associates on Nov. 9 at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in St. Mary-of-the-Woods. Providence Associates are individuals of faith who form an intentional relationship with the Sisters of Providence of Saint-Mary-of-the-Woods. Candidates are paired with a sister or other associate companion for a year of study, prayer and reflection. They then commit to sharing their unique gifts and talents with others while walking with the Sisters of Providence. Currently, more than 285 Providence Associates live out Providence spirituality in their daily lives across the United States and in Taiwan. Learn more about the program at ProvidenceAssociates.org. (Submitted photo)

Sisters of Providence to host dementia caregiver support group on Jan. 8

"Dementia: Approach is Everything" is the theme of a caregiver support group hosted by the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in Havlic Center of Providence Hall, 1 Sisters of Providence, in St. Mary-of-the-Woods, from 6-8 p.m. on Jan. 8. Dementia is overwhelming not only for those experiencing it, but also for their caregivers and families. Caregivers will have the opportunity to share their stories,

ask questions and receive support from others traveling a similar journey. The session will be facilitated by the Sisters' clinical care coordinator Elizabeth Collins, BSN, MA. The cost to attend is \$15. Registration is requested by Jan. 6 online at www.spsmw.org/event. For additional information, contact Elizabeth Collins at 812-535-2870 or e-mail ecollins@spsmw.org. †

Events and retreats can be submitted to The Criterion by logging on to www.archindy.org/events/submission, or by mailing us at 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202, ATTN: Cindy Clark, or by fax at 317-236-1593.

'Changing Lives Forever' program brings hope to veterans

Special to *The Criterion*

Smiling through tears, one graduate spoke of new ways of thinking and planning for his future, while another thanked God for the gifts of inner peace and confidence. These veterans were among the nearly 300 graduates of the Indianapolis St. Vincent de Paul Society's "Changing Lives Forever" (CLF) program and the first to complete the course in a Veterans Administration (VA) facility in Indianapolis.

The unique collaboration between the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and the VA began with a chaplain's request to bring the program to veterans residing in a therapeutic community located in northeast Indianapolis. The St. Vincent de Paul conference at St. Simon the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis agreed to host the program and the 16-week course that began on Aug. 21.

"CLF is a perfect union of our mission at the VA domiciliary: taking complete management of your life, improving living conditions and standards of behavior, and rediscovering a spiritual purpose in your journey of life," said Divine Word Missionaries Father Charles Smith, the VA's chaplain.

Speaking at the Nov. 25 graduation, combat veteran Landon "Red" Boyd said, "This program is a God-sent program that has guided me in ways of knowledge [and] has given me inner peace when I think of my future. I am no longer afraid."

Paul Larkin summed it up this way: "This incredible program has, through Christ,



Society of St. Vincent de Paul members of St. Simon the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis and Divine Word Missionaries Father Charles Smith, Veterans Administration chaplain, celebrate with recent graduates of the first "Changing Lives Forever" program focused specifically on the needs of veterans on Nov. 25. Pictured are Phyllis Manfredi, left, program coordinator Domoni Rouse, Dave Kasberg, Brenda Ray, Paul Larkin, Landon "Red" Boyd and Father Smith. Not pictured is John Babcock. (Submitted photo)

allowed me to change my thinking, my words, and of course my actions. At this time in my life, I now sit down and cautiously consider my thought processes, behaviors and actions, and actually write out a plan for things in my life I need to accomplish. Now the work begins. I encourage others to

consider this incredible course."

CLF facilitators Dave Kasberg and John Babcock, both members of St. Simon, were assisted by Phyllis Manfredi, a member of St. Philip Neri Parish in Indianapolis, and Brenda Ray of St. Rita Parish, also in Indianapolis.

When asked why he volunteered to be lead facilitator, Kasberg, an Air Force veteran, said, "I spent 28 years on active duty. We were stationed across the U.S., in Germany four times, and finished up in the Pacific. When I retired, we moved back home to Indiana.

"I wanted to give back, to help those

in need in my own city, my own parish, not some distant land. It is easy to write a check and send it off in the mail. It is a lot harder to get your hands dirty and to address poverty in your own backyard—whether it is through St. Vincent de Paul home visits, Changing Lives Forever or some other program. It is just something I feel I am called to do. And I love it!"

The St. Vincent de Paul conference at St. Simon plans to host another program for veterans. For more information and additional program sites, contact Domoni Rouse, CLF coordinator, at 317-924-5769 or drouse@svdpindy.org. †




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St. Malachy Parish marks ‘150 years of making saints’

By Natalie Hoefler

St. Malachy Parish in Brownsburg was founded by native sons of Ireland who immigrated to America and made their way to the town in Hendricks County.

Now, 150 years later, the parish’s pastor, Father Sean Danda—a native son of St. Malachy—reflects on the faith community’s sesquicentennial.

He sums it up in a statement that addresses the past, the present and the future: “It’s been a fun year of celebrations, ... a pivotal moment of looking at where we came from and to where we’re heading, where [God] is leading us.”

This article looks at those three aspects—the parish’s founding, how it honored its 150th anniversary, and the faith community’s future path as a parish and as saints with heaven as their destination.

‘Looking at where we came from’

As the parish celebrates 150 years, it could be said that it has recently returned to its roots.

About a decade ago, the parish relocated from downtown Brownsburg to a site surrounded by fields—quite possibly on the same land the faith community’s Irish founders cleared in the late 1840’s.

The timing makes sense. Irish immigrants poured into the United States during the Green Isle’s devastating potato famine of 1845-1849.

Meanwhile, the town of Harrisburg in Hendricks County was incorporated and renamed Brownsburg in 1848. The small wilderness town was ready to grow.

A 1969 memorial book marking the parish’s 100th anniversary notes that “these Irish settlers, blessed with vigorous constitutions, labored clearing the dense forests and draining the pestilent swamps to convert this worthless territory into rich, productive farmland.”

To meet their spiritual needs and fulfill their faith obligations, they traveled 14 miles by horse or buggy to worship at St. John the Evangelist Church in Indianapolis. Additionally, Father D.J. McMullen of County Down, Ireland, was appointed to minister to the Brownsburg Catholic community.

He helped them establish their own parish. The community held a naming contest, and the winning name was



St. Malachy Parish pastor Father Sean Danda, left, Deacon Dan Collier, Archbishop Charles C. Thompson and Deacon Rick Renzi gather around the altar of St. Malachy Church in Brownsburg during a Mass celebrating the parish’s 150th anniversary on Nov. 3. (Submitted photo by David Gansert)

St. Malachy. It was a doubly appropriate choice—not only is he Irish, but the 12th-century bishop was known for serving those “in the remotest villages” in Ireland, according to the 1969 memorial book.

The congregation ebbed and flowed. A new brick structure replaced the old, wood-frame church in 1904, but little physical growth occurred until the parish opened a school in 1955. Twenty years later, the parish built its third church structure in the town of Brownsburg.

In 2008, the most recent church was built on the parish’s new field-encircled campus. The adjacent school building was completed in 2014.

“You have to think of what it took for [the parish founders] to do this in a somewhat remote parish, to continue and not let it waiver,” says Beatrice Bursten, a St. Malachy parish council member and head of the 150th anniversary committee.

“You look at where we are today, and [the faith community’s growth]

is pretty impressive, not just from a building perspective but also from a faith perspective.”

‘A fun year of celebrations’

The parish’s growth is impressive from a numbers perspective as well. In 1885, the parish had 72 registered families. Today it has 2,100.

“Many new people are moving to Hendricks County. It’s the second fastest growing county in the state,” says Father Danda.

“The parish is becoming a very young parish, very ethnic in diversity with a large African community, many Asians and Filipinos. The feel of the parish is really young and vibrant.”

Those are the same adjectives St. Malachy’s director of faith formation uses to describe the community.

“It’s a young, vibrant parish,” says Marian Knueven. “Young families are getting very involved. ... We are seeing

the leadership responsibilities shifting, so young, growing families are leading us.”

Bursten notes St. Malachy now has 45 ministries, including several mission trips each year to supply medical, educational and clean water support to St. Marguerite Parish and the people of Port Margot, Haiti.

The parish began more than a year of celebrating its sesquicentennial with a Mass in September 2018, the same month the first church building was dedicated in 1869. (See related story.)

“The theme has been ‘150 years of making saints—become the saint God wants you to be,’” says Father Danda. “We’ve had a saint of the month highlighting different vocations. We put an image of them in the sanctuary, information about them in the bulletin.”

For inspiration, the parish led several local pilgrimages, including one to the Sisters of Providence at Saint

See ST. MALACHY, page 20

Custom seats are act of ‘chair-ity’ for parish’s sesquicentennial

By Natalie Hoefler

During the Nov. 3 Mass marking the 150th anniversary of St. Malachy Parish in Brownsburg, a trio of exquisite art pieces adorned the sanctuary.

They were not sculptured figures, nor were they hung images.

They were chairs, a large one for the presider and two smaller ones for the parish deacons.

But these were no ordinary sanctuary seats. Each was custom-designed, constructed of richly-colored woods with 23-carat gold-leaf details, hand-finished with four layers of lacquer—and crafted entirely by St. Malachy parishioners.

The liturgical chairs were a long time coming.

When the church was built 11 years ago, says parish pastor Father Sean Danda, “it didn’t come ready-made with an altar and accompanying fixtures. They’ve been adding things along the way.”

Several talented parishioners hand-crafted the wooden altar, ambo, candlesticks, tabernacle base, gifts table and pieces for the church’s Blessed Sacrament chapel and Marian shrine.

All that was left by 2018 was the sanctuary chairs.

But two important Masses were rapidly approaching—one in September launching the parish’s sesquicentennial year, and one in November celebrating the feast of St. Malachy.

And those who had created the existing sanctuary pieces were no longer available. One of those volunteers, Larry Garetto, had even sold his expensive woodworking equipment before moving out of state.

But like the precisely-fitting pieces in the fine-crafted chairs, a new team of parishioners with complementary skills fell perfectly into place, and just in the nick of time.

It began with Bob Kasnak. He and his wife Leslie are artisans for their antique furniture business, Kasnak Restorations.

Kasnak admits he’d been approached about building the chairs by various pastors since the new church was built in 2009. But the timing was never right.

Then one day in 2018, Kasnak ran into two other known woodcrafters in the parish, Bill Buss and Roger Manternach.

“Unbeknownst to me, Bill was the one who bought Larry’s equipment,” he says. “And Bill said Larry told him, ‘I’ll sell it to you cheap, but you have to build these chairs.’”

Also unbeknownst to Kasnak was that then-pastor Father Vince Lampert, not wanting to wait any longer, had already selected chairs to purchase for the sanctuary.

After a conversation with Father Lampert, the priest agreed to commission the work to the three parishioners instead.

So the components were in place: Kasnak had the space to do the work, Buss had the equipment, and Manternach



Father Sean Danda, pastor of St. Malachy Parish in Brownsburg, stands proudly with the three sanctuary chairs custom-designed and built by parishioners in time for the parish’s feast day Mass in November 2018 during the faith community’s sesquicentennial year. The artisans volunteered at least 1,600 hours on the project. (Submitted photo)

made for a third gifted craftsman to work on the project. Plus Garetto contributed the designs, and Leslie helped with the hand-finishing.

Now all they needed was time—something they had little of. The team started working on the chairs in March

of 2018. The September Mass was seven months away, and the St. Malachy feast day Mass was nine months away.

Selecting the lumber was easy. They retrieved from storage the dark African Wenge and brown Honduras Mahogany

See CHAIRS, page 20

Annual conference focuses on ministering to those in prison

By Katie Rutter

Special to *The Criterion*

BLOOMINGTON—Russell Boyd never expected that he would be outside the prison walls, let alone be a panel member speaking to an audience. Yet on Nov. 16, he was one of the presenters at the annual Corrections Ministry Conference held at St. Paul Catholic Center, Bloomington.

“If it hadn’t been for the people coming in from the outside and encouraging me,” Boyd told those in attendance, “I probably would have been the same man. But I changed.”

Boyd spent 10 years on Indiana’s death row. On Feb. 22, 1989, just 25 hours before he was scheduled to die, he was granted a stay of execution. Four years later, he was re-sentenced and removed from death row, and in January was released from prison.

“I watched my brothers on [death] row die. God, for some reason, he saved me, and from that moment that’s where my faith started to kick in,” Boyd said.

He was one of six formerly incarcerated people who shared their appreciation for prison ministry at the annual conference. About 140 people attended the event, which aimed to equip and recruit ministers to enter correctional institutions and minister to the incarcerated.

The keynote speech was given by well-known activist Sister Helen Prejean, a Sister of St. Joseph of Medaille. Her lifelong ministry to those on death row and campaign against the death penalty were thrust into the spotlight by the 1995 film *Dead Man Walking*, which was based

on her book of the same title.

“I’m no different from you. We’re blessed by grace to be awake enough to sit here on a Saturday morning and know that we are called to go into prisons where Christ is waiting for us,” Sister Helen said to the attendees.

“Blessed are our eyes that see what we see and ears that hear what we hear and hearts that feel what we feel. With God on our side, what is not possible?”

The conference was the third of its type organized by the archdiocese. It marks a growing initiative by the local Church to better organize, connect and equip Catholics who visit the 19 prisons and 92 jails located in the state.

Clergy, religious and lay Catholics have ministered inside these institutions for decades. In 2016, however, a task force began to focus specifically on corrections ministry and how it might be facilitated. A new position, the coordinator of corrections ministry, was formed at the archdiocese shortly after, and the first conference was held in 2017.

“My goal always is to inform those who are already interested so that they can perform their ministry in a more effective and fulfilling way,” explained Deacon Marc Kellams, a former judge and now the coordinator of Corrections Ministry for the archdiocese.

“I also hope that it helps encourage them that there are many people throughout the archdiocese who have devoted significant time and resources to helping those who are most vulnerable and in often dire need of spiritual counseling and support,” Deacon Kellams said.

According to the latest numbers

available from the Indiana Department of Corrections, on Oct. 1 there were 28,876 adults held in prisons maintained by the department.

All of the formerly incarcerated people participating at the conference expressed the importance of having ministers come to visit them.

“When people come in, it’s a big deal. It’s more than just a conversation. It’s someone breathing life back into you,” said Richard Samuels, who was incarcerated for 26 years. “When you get into prison, a lot of times hope is not there.”

“Just to see how much [the volunteers] love you and care about you and they spend their time and they’re there to pour into your souls—and you gotta hold onto that for days because then you go back into



Russell Boyd, center, speaks about his imprisonment for more than 43 years, 10 of which were spent on Indiana’s death row, during the Corrections Ministry Conference at St. Paul Catholic Center in Bloomington on Nov. 16. Boyd was part of a panel of formerly incarcerated persons led by Deacon Marc Kellams, far left. The conference was the third of its type and marks an increased effort by the archdiocese to better organize and equip people who minister in jails and prisons. Panel members included Richard Samuels, left, David Steele, Russell Boyd, Maria Luttrell and Jay David. (Photos by Katie Rutter)

the dorm and it’s chaos,” explained Maria Luttrell, who was released in April after a decade of imprisonment.

In addition to the panel discussion, the conference also included breakout sessions on topics like best practices for ministering and the correlation of addiction and crime. Attendees frequently engaged in discussion with the presenters, sharing their own experiences to encourage and educate others.

Harlem Lyle and Karen Burkhart, both members of St. Susanna Parish in Plainfield, told *The Criterion* about a lasting relationship that they formed with one person they had ministered to in prison. Once released, the man invited both women to his wedding, then, when the ladies were stuck in traffic en route, he waited to begin the ceremony until they arrived.

“I became his kind of ‘mother/grandmother,’” said Burkhart.

“We had helped him find God again, and so he wanted to share [the wedding] with us,” added Lyle.

The conference met under the shadow of several pending executions that were scheduled to take place at the Federal Corrections Complex in Terre Haute in December and January. Attendees bowed their heads in prayer, while Sister of Providence Barbara Battista read aloud the names of those scheduled to die.

Just four days after that prayer, a federal trial judge temporarily suspended those executions. Appeals to that stay continue to make their way through the courts.

“Everybody is worth more than the worst thing they’ve ever done in their life,” Sister Helen said at the conference, an oft-repeated mantra.

“You know from visiting prisons,” she told those in attendance, “we look into their eyes, and they are human beings, and we reflect in our own minds, ‘What if I was poor, what if I came from a broken family, what if I was taught violence from the time I was 6 years old? Where would I be?’”

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that capital punishment is “inadmissible.”

Sister Helen emphasized that what everyone needs—including those in prison—is the mercy freely offered to all people by God.

“As a young adult, I did some stupid things,” reflected attendee Dan White, a



Sister Helen Prejean, a Sister of St. Joseph of Medaille, speaks at the Corrections Ministry Conference at St. Paul Catholic Center in Bloomington on Nov. 16. Sister Helen has dedicated her life to advocating against the death penalty and ministering to those on death row.



Deacon Marc Kellams, coordinator of Corrections Ministry for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, introduces the Corrections Ministry Conference held at the St. Paul Catholic Center in Bloomington on Nov. 16.



Ann Tully and Dan White, both members of St. Matthew the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis, have a conversation during the Corrections Ministry Conference at St. Paul Catholic Center in Bloomington on Nov. 16. Tully visits inmates at the Indiana Women’s Prison in Indianapolis, while White ministers at the Pendleton Correctional Facility in Pendleton.



Attendees of the Corrections Ministry Conference applaud during a panel discussion by formerly incarcerated persons at St. Paul Catholic Center in Bloomington on Nov. 16.

member of St. Matthew the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis.

“These people just made mistakes in their lives and got caught. ... They need somebody now,” White concluded.

As the new Corrections Ministry initiative continues to grow, Deacon Kellams said he intends to focus on facilitating re-entry for those who are released from prison. He affirmed that ministry to the incarcerated is critical to the Catholic faith.

“It says in [the Gospel of] Matthew [25:36] that when I was in jail, you visited me,” Deacon Kellams said, “and it’s an instruction from our Lord to include these people in the body of Christ, and make sure their spiritual needs and their personal needs are met as best we can. It’s a mandate of the Gospel.”

(Katie Rutter is a freelance writer and member of St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Bloomington.) †

Readers share stories of the best Christmas gifts they have given and received

‘Making others happy and giving joy’

By Debbie Hartman

I’ve given my share of nice gifts that I have loved to give and were much appreciated. I’m still pleased about this one!

It was autumn of 2009. I was at my brother and sister-in-law’s house, and we were watching the Indianapolis Colts, which is always fun for us, win or lose.

A commercial had come on for the iPod Nano, very popular at that time. It came in several beautiful colors—blue, red, gold, green, pink, purple, black and silver. They were made of aluminum and were beautiful.

The commercial was fun to watch, and I jokingly asked my nephew Zack (who was 15 at the time) if he wanted a Nano and what color he would like. He promptly said, “red.” I decided then that I would get a red iPod for his Christmas gift.

At the time, I worked downtown [Indianapolis] and was able to drive up to Keystone at the Crossing and visit the Apple Store. That was the only place where a red Nano could be purchased.

I asked for what I wanted, and the helpful store clerk showed a sample Nano and how it sounded. I purchased the iPod in a very nice box that held everything needed. Even the drawstring bag I received it in was well made.

I bought an iPod book to go along with the Nano that explained everything about it. All of it went into a gift bag—even the little drawstring bag. It was worth keeping.

Christmas Day was celebrated at my niece’s new house. It was an awesome day for us all, and especially for Zack when he opened the gift bag. He couldn’t believe he had received something so cool. He carried it in his backpack all though high school and IUPUI (Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis). He got much use out of it, and he still plays it on occasion.

Zack was so appreciative and happy with his gift. Seeing his surprise and happiness says so much about making others happy and giving joy. That’s what Christmas is all about.

(Debbie Hartman is a member of St. Mark the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis.)

‘My greatest wish for Christmas’

By Cecelia Kiley

It was 1952, and I was 10 years old. The biggest desire among little girls at that time was to possess a Toni doll, a doll on which one could give a home-permanent. Some of my friends already had such a doll, so this was my greatest wish for Christmas!

Come Christmas morning, there under the tree sat this beautiful doll with long blond hair. The joy I felt in seeing the doll is hard to describe! I took loving care of my Toni doll, never having the courage to actually give her a permanent for fear of destroying her beautiful hair!



The doll is now 67 years old; has had a hair restoration only once; but the rest of her is original and still serene-looking as she sits in a rocking chair wearing a pretty blue dress made by my daughter-in-law along with a wreath of flowers upon her head. I still look at the doll with fond memories and as one of my most memorable gifts.

(Cecelia Kiley is a member of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Carmel, Ind., in the Diocese of Lafayette.)

‘Thanks, I really love it’

By Nancy McKee-West

My best Christmas gift that I ever received was not wrapped in shiny red paper. It is a gift that is unwrapped year after year and one that I cherish with all my heart.

The year was 1986 and my father, Carl Genaro, had leukemia. During the 1970’s and 1980’s when my two sisters and I were married and had other families, Mom and Dad decided it would be best to have our celebration of Christmas the Saturday after Christmas.

In this particular year on Christmas Day, my husband and I had paid a visit to my maternal grandfather who was in a nursing home near where my parents were living. On the way home from our visit with my grandfather, we stopped in to see my folks.

Dad was resting on the couch. He was tired and looked weary. It wasn’t like my dad to be like this, especially on Christmas. Upon leaving their house, my heart was sad and tears rolled down my cheeks. I almost couldn’t stop as I knew that this would be my dad’s last Christmas. When I realized that fact, I decided that when we had our celebration, I would be very cheerful for my dad and not show tears.

Not showing tears and being cheerful were harder than I thought; however, it went as I had planned.

The house was decorated so pretty, dinner was almost ready and underneath the tree was a large assortment of packages for everybody—my mom, dad, my grandmother, my two sisters, husbands, the twins and the two grandchildren. Dad had made it clear how happy he was that the family was together on this, the holiest of days.

My gift came during the unwrapping of all those packages of sweaters, games and lotions. I looked over at my dad and saw all of his pain from the disease and saw his hope for the future of his family without him. I also saw his deep strength to go forth and his being cheerful.

Suddenly, the memories of past Christmases flooded my mind. I remembered how the Christmas season brought out a big change in dad, almost childlike. He would be more into mischief by making surprises for all, sneaking the freshly-made cookies from the oven, decorating the house with gusto and going to Midnight Mass and crying. You see, Dad’s mom had her birthday on Dec. 25. I think he thought a lot about her especially at Mass; thus his tears.

In 1986, I did get a shiny package and I cannot even remember what it was. There were so many presents for everybody, and the wrapping paper was flying or so it seemed. My best present came unwrapped, and it is the most wonderful of all. It

was the gift of reflections and memories. Knowing that this would be my dad’s last Christmas this day has become a bittersweet celebration for me. Dad passed in April of 1987.

My gift of reflection and memories is re-opened year after year when I think of how strong Dad was on that Christmas in 1986, and how many memories he shared with me and my family: there were the trips to Fort Wayne to visit my Italian family, the sampling of dinner before it was on the table, the silly things that appeared in our stockings and all of his laughter.

Then, there was a donut cushion dad provided for me after my surgery in 1981, the phone calls to his grown daughters asking what Santa had brought them. Then there were the earlier memories of him playing with our toys like they were his, and the pink ice box that suddenly appeared on the front porch on Christmas day for my sister. The list goes on and on.

My gift of reflection and memories is something I learned and obtained on that Christmas in 1986. Dad gave this gift freely by showing us that we should live each day as if it were our last and to not let anything stand in the way of Christmas memories. Do not forget them; let them live deep within your hearts.

Even though my dad is gone, I still get to open my gift from him every year, and I do so with as much anticipation and glee as when I see the packages wrapped in pretty papers and bows.

Dad’s gift is like the Energizer Bunny: it keeps on going. In my family, the traditions, reflections and memories are from the past but are building bridges to the future. Don’t cry anymore Dad, as I am remembering and reflecting.

Thank you, Dad, for my present. I really love it.

(Nancy McKee-West is a member of St. Michael the Archangel Parish in Indianapolis.)

‘Good things come in small packages’

I was born in a small town in eastern Kentucky. When it rained a lot, a little branch of the river would overflow and flood the town.

I do not remember how old I was at the time, but it was very close to Christmas. My dad had gone to get my Gran and bring her back to our house. She lived in the flooded part of town, and we lived on a hill, away from the flood.

I was waiting with excitement for Dad to arrive with Gran. I looked forward to seeing her and the Christmas present I knew she was going to be bringing with her. It was almost all I could think about, the new big doll that could stand up on its own that I told her I was wanting when she asked me.

My Gran always got us the neatest things, so I was sure she was bringing my new doll with her. My mom, brothers, sisters and I waited anxiously for Dad, hoping he did not have any problems getting through floodwaters.

We kept looking out the window, hoping to spot the car at any moment. We were all relieved when we finally saw it coming down the road.

My Gran was a big part of our lives, and it was wonderful to see her again. She barely made it through the door when we were all around her.

After the greetings, hugs and talk of the floodwaters, the moment came when the gifts were presented from her. I was disappointed when she handed me a small gift, much too small to be the doll I had hoped for, and I knew she saw the disappointment on my face.

She just kept smiling after she handed it to me and told me “Good things come in small packages!” I could not imagine it being anything as grand as the doll, but I took it and opened it.

My disappointment quickly turned to pure joy when I opened that little box and inside was a brand-new Timex watch, with a black leather band!

A Christmas meditation shares Jacob the innkeeper’s story

By John F. Fink

I have to tell you about the most exciting day of my life, one that I never expected to occur during my lifetime. It happened several years ago.

But first I’d better tell you who I am. My name is Jacob, and I have been the innkeeper of the only inn in Bethlehem. Usually that one inn is sufficient for a little town like Bethlehem, but that year Caesar Augustus issued a decree that everyone in the Roman Empire had to go to where their ancestors came from and be registered. Well, Bethlehem was once important because that’s where King David was born and raised, so a lot of people came to register.

On this particular day, a man named Joseph arrived with his wife, Mary. She was pregnant and appeared to be near the time for the birth. They, of course, were looking for a room in my inn, but I had already had to turn down some others because I simply didn’t have any room.

I felt sorry for them because they had come a great distance. Joseph said that they lived in Nazareth, which is way up in Galilee, about 80 miles away. To get to Bethlehem, they had to meet up with a caravan where the Jordan River flows out of the Sea of Galilee. The caravan traveled down the east side of the Jordan River, so they could avoid the mountains of Samaria, until it neared Jericho. Then it crossed the river and began a tough walk up the mountains in the Judean Desert until it reached Jerusalem. Then Joseph and Mary left the caravan and walked the final five miles to Bethlehem by themselves.

Of course, Mary rode a donkey most of the way. Joseph walked. The whole trip took them six days.

I learned from Joseph that Mary had taken a similar trip nine months before when she visited her relative Elizabeth, and returned to Nazareth six months ago. She was used to taking long trips, but this time she was nine months pregnant.

As much as I felt sorry for them, I still couldn’t give them a room in the inn. The best I could do was put them up in the stable behind the inn, where they also put the donkey that Mary rode on. Joseph had to feed and water the donkey anyway. At least, I thought, there was enough straw for them to rest.

I hugged her and could not thank her enough. She asked me what I thought of it as she helped me put it around my wrist, and I told her I loved it! I told her she was right: good things do come in small packages!

As I reminisce about that Christmas gift of long ago, I think about what Christmas is really about: that small, tiny baby Jesus given to us at the first Christmas, wrapped up in that small “package,” was all the love the Father has for us and the hope of the whole world, all the mercy and forgiveness we could ask for, and a light shining brighter than the sun to lead us to him and to heaven.

I loved my Gran and looked up to her a lot. She was a big influence in my life. She helped me learn my catechism when I was younger and taught me many life lessons.

And like that first small Christmas “package,” she taught me to have an unconditional love that I hope I have passed on to my children. Fifty years later, I still have that watch tucked away and always remember that good things do indeed come in small packages!

(Mary, who asked that her last name not be used, is a member of a parish in southern Indiana.)

‘Our memorable miracle Christmas’

By Arleen Loviscek Krebs

In 1973, we were living in Atlanta far away from family and friends. We had



A Nativity scene displayed at the University of Dayton in Ohio on Dec. 2 shows the Magi, townspeople and animals crowded around the baby Jesus. The university has collected about 3,600 Nativity sets and displays around 100 selected creches each Christmas season. (CNS photo/Katie Ruttler)

A couple hours later, Joseph was back at the inn. Mary was ready to give birth, he said. I quickly found a midwife for him, but it turned out that she wasn’t needed. The midwife said later that the birth was miraculous.

All that was exciting enough, but there was more. Shortly after the birth, I suddenly found some unexpected guests—shepherds who had been in the fields. Of course, I didn’t let them inside the inn; my other guests would have objected vehemently to having shepherds there.

But they wanted to see the new baby. “Why,” I asked, “and how did you know that a baby was born?”

I moved there three years previously for my husband to take a new job.

Alas, after three years, the company folded and we were stranded there with no job and it was Christmas week.

We had four young daughters, and no money for presents. We did have a tiny Charlie Brown tree with popcorn strands and ornaments cut out of old, felt pieces I had.

Out of the blue, we received a Christmas card from our favorite Aunt Annie. Enclosed was a \$20 bill! She had gotten an unexpected bonus at her job and wanted to share it with us.

She had never done this before. On Christmas Eve, I was able to find some really good markdowns before the stores closed. Now I had some presents for the girls.

This was truly our memorable miracle Christmas!

(Arleen Loviscek Krebs is a member of Sacred Heart Parish in Indianapolis.)

‘The greatest Christmas gift I have ever gotten’

By Darlene Radtke

I was attached to a full-size green blanket that I received on Christmas Eve while I slept when I was 5 years old.

I remember going to bed with a towel over me to sleep. I was cold. On Christmas morning, I woke up warm to this wonderful blanket. I remember being so thrilled and happy that I had this blanket. I was told

that Santa had covered me with it and gifted it to me.

I kept that blanket for many years. It helped me through my childhood and gave me comfort. I brought it with me when I moved into my first apartment on my own. By then, that blanket was pretty old but still covered me on my bed. I even brought it with me when I married at 25.

It was a sad day when I had to finally admit that it was time to let it go. I am 61 now, and I have never forgotten that feeling that blanket brought me on Christmas morning.

To me, it has always been the greatest Christmas gift I have ever gotten.

(Darlyne Radtke is a member of St. Pius X Parish in Indianapolis.)

‘A warm welcome’

By Rita Weisenbach Jolley

Beyond a doubt, the most wonderful gift my family and I ever received had to be the successful delivery of our seventh son after a very stressful pregnancy where contact bleeding threatened to end it at any time.

The labor was difficult and tedious, but I truly believe that our Blessed Mother and her Son heard my prayers. Our tiny baby boy, Michael Robert, was born and survived on Dec. 21, 1961. We brought him home from the hospital on Christmas morning. He was warmly welcomed by a blended family composed of two sisters and six brothers.

One more brother was added on

will be a spiritual leader.

Other angels joined the first angel and sang, “Glory to God in the highest and on Earth peace to those on whom his favor rests” (Lk 2:14). And they told them where they would find their savior. So they came here to my stable.

It was an amazing night. It happened several years ago, and I haven’t heard anything more about that baby. I assume that he is growing up in Nazareth. I hope I will still be around when he grows up.

(John F. Fink is editor emeritus of The Criterion.) †

Feb. 16, 1964, totaling eight boys and two girls.

(Rita Weisenbach Jolley is a member of St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis.)

‘Joy to the world’

By M. John Khai Nou and Veronica Niang

The best Yuletide gift we’ve received for this 2019 Christmas is our second-born son, Ignatius Thang Vanglian, who was delivered on Dec. 7, 2019, at Franciscan Health in Indianapolis.

The best Christmas presents we’ve given this year are Nativity greeting cards to one of my co-workers’ two little daughters. Joy to world, the Lord has come! †



A family remembers their son

(James Warren, Jr. a 2015 graduate of Bishop Chatard High School in Indianapolis, died of cancer on Feb. 22, 2019. His father James E. Warren, Sr., and other members of his family felt called this Christmas to remember how James, known as “JDub” to family and friends, wrote letters to them before he died. Following are copies of those letters.)



James Warren, Jr.

JDub’s letter to his mom

Mom, if you are reading this just know nothing was your fault. You were the best mother I could ever ask for and I love you so much.

I never understood why any of this had to happen to me, but I am finally at peace with everything and all the pain and suffering is gone. You and Dad gave me the best life any kid could have asked for, and you guys will never know how thankful I was for everything.

Even though I am no longer here, I will always be here in your guys’ hearts. I had 23 great years of life, and wouldn’t change a thing. Take care of Maebre, and tell her I love her. And tell Mamaw and Dad I love them too. Don’t be sad or hurt, just know I am happy now and in a better place.

I’ll always love you. Mom. Thank you for everything.

Your son,
JDub

JDub’s letter to his family and friends

If you are reading this, my fight with cancer has come to an end. I gave it everything I had and never gave up one second, but God had other plans for me.

I want to thank everyone who has been there for me through it all. I never knew how many people loved and cared about me, and I will never forget any of you. I am at peace now and all the pain is gone.

I love everyone from the bottom of my heart, and I had the best 23 years of life anyone could ask for.

One thing I learned through this all is never give up no matter what you are going through, and to go live your life to the fullest. Go do those things you’ve always wanted to do and never hold grudges. Life is too short.

I will see you all again one day, and I’ll always be watching over all of you.

Love,
JDub †

Pope lifts secrecy obligation for those who report having been abused

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Francis has abolished the obligation of secrecy for those who report having been sexually abused by a priest and for those who testify in a Church trial or process having to do with clerical sexual abuse.

“The person who files the report, the person who alleges to have been harmed and the witnesses shall not be bound by any obligation of silence with regard to matters involving the case,” the pope ordered in a new “Instruction On the Confidentiality of Legal Proceedings,” published on Dec. 17.

In an accompanying note, Bishop Juan Ignacio Arrieta, secretary of the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts, said the change regarding the “pontifical secret” has nothing to do with the seal of the sacrament of confession.

“The absolute obligation to observe the sacramental seal,” he said, “is an obligation imposed on the priest by reason of the position he holds in administering the sacrament of confession, and not even the penitent can free him of it.”

The instruction was published by the Vatican along with changes to the already updated “*Sacramentorum Sanctitatis Tutela*” (“Safeguarding the Sanctity of the Sacraments”), the 2001 document issued by St. John Paul II outlining procedures for the investigation and trial of any member of the clergy accused of sexually abusing a child or vulnerable adult or accused of acquiring, possessing or distributing child pornography.

In the first of the amendments, Pope Francis changed the definition of child pornography. Previously the subject was a person under the age of 14. The new description of the crime says, “The acquisition, possession or distribution by a cleric of pornographic images of minors under the age of 18, for purposes of sexual gratification, by whatever means or using whatever technology.”

In describing the procedural norms for how the tribunal of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is to be composed and conducted, Pope Francis has removed the requirement that the legal representative of the accused be a priest. The law now reads: “The role of advocate or procurator is carried out by a member of the faithful possessing a doctorate in canon law, who is approved by the presiding judge of the college.”

But the abolition of the pontifical secret over the entire Vatican process is the greatest change made. And, not only are victims and witnesses free to discuss the case, the amended law specifies that the still-in-effect obligation of Vatican officials to maintain confidentiality “shall not prevent the fulfillment of the obligations laid down in all places by civil laws, including any reporting obligations, and the execution of enforceable requests of civil judicial authorities.”

Archbishop Charles Scicluna, adjunct secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Vatican’s chief abuse investigator, told *America Magazine* the new law makes clear that “anybody who discloses misconduct or a crime and anybody who is impacted by the misconduct or the crime, and the witnesses, should never be subject to a vow or a promise of silence on the fact that they have reported.”

The new law, he said, explicitly states people’s “moral duty” to cooperate with civil authorities in reporting and investigating the crime of abuse. “Moreover, there is an obligation not to bind people who disclose misconduct or crimes by any promise or vow of silence,” he explained.

In a separate interview with Vatican News, Archbishop Scicluna described as an “epochal change” the pope’s decision to drop the “pontifical secret”—the highest level of confidentiality. “That means, of course, the question of transparency now is being implemented at the highest level,” he said.

The new rules do not mean that documents from Vatican abuse investigations and trials will be made public, he said, but “they are available for authorities, or people who are interested parties, and authorities who have a statutory jurisdiction over the matter.”

In the past, when a government or court asked the Vatican for information on a case, the response usually was that the material was covered by “pontifical secret.”

Now, Archbishop Scicluna said, once “all the formalities of international law” are fulfilled, communication with other authorities “and the sharing of information and documentation are facilitated.”

In September 2017, members of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection



Pope Francis and prelates from around the world attend a penitential liturgy during a meeting on the protection of minors in the church at the Vatican in this Feb. 23 file photo. In a decision published on Dec. 17 the pope abolished the obligation of secrecy for abuse victims during Vatican trials and processes. (CNS photo/Evandro Inetti, pool)

of Minors asked Pope Francis to reconsider Vatican norms maintaining the imposition of “pontifical secret” in the Church’s judicial handling of clerical sex abuse and other grave crimes.

The secret ensures cases are dealt with in strict confidentiality. Vatican experts have said it was designed to protect the dignity of everyone involved, including the victim, the accused, their families and their communities.

But when Pope Francis called the presidents of the world’s bishops’ conferences to the Vatican for a summit on the abuse crisis in February, victims and experts alike urged a revision of the policy.

Linda Ghisoni, a canon lawyer and undersecretary for laity at the Dicastery for Laity, the Family and Life, told the summit removing the pontifical secret from abuse cases would reverse a situation or the impression of a situation where secrecy “is used to hide problems rather than protect the values at stake,” including the confidentiality of the victims and the right of an accused to a fair trial.

Cardinal Reinhard Marx of Munich and Freising, Germany, told the summit

that removing the pontifical secret would promote transparency in a scandal where the lack of transparency has meant “the rights of victims were effectively trampled underfoot and left to the whims of individuals.”

In his commentary, Bishop Arrieta noted that already in May with the publication of “*Vos Estis Lux Mundi*” (“You are the light of the world”) on procedures for handling allegations of abuse or of the cover-up of abuse, Pope Francis already banned imposing confidentiality agreements on victims.

The bishop also took pains to note that the abolition of absolute secrecy—the “pontifical secret,” which is invoked with an oath—was not the same thing as removing all obligations for confidentiality.

The “secrecy of the office” still applies to Vatican officials and others involved in an investigation or trial of a cleric accused of abuse or of a bishop or religious superior accused of cover-up. Except for sharing information with civil authorities, the basic professional secrecy serves, as the new law says, to protect “the good name, image and privacy of all persons involved.” †

World needs peacemakers, not empty words, pope says in message

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—The world does not need more empty words, it needs committed, active peacemakers who do not exclude or manipulate, but are open to respectful dialogue, Pope Francis said in his annual message for the World Day of Peace on Jan. 1.

“In fact, we cannot truly achieve peace without a convinced dialogue between men and women who seek the truth beyond ideologies and differing opinions,” the pope said in the message released on Dec. 12.

Peace requires “patient effort

to seek truth and justice, to honor the memory of victims and to open the way, step by step, to a shared hope stronger than the desire for vengeance,” he said.

Peace also requires “ecological conversion,” he said, which basically is “a new way of looking at life as we consider the generosity of the Creator who has given us the Earth and called us to share it in joy and moderation.”

People, he said, need “a new way to dwell in our common home, to accept our differences, to respect and celebrate the life

that we have received and share, and to seek living conditions and models of society that favor the continued flourishing of life and the development of the common good of the entire human family.”

The pope’s message was released at a Vatican news conference led by Cardinal Peter Turkson, head of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development.

The pope defined peace as a journey built on: hope that inspires people to keep moving forward, “even when obstacles seem insurmountable”; listening that learns lessons from the past; reconciliation that respects others; ecological conversion; and patience and trust.

His message, which the Vatican sends to heads of state around the world, invited everyone “to set aside every act of violence in thought, word and deed, whether against our neighbors or against God’s creation.”

“The culture of fraternal encounter shatters the culture of conflict,” he said, and it makes “every encounter a possibility and a gift of God’s generous love. It leads us beyond the limits of our narrow horizons and constantly encourages us to live in a spirit of universal fraternity, as children of the one heavenly Father.”

Pope Francis said every act of war is “a form of fratricide that destroys the human family’s innate vocation to brotherhood,” and all violence has a lasting effect “on the body and soul of humanity.”

War often begins with the inability to accept the diversity of others and is fueled “by a perversion of relationships, by hegemonic ambitions, by abuses of power, by fear of others and by seeing diversity as an obstacle,” he said. Peace, stability and security cannot be built by fear or threats, particularly “the threat of total annihilation” with a strategy of nuclear deterrence.

“Every threatening situation feeds mistrust and leads people to withdraw into their own safety zone,” he said.

A “global ethic of solidarity and cooperation in the service of a future” is needed, he said, and it can be achieved by pursuing “a genuine fraternity based on our common origin from God and exercised in dialogue and mutual trust.”

“The desire for peace lies deep within the human heart, and we should not resign ourselves to seeking anything less than this,” he said.

A patient and respectful listening to victims and lessons of the past “can lead to courageous and even heroic decisions,” Pope Francis wrote. “It can unleash

new energies and kindle new hope in individuals and communities.”

People’s moral consciences must be formed and strengthened, and individual and political will must be renewed, he said, “so that new ways can be found to reconcile and unite individuals and communities.”

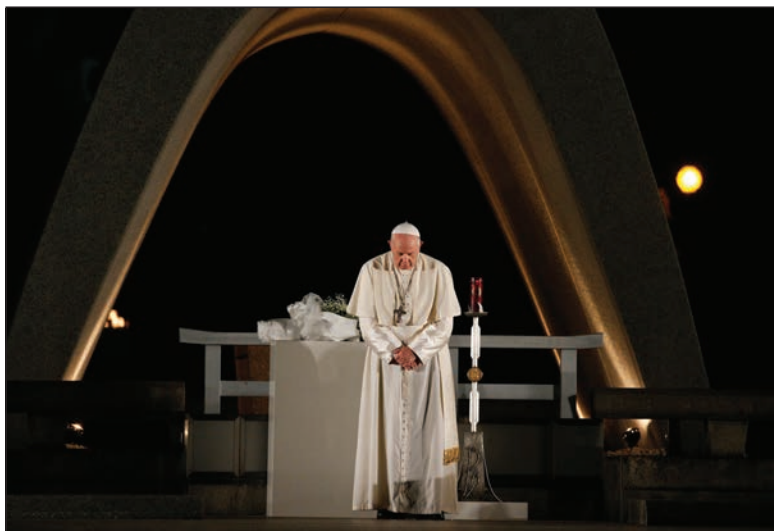
“The world does not need empty words but convinced witnesses, peacemakers who are open to a dialogue that rejects exclusion or manipulation,” he said.

“There can be no true peace unless we show ourselves capable of developing a more just economic system,” he also said in the message.

Reconciliation and forgiveness also are essential for creating a more fraternal world, the pope said. “We should never encapsulate others in what they may have said or done, but value them for the promise that they embody.”

And, he wrote, “only by choosing the path of respect can we break the spiral of vengeance and set out on the journey of hope.”

In conclusion, the pope asked, “May all men and women who come into this world experience a life of peace and develop fully the promise of life and love dwelling in their heart.” †



Pope Francis participates in a moment of silence during a meeting for peace at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial in Hiroshima, Japan, on Nov. 24. In his message for the Jan. 1 World Day of Peace, Pope Francis said the world does not need more empty words, it needs committed, active peacemakers. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

Football team gives touching tribute to longtime CYO coach

By John Shaughnessy

The touching moment happened spontaneously—a fitting tribute to a man who coached in the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) for 40 years.

The moment occurred at St. Lawrence Church in Indianapolis on Nov. 20, the day of the funeral Mass for 89-year-old Patrick Devine.

During the Mass, several people shared heartfelt words of praise for Devine, including how he and his wife Mary had been married for 66 years and



Mary and Patrick Devine pose for a photo when the football field at St. Lawrence Parish in Indianapolis was named in his honor after coaching teams there for 40 years. (Submitted photo)



The players and coaches of the fifth-and-sixth grades' football team of St. Lawrence Parish pose for a photo after attending the Nov. 20 funeral Mass for Patrick Devine, a longtime coach at the parish. (Submitted photo)

how the couple, who had no biological children, cared deeply for their 22 nieces and nephews, even taking three of the nephews into their home for several years and providing a Catholic education for them in high school.

Then came the focus on the many other children Devine cared about, the ones he coached in football at St. Lawrence for 40 years.

They talked about the lessons they learned from him and the commitment he made to his players—a legacy that had been honored while he was still alive when the parish named the football field for him several years ago.

“We didn’t have any children, so they were just like his kids,” his wife Mary said. “He loved every minute he coached. Anybody who did it for that long had to love it. Everywhere we’d go, people would call him ‘Coach.’ A lot of them became coaches.”

Devine’s legacy was so strong at St. Lawrence that the coaches of this year’s 5th-6th grades’ football team decided to have their players attend the funeral Mass for Devine, wearing their jerseys.

“We wanted to pay our respects for the 40 years he put into coaching,”

said Keith Minch, one of the team’s coaches who also serves as the parish’s athletic director. “Even after he was done coaching, he would come to homecoming.

“We always knew how much CYO football meant to Pat and his family. We just thought it would be a fitting tribute to be there for him.”

As the players and

coaches listened to the eulogies for Devine, it left a deeper impression on them—and a desire to do something more to honor him.

“After the Mass, we came out. Everybody gathered and thought it would be a fitting tribute to give Pat’s wife a jersey,” Minch said.

Minch’s son Eamonn walked up to Mary Devine, hugged her, took off his jersey and handed it to her. Filled with emotion at that moment, she rushed to her family to show them the tribute from the team.

“I had no idea they were going to be at the church, and I was just blown away when they gave me the jersey,” Mary Devine said later. “I was speechless. The boy had already hugged me, and I thanked him for being there. Then when he took off his jersey and gave it to me, I was overwhelmed. It brought tears to my eyes. It does now just thinking about it.”

She believes her husband would have been touched by the team’s gesture, too.

“He was honored when the field was named after him,” she said. “I think he would feel the same way about the team coming to the church and giving me the jersey.”

It was an off-the-field lesson in grace and thoughtfulness for the players—



Mary Devine shows the football jersey that she received from the fifth-and-sixth grades' football team of St. Lawrence Parish in Indianapolis. The team gave her the jersey after the Nov. 20 funeral Mass for her husband, Patrick Devine, who had coached boys at the parish for 40 years. (Submitted photo)

teammates who had learned on-the-field lessons in hard work and determination in winning a CYO championship this season.

“You saw the reaction after she got the jersey,” Minch told the boys. “She was touched. Is there any doubt in your minds that it meant a lot to her? If you ever get the opportunity to leave a lasting impression on someone, then do it.” †

New initiative aims to ‘LEAD’ parishes into the future

By Jennifer Lindberg

Special to *The Criterion*

Leadership like this doesn’t come along every day.

“This really helps parish leaders in a totally new way,” said Father Jeffrey Godecker, who is helping pilot a new leadership program in the archdiocese called LEAD.

“I’ve been around a lot in my 50 years [of being a priest] and it’s really just about the best I’ve seen,” said Father Godecker, who serves as the program’s clergy educator. “It really engages the participants in a very thoughtful way. It’s not going to replace the priest. The

priest still has the bottom line, but in an age where there are fewer of us, we need better collaboration and a way to do it that enables everybody.”

LEAD, an acronym for Leader Education and Development, is a unique guided learning process that helps pastors, parish life coordinators, parish staff and parish volunteer leaders learn a new type of leadership. Described as a “journey of discovery,” the program focuses on a leader’s deep underlying assumptions about leadership, beliefs, motives and the thoughts that drive their behavior.

Underwritten in full by a grant from Lilly Endowment, Inc., the program at the University of Indianapolis is meant

to coach leaders throughout the process as they implement it at their unique parish community. The program assists the parish priest in the evangelization process at the parish level to have better leadership skills so the priest can focus on the spiritual needs of a parish.

Today, many priests serve more than one parish community. In 1970, there were 59,192 priests compared to 36,580 in 2018, according to statistics from CARA (Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate).

“Sometimes, leadership is always focused on the

leader,” said Father Godecker. “If that leader is charismatic, they usually say, ‘Well, let him do it all,’ but that’s not a healthy way to form community. There is another piece of this. The archbishop [Charles C. Thompson] says we need to give parishioners what is actually theirs.”

The LEAD program is about helping Catholics in the new evangelization. St. John Paul II said this requires “a new fervor, new methods and new expression for announcing and witnessing the Gospel.”

LEAD is a new evangelization method, said Dr. Matthew Hayes, the LEAD project director for the archdiocese.

“Evangelization is a process,” Hayes said. “We are all leaders in that, whether ordained, professed, parish staff or parishioners. We are leaders in the processes, and the task is to ask, ‘How can I use God’s grace, gifts and skills I’ve been given to spread the Gospel?’”

Hayes said it is not just the priest or parish staff’s responsibility to lead.

“It’s all of us,” he said. “We need to think through the Catholic parish in the context of lay shared leadership.”

What makes the program unique is that it uses a business model of leadership that is put into the context of the Catholic Church, respecting its values and protocols, but giving the community better leadership tools to survive in the time the Church finds herself, Hayes said.

“It spreads leadership beyond the pastor or the parish life coordinator,” said Hayes. “When we look at the demographics of priests, unless we figure out a way to share leadership beyond one individual we are in trouble.”

LEAD seeks to help the priest be the pastoral leader that he was ordained to be. Many priests are suddenly placed in a manager role at the parish. LEAD is about “having a better sense of awareness of

leadership, better managers, and better collaborators,” Hayes said.

John “Jack” Dolan, a member of St. Thomas More Parish in Mooresville, said the program was worth his time and changed his views of the old school way of leadership where one person directs instead of the collaborative way presented.

“People want to be heard, and this new way of leadership will ensure that the best ideas and courses of action rise to the top,” Dolan said.

It also will help parishes sustain themselves and get volunteers at the parish level involved in the decision-making process as “opposed to just filing a seat on a council,” he said.

Holy Angels and St. Rita parishes, both in Indianapolis, also went through the initial training for LEAD. Neither of the parishes has implemented the training yet as it is continuing, and participants are now involved in coaching calls with the program developers through the next three months.

These coaching calls take participants through their strengths and weaknesses of leadership, the cultural attitudes they and their parish have about leadership, and the new understandings of self-assessment and self-awareness they have been able to uncover using the journaling methods of the LEAD program.

Spots are still open for pastors and parishes to take part in LEAD. All costs of the program are covered by the Lilly grant, alleviating any financial strain a parish might have. Those interested in learning more and applying for the leadership program can contact Father Eric Johnson, archdiocesan vicar for clergy, religious life and parish life coordinators, at 317-236-1495.

(Jennifer Lindberg is a freelance writer and a member of St. Joseph Parish in Shelbyville.) †



Pictured are parish leaders that took part in the archdiocese’s LEAD program. The group includes St. Joseph Sister Gail Trippett, parish life coordinator at Holy Angels and St. Rita parishes, both in Indianapolis, and team members of her parishes; Father Francis Joseph Kalapuracka, pastor of St. Thomas More Parish in Mooresville and St. Ann Parish in Indianapolis, and team members of his parishes; Father Jeffrey Godecker, clergy educator; and Dr. Matt Chodkowski and Dr. Terry Schindler, both members of the University of Indianapolis faculty. (Submitted photo)

Gold Mass helps spread the word: ‘faith and science are compatible’

By Natalie Hoefler

Paul Giesting has long been frustrated by a concept in Western culture that he says “is absolutely not true.” It’s the concept that faith and science are not compatible, “that you have to pick one or the other.”

So when the member of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Parish in Rushville learned about the Society of Catholic Scientists (SCS) and the Gold Mass for Scientists, he was more than intrigued.

“This exists?” he recalled thinking. “I have to be a part of this.”

The more he learned about the society’s mission “to foster fellowship among Catholic scientists and to witness to the harmony of faith and reason,” the more he wanted such local camaraderie and to help in sharing the message in the archdiocese that faith and science are complementary.

Desire turned to action. And so it was that Giesting helped coordinate the archdiocese’s first-ever Gold Mass, with roughly 25 Catholics working in the fields of science, engineering, technology and math participating.

The Mass was celebrated in the chapel of SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis on Nov. 15—the feast of St. Albert the Great, patron saint of scientists.

“We want the graces from Mass to help us do our jobs for the glory of God,” said Trina Trusty, a medical technician and a member of St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis who worshiped at the special liturgy. “It’s always good to have fellowship with like-minded people and for encouragement.”

Faith and science ‘true simultaneously’

Giesting’s interest in science’s compatibility with faith started when he was 14. He was reading Dante’s *Inferno*, written in 1320 at the beginning of the Italian Renaissance. Intellectuals of that time started exploring science as both separate from and superior to faith as a source of truth.

Giesting read the footnotes of the book as well.

“I was blown away by what I learned,” he said. “People like



Father Lawrence Richardt looks on as Paul Giesting, left, thanks those who came to the archdiocese’s first Gold Mass for Scientists, which he helped coordinate, in the chapel of SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis on Nov. 15, the feast of St. Albert the Great, patron of scientists.

(Photo by Natalie Hoefler)

St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Albert the Great, they did the hard thinking of how do we iron out where there are contradictions [between faith and reason] and resolve them, and what it would look like if both could be true simultaneously—and they can be.”

Giesting went on to earn his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in Earth and planetary sciences at Washington University in St. Louis. He then graduated with a doctorate in geological sciences in 2006 from the University of Notre Dame.

It was at Notre Dame that he met William Schmitt, a Catholic then working as an adjunct professor of journalism at the university. The two now host a weekly podcast, interviewing scientists about the impact of living out their faith in a profession that seeks to separate faith from reason. (See related article.)

It was Schmitt who told Giesting in 2018 about the Society of Catholic Scientists, founded just two years prior.

‘A great service these men and women do’

The Society of Catholic Scientists sponsors the Gold Mass for Scientists. It follows in the tradition of special Masses for members of particular professions such as the Red Mass for lawyers and lawmakers, the White Mass for health care professionals and the Blue Mass for those in public safety.

By promoting Gold Masses for Scientists around the world, the SCS hopes to create spiritual fellowship among local Catholic scientists, technologists, engineers and mathematicians, as well as educators and students in those fields.

It was “a pleasant surprise” for Giesting when roughly 25 qualifying Catholics turned out for the Gold Mass. While many were from the Indianapolis area, others traveled from as far as Terre Haute and Richmond to participate in the liturgy.

“Scientists help us try to understand the mysteries that are in nature, a nature created by God,” said Father Lawrence Richardt, a retired priest of the archdiocese, during the homily. “It’s a great service that these men and women do for us.”

The gathering was “a good reminder that while most of us are very busy ... there are these men and women expanding into the universe—both the cosmos and the micro-universe,” he said.

He ended his homily noting that all “are called to look at the meaning of our life both from a scientific point of view as well as a faith point of view. ... We give thanks to God for the work of these men and women.”

‘The most plausible explanation’

About 15 of those participating in the Gold Mass met afterward for food and fellowship.

Lay Dominican Tom Rohn, a member of St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis and a statistician for the United States Department of Defense, said he felt it was “a really important part of modern Catholicism to explain to the modern world why Catholicism is the most plausible explanation for why reality is the way it is.”

The Gold Mass “is a wonderful thing, especially in trying to get professional Catholics re-engaged with the faith,” he said. “Without the Catholic Church, there would be no conception of the sciences as we know them today.”

As a computer science teacher at Cathedral High School in Indianapolis, Ria Pereira said she already has an advantage in helping her students see the relationship of faith and reason.

“We pray before every class,” she noted. “That brings the focus back to the bigger picture, that it is God behind everything, and whatever we do is for his greater glory, be it through computer science or robotics or anything.”

Christopher Breen, a member of St. Malachy Parish in Brownsburg and a statistician for Eli Lilly and Company, noted that the Gold Mass and fellowship “could help build a scientific community within the local Church.”

Such is the goal, according to the Society of Catholic Scientist’s website. It notes that such a community and network “may lead to collaborations on various projects, such as study groups and public lectures.”

‘The beginning of a process’

Several of those gathered after the Mass expressed hope that the Nov. 15 gathering marked the beginning of such an effort.

“I want to offer my students the best I can and improve in ways to help them know what the Church teaches when they have to make moral or ethical decisions in the technology field,” Pereira said. “Being part of a group like this would help me do that.”

She also saw the possibility of such a group sharing with the larger community about the applicability of the scientific method in making moral and ethical decisions.

“We live in world where everything happens very quickly and we need answers quickly,” said Pereira. “That leads us to jump to conclusions very quickly.”

“We need to share that the scientific method exists, that it requires you to be patient, to gather all the data, to know all the repercussions of a decision and think about all the people who could be impacted.”

Plus, having a network of Catholics in science-related fields speak publicly on the topic of faith and reason could produce good fruit, said Trusty.

“Maybe it would get people thinking that there might be something to the Catholic faith, seeing that there are intelligent people who are Catholic and still engaged in science,” she said. “And maybe they might consider investigating the faith.”

Giesting hopes the group will “do something in the new year, then look into what it takes to start a local chapter, see if we can put together an event like a talk at IUPUI [Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis] or a local parish downtown about the connection of science and faith.”

As the statistician he is, Breen noted that such a step “is the beginning of a process, but that’s where you always start.”

(For more information on becoming involved in a local Society of Catholic Scientists group, contact Paul Giesting at giesting@alumni.nd.edu. For more information on the Society of Catholic Scientists, the Gold Mass or starting a local chapter, go to www.catholicscientists.org.) †

‘Taking faith and science seriously’

By Natalie Hoefler

Paul Giesting of St. Mary of the Immaculate Parish in Rushville is passionate about dispelling the myth that faith and science are incompatible.

“There’s this flawed idea floating around in Western culture that religion and science are different things and you have to pick one or the other,” he says. “In the case of the Catholic faith, it’s absolutely not true.”

So in April 2018 Giesting, who has a doctorate in geological sciences from the University of Notre Dame, teamed up with his friend William Schmitt, a freelance writer and communications specialist in South Bend, Ind. The two created a podcast called “That’s So Second Millennium.”

“The name harks back to early in the second millennium when there was this great flow of Catholic and Christian intellectual thought that unified faith and science, and that we can do it again,” Giesting explains. “And also that the [fallacy] floating around from the 19th and 20th centuries that faith and science are not compatible should be left [in those centuries].”

In the podcasts, the two devout Catholics explore “the consequences if you take science and faith seriously,” according to the podcast’s Facebook page.

“We’ve done interviews with Christian and Catholic scientists and how that [combination] played out in their lives,” said Giesting.

One interview was with Catholic bio-ethicist Maureen Condic. While working as an associate professor

of neurobiology and anatomy at the University of Utah, she spoke out against embryonic stem-cell research.

“That cost her a lot of friends,” Giesting noted.

Father John Hollowell has also been a guest on the podcast. He is pastor of Annunciation Parish in Brazil and St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Greencastle, where he also serves as chaplain for DePauw University’s Catholic students.

“He talks with students a lot,” noted Giesting. He said the priest mentioned how the idea of faith and science being separate “is endemic, that we exist in a renaissance environment where the idea is everywhere that faith is fading and worn out.”

Consequently, scientists tend to hide their faith and beliefs.

“You can go months and months without knowing anyone in science has faith at all,” says Giesting. “I interviewed one of my past professors and turns out she’s a very dedicated Christian. I never knew that.”

At the University of Notre Dame in June, he and Schmitt had the opportunity to interview for their podcast the Society of Catholic Scientists’ conference speakers.

“I just think it’s a great thing that the society is trying to increase more awareness among Catholic scientists,” said Giesting. “We’ve lost sight of the fact that science and faith can coexist and are both simultaneously true.”

(To listen to “That’s So Second Millennium” podcasts, go to www.thatssosecondmillennium.net.) †

Faith *Alive!*

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Holy Land craftsmen share gift of Christmas with the world

By Judith Sudilovsky

For Ashraf Jaraysa, 53, handcrafting olive wood handicrafts is a way of life.

A fourth-generation artisan, Jaraysa began working with his father in the family's olive wood workshop after school when he was 8 years old.

"As the oldest son, I would come to the workshop and sit with my father, and we would talk and work together," recalled Jaraysa.

Today, he runs the family's workshop in the village of Beit Sahour that neighbors Bethlehem in the West Bank.

His younger brother works with him fashioning carved religious figurines from both the Old and New Testaments, Nativity scenes and wooden crosses from traditional and new designs.

Other members of the family also take part in the family business, with his sisters and mother doing gluing and finishing work on rosaries and smaller pieces. His middle son has come on as a marketer and salesman for his father's work.

Though not as directly involved with the workshop, his other three children help out when they can.

"As long as we can, we will keep the work with my family," said Jaraysa, whose late father was among the founders of the Holy Land Handicraft Cooperative Society, which was founded in 1981 and represents 35 olive wood and mother-of-pearl workshop owners.

"We are four generations in this work so we have many of our designs from the older generations. This is our tradition. We give people our voice of love and peace as Christians," he said.

In addition to selling work by its members, the cooperative also sells handicrafts made by non-members including ceramics, glass, embroidery, olive soap and stationary.

For many of the artisans, including himself, said Jaraysa, the cooperative allows them to get a fair price for their work.

Much of the work continues to be done in the same way as it was done by



Ashraf Jaraysa poses in his family's olive wood workshop in the village of Beit Sahour that neighbors Bethlehem in the West Bank. He and other craftsmen share the gift of Christmas with people around the world through Nativity sets that they carve by hand from olive wood grown in the Holy Land.

(CNS photo/Judith Sudilovsky)

his grandfather and great-grandfather. In the autumn, when olive farmers prune their trees, Jaraysa purchases the wood and leaves it to dry in a special drying room for at least two years. Only then is it ready to be carved.

"If you love your work, you love God, and we always want to make new and beautiful things. This is our job, but we also share our voice about God and Jesus. We share the love with these pieces," he said.

she said. "I am proud they work in something which belongs to Jesus and the Holy Family."

On a practical level, Abu Sada said, the olive wood handicrafts and other handmade crafts local artisans produce are an important source of livelihood for many local residents.

"This has been our work from the beginning. We are in our land, in our workshops," he said. "I believe the olive trees are blessed and we are passing on that blessing, especially with the Nativity sets."

Jaraysa also feels it is especially significant to work with olive wood, calling the olive tree holy because of its association with Jesus, who prayed in an olive grove in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives before he was crucified.

"We present the story of Jesus. Many people do not have the chance to come here. When we make a crèche and sell it in Europe or the USA, they can live the story," said Jaraysa. "The children can put in the pieces of Mary and Joseph, and the shepherds and then the three kings and baby Jesus. We share this Christmas time for all."

As more and more Christians are emigrating from the Holy Land because of the difficult political and economic situation, it is important to maintain this traditional handicraft, he said.

"We will continue to build on love, because without love there is no life," he said.

(Judith Sudilovsky is a freelance writer based in the Holy Land.) †



Bishop Felipe de Jesus Estevez of St. Augustine, Fla., holding a cross, and Bishop Alberto Rojas, then an auxiliary bishop of Chicago Archdiocese, right, watch a Palestinian worker make crosses from olive wood on Jan. 27, 2018, at the Holy Land Handicraft Cooperative Society in Beit Sahour, West Bank. Founded in 1981, the cooperative represents 35 workshop owners, helping them get a fair price for their work. (CNS photo/Debbie Hill)

Another olive wood artisan and member of the cooperative, Kamal Abu Sada, 70, said that creating religious sculptures from olive wood strengthens his Christian faith.

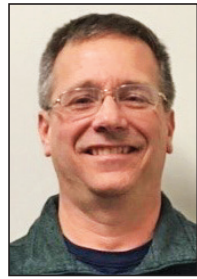
"I am happy we can be here, on our land, doing this work," said Abu Sada, whose two sons are also craftsmen, one in his own workshop and the youngest with his father. He began his workshop as a young man out of the love of the art of carving, he said. Indeed, said his wife Rima, Abu Sada is rarely without some sort of carving tool in his hands.

"I am proud of the work my husband does,"

Corrections Corner/Ed Witulski

Trusted Mentors program can change lives for the better

Mentoring changes lives. I have witnessed people change their outlook on life, what they achieve, and their perception of other people. All of these changes have occurred for me since I started mentoring folks returning from incarceration more than 10 years ago.



Oh yes, mentoring certainly changes lives for mentees. I work

for an agency called Trusted Mentors, which for more than 15 years has connected and trained volunteer mentors with at-risk adults (mentees) to help keep them housed and out of prison.

Here are some documented statistics for you: In 2018, 92 percent of our adults in the re-entry track did not re-offend while in contact with their mentors; 98 percent of our matched adults at risk of homelessness remained housed; and 95 percent of our matched young adults also remained housed.

When we help people stay out of prison or from homelessness, they can become successful employees, can give

back to their community, and can act as parents such that their children will have a better chance to succeed as well.

Mentoring changes the lives of those being mentored. And, I can't tell you how many mentors have said that their lives have been changed for the better as well.

Mentors really get to know, often for the first time, someone involved in the criminal justice system. They learn how hard it is to succeed when people leave prison because of the design of the system, the lack of transportation, the lack of landlords willing to rent to them, the lack of employers willing to hire them ... the list of obstacles goes on and on.

I have mentored several folks over the past 10 years. My renewed faith brought me to mentoring. I won't say that it has always been easy, but I will say that I feel I have learned a great deal about what it means to "love thy neighbor." I am happy to share with any of you my experiences with Herman, Charles, David, Mark, Leroy, Sue, Terry, Gene, Anita and others. Reach out to me at ewitulski@trustedmentors.org for coffee to discuss.

Trusted Mentors provides training and ongoing support for mentors because

we realize that people can't do it alone. It takes time for others to change and, as I say to everyone who is considering becoming a mentor, progress can be "three steps forward and two steps back." A big part of mentoring success is being there to help your mentee pick him or herself back up, help them dust themselves off, and without judgment help them move forward with a fresh start.

At the end of the day, it is about compassion, love, forgiveness, perseverance, patience and listening without judging that can influence the life of another.

Mentoring changes lives. What can be better than building a new relationship that changes your life and the life of a person working to stay housed or out of prison. For more information about Trusted Mentors, go to www.trustedmentors.org.

(Ed Witulski is the Mentor Match Coordinator for Trusted Mentors and is a member of the archdiocese's Corrections Ministry Advisory Committee. He is also a member of St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis.) †

Faith and Family/Sean Gallagher

Christmas joy is a foretaste of the happiness of heaven

I have many vivid memories of the excitement I experienced as a child on Christmas morning when I unwrapped the presents my parents had given me.



The discovery was joyous. Then there was the happy time I spent exploring what the gifts offered and playing with them in the carefree days of Christmas break.

As an adult, I don't usually experience the same excitement on Christmas morning that I did as a child.

That's in part because I don't really yearn for special gifts like I did then. Thankfully, I'm pretty much oblivious to the marketers who want to persuade adults to get the latest digital device, a big new TV or a new fashion trend.

More importantly, though, I tend to focus more at Christmas on what my family around me is experiencing.

Seeing my boys' excitement at opening their gifts renews my memories of the same when I was a child.

When I was their age, I wasn't concerned about the commercialization of Christmas and how it can distract us from the spiritual meaning and good news of the feast of our Lord's birth in Bethlehem.

Thankfully, my parents instilled the faith in me so that it is at the heart of my life as an adult.

My wife Cindy and I are trying to do that now for our sons. One way we do it at Christmas is by limiting the gifts we give to them. We've applied the advice of a friend and give the boys three gifts each (in addition to what they receive in their stockings): something they want; something they need; something to read.

We've noticed after doing this for some years that the boys don't get fixated on a long list of gifts they want to see under the Christmas tree. They certainly have gift ideas in mind, but they tend not to go overboard.

Hopefully, we'll create space in them where a personal appreciation of the gift of Christ at Christmas can grow in their hearts.

As an adult, I've come to learn that desiring material things at Christmas is ultimately rooted in the yearning God placed in our souls for the gift of eternal life that he offers to all of us.

It's easy in our culture, though, to allow the desire for material things to push the spiritual foundation of our lives to the back of our hearts and minds.

That's a main reason why Cindy and I try to keep the material focus in Christmas within limits in our home. In setting them, we're not being Grinch. Indeed, we hope the boys experience real joy in what they receive. Thankfully, we've seen that in them over the years.

It is our hope that they can keep that youthful joy at Christmas as they grow into adulthood.

I'm convinced that part of what our Lord meant when he said that "whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it" is that we are to be open to the childlike joy of the gift of himself to us (Mk 10:15).

I imagine that the joy children experience in unwrapping gifts on Christmas morning can be a small taste of the infinite happiness we'll know and show forth when, God willing, we see our Lord face to face when we pass from this life to the next, or at his glorious return if we're alive when that blessed day dawns.

So, let us who are parents, with the help of God's grace, renew in ourselves the joy we see in our children at Christmas and help them keep that joy as they grow.

(Sean Gallagher is a reporter for The Criterion.) †

That All May Be One/Fr. Rick Ginther

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is a chance to build bridges

Christmas will soon unfold before us. Trees twinkling. Wreaths well hung. Candles set ablaze. All to celebrate



the "reason for the season": the birth of Jesus Christ, Son of God, Son of Mary.

"Jesus" means "one who saves." The name comes in a number of forms: Jesus, Jeshua, Yeshua, Joshua. All bear the same meaning. All proclaim

salvation in Christ.

Honored by Jews today as a great teacher and by Muslims as a great prophet and the son of Mary, Jesus offers a continual plea to Christians: that (you) all may be one.

One of the great scandals in the religious world today—indeed, for many centuries now—is that Christians are not one

Oh, we all celebrate Jesus as Lord and Savior. We all believe him to be fully human and fully divine. But the body we call "the Body of Christ" is divided on so many levels.

Each year, Christians are offered an opportunity to pray intensely and intentionally for unity. Jan. 18-25 is the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

This annual octave often includes a prayer service led and attended by a variety of Christians who gather to pray for the Spirit of God to move us closer

through the ecumenical process.

This year, no less than nine religious leaders of many Christian churches and ecclesial communities in Indiana will gather in Indianapolis to pray. Our prayer will take place at 6 p.m. on Jan. 19 in Zion Evangelical United Church of Christ in Indianapolis.

The prayer service itself originated in the Christian community on the island of Malta.

In 2017, the World Council of Churches (Faith and Order) and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity asked the Roman Catholic Episcopal Conference of Malta and the Christians there to draft the prayer service for 2020. Those who attend our local service will benefit from their hard work.

The folks of Malta chose a text—Acts 27:18-28:10—as the service's basis.

This text describes a moment in the life of St. Paul and his shipmates. They encounter danger, discord, near mutiny, and finally shipwreck. Washed ashore on Malta, the survivors are met with the generous hospitality of the inhabitants of Malta.

Acts 28:2 states: "They showed us unusual kindness."

Taking up this theme, the prayer service briefly retells the story.

Then it applies the "unusual hospitality" to our own time of refugees, immigrants, asylum seekers and others in our communities who are cast adrift.

Invoking the Holy Spirit, prayers of

pardon and reconciliation are prayed.

Scripture is to be proclaimed and preached by the Rev. Dr. Sarah Lund, senior pastor of First Congregational United Church of Christ in Indianapolis. The word is to culminate in song and the Apostles' Creed.

Prayers of the people follow. During these petitions, oars are to be carried up to symbolize reconciliation, enlightenment, hope, trust, strength, hospitality, conversion and generosity.

Finally, all are sent forth to proclaim the words of God's love.

Our local planners have added a focused participatory piece. Links for a paper chain of "acts of kindness" will be fashioned by the congregation and displayed on the pulpit.

Choir and congregational music will stitch together the various movements of the prayer.

An ecumenical choir will form around the Zion Evangelical United Church of Christ choir. If you would like to be a part of this choir, contact me at rginther@archindy.org.

We all have Christian friends. Perhaps this is an occasion for you to pray together! Bring a friend. Be a friend in Christ. Be a promoter of unity!

(Father Rick Ginther is director of the archdiocesan Office of Ecumenism and Interreligious Affairs. He is also the pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Indianapolis.) †

Worship and Evangelization Outreach/Joann Riner

SPRED retreat unwraps unique dramatization of the Nativity

It was an unlikely place for a retreat. A school cafeteria, with bright fluorescent lights, tile floor and dozens of fiberglass chairs. In the gymnasium above, fifth graders played basketball. To us, the running sounded like thunder. The smell of popcorn from the concession stand snaked downstairs.



It was an unlikely setting for an unlikely

group. These were not reverent pilgrims. Some danced in, laughing. Others walked slowly, some limped, one young man with head tilted forward spoke to no one in particular, another muttered while clutching a plastic toy to his chest.

Others were boisterous; a few looked

guarded, bewildered. The stoic few filed in silently. A smiling young woman, unable to walk, speak, hold up her head or grasp objects arrived with her mom. Some used walkers, a few had assistants, three wore festive Santa hats. Few took social cues from anyone else. Looking for caffeine, two of the women in Santa hats asked permission to leave to find Coca-Cola.

Eventually, 27 adults with developmental disabilities assembled for our annual Advent retreat hosted by Special Religious Development (SPRED).

Retreat planners filled the day with music, singing, a delicious lunch, themed crafts, stories dramatized by costumed Old Testament characters, snacks and a surprise visit from St. John the Baptist. The group also attended Mass.

I planned a session for the group to experience, through smell, hearing, touch

and sight—the mystery of the Nativity.

I considered evoking the texture and smell of the manger by hot gluing straw to small blocks of wood. Or maybe I'd pass around a basket of straw to touch and smell. Scouring the Internet for a Nativity scene, I found a colorful one jammed with activity to distribute as a thought starter.

I asked the group to look at the Nativity scene and enter into it. Soon, it was time to share.

No one made the observations I expected. They saw angels, palm trees, sheep, wise men. "But what do you feel underfoot?" I prompted. "Give me texture," I pleaded silently. "What would walking on straw sound like?" Silence. OK, "Look at how many animals there are. How do you think it smells in there?" Giggles. "Can you see that this smelly,

See RINER, page 18

Fourth Sunday of Advent/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, December 22, 2019

- Isaiah 7:10-14
- Romans 1:1-7
- Matthew 1:18-24

This weekend, the Church celebrates the fourth and last Sunday of Advent 2019.

For its first reading, this weekend's Mass offers a reading from the first section of the Book of Isaiah. This reading refers to King Ahaz of the southern Hebrew kingdom of Judah.



Ahaz reigned in the last third of the eighth century before Christ.

To be kind, he is not regarded as having been a remarkably successful king. Prompting Isaiah's interest in Ahaz or in any king was not necessarily the monarch's obvious power and renown, but rather the fact that the king first and foremost was intended to be the principal servant of God among his chosen people.

Urged to be loyal and devoted, Ahaz was promised a sign of God's favor. It was the birth of a son, whose mother was Ahaz's young bride, a virgin.

St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans provides the second reading. Introducing himself, Paul firmly states that he is an Apostle, called by the Lord to proclaim the Gospel. Above and beyond everything, he insisted, he was God's servant.

For its last reading, the Church presents a section from the Gospel of St. Matthew. Only the Gospels of Matthew and Luke recount the birth of Jesus.

This weekend's reading recalls the conception of Jesus. It says clearly, as Luke states, that Jesus had no earthly father, but that he was the son of Mary, a human being.

In this story, Joseph is concerned, to say the least. He first understandably wonders if his betrothed has been unfaithful to him. How else could Mary have become pregnant? An angel, Gabriel, one of God's messengers, relieves Joseph's mind by revealing that the unborn child is in fact the Son of God.

It is more than simply a chronicle of the conception and birth of Jesus, divine

though these events may have been. The coming of the Messiah is a sign, perfect and penultimate, of God's everlasting love for humankind. God never fails, and is never absent from people.

Reflection

This weekend, the Church calls us to observe the last Sunday of Advent. The season of Advent is the careful and focused period preceding Christmas. In our culture, it is a time to prepare gifts to present to those whom we love.

The custom of gift-giving has religious origins. It mimics the Magi, who brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to the baby Jesus. We give gifts to others in whom we see Jesus, precious because the Lord died for them. Love, the very essence of God, impels us. Advent calls us to give ourselves to God.

An old European legend has a message. Once, in a great city, at Christmas, the people presented gifts before the Nativity scene in the cathedral. The rich and mighty vied with each other to offer the most expensive gift.

A poor orphan boy dreamed of offering a gift, but he had nothing. One day, he found an old gold button on the street. He took it, scrubbed it, and laboriously polished it. Tiny, bent and broken, it nevertheless gleamed with his unquestioning love.

Christmas came. In full view of the whole congregation, the "important" people paraded to the crib and placed their gaudy gifts before it.

This cathedral had great bells in its tower. At times, without cause, they suddenly would ring. People said that they rang when God was pleased.

Ashamed of his paltry gift, the boy knelt in the shadows until Mass ended. Then, with no one watching, he laid his little button before the image of the Christ Child. The bells rang out in a melody more beautiful than anyone could remember.

God asks for our honest, total love—nothing more, nothing less. †

Daily Readings

Monday, December 23

St. John of Kanty, priest
Malachi 3:1-4, 23-24
Psalm 25:4bc-5ab, 8-10, 14
Luke 1:57-66

Dawn

Isaiah 62:11-12
Psalm 97:1, 6, 11-12
Titus 3:4-7
Luke 2:15-20

Tuesday, December 24

2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16
Psalm 89:2-5, 27, 29
Luke 1:67-79

Day

Isaiah 52:7-10
Psalm 98:1-6
Hebrews 1:1-6
John 1:1-18
or John 1:1-5, 9-14

Vigil of the Nativity of the Lord

Isaiah 62:1-5
Psalm 89:4-5, 16-17, 27, 29
Acts 13:16-17, 22-25
Matthew 1:1-25
or Matthew 1:18-25

Thursday, December 26

St. Stephen the first martyr
Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59
Psalm 31:3cd-4, 6, 8ab, 16bc-17
Matthew 10:17-22

Wednesday, December 25

The Nativity of the Lord
Christmas Night
Isaiah 9:1-6
Psalm 96:1-3, 11-13
Titus 2:11-14
Luke 2:1-14

Friday, December 27

St. John, Apostle and Evangelist
1 John 1:1-4
Psalm 97:1-2, 5-6, 11-12
John 20:1a, 2-8

See READINGS, page 19

Question Corner/Fr. Kenneth Doyle

Mental health conditions may dispense a Catholic from required Mass attendance

QI was diagnosed with anxiety/mood disorder in 2003. I had spent time in the military and gone through some horrific experiences that had affected me emotionally. I have also been on Dilantin now for more than 25 years because of seizures.



My psychiatrist has explained to me that I find sounds and smells much more

intense due to the seizure medication. Prior to joining the military, I had enjoyed going to Mass. I would arrive early to pray before Mass started, and I found it fulfilling and joyful. As a child, I had attended Catholic school and was an altar server.

Now, though, the experience of Mass is for me very stressful. People often sit nearby who have been smoking before coming to church, and this causes me to feel very nauseous. Other times, young children misbehave, throwing toys or books, causing me to feel so stressed that I get up and stand in the back of the church for the rest of the Mass.

So my question is this: Would it be a mortal sin if I stopped going to Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation due to the harmful effect it is having on my mental and emotional health? (South Carolina)

A People committed to regular religious practice have been shown to have a more positive outlook on life than those who seldom or never attend church.

A 2019 research project done by the Christian polling firm Barna Group, for example, found that 28 percent of young people said they often feel sad or depressed versus 18 percent of practicing Christians—and that, while 16 percent of young practicing Christians reported feeling "lonely or isolated from others," 31 percent of those with no faith confessed to feeling that way.

In general, then, church attendance—while being the right thing to do morally—seems also to carry a psychological benefit. But there can be individual exceptions to that, and your own situation may well be one.

So, it seems from what you have said that it would not be a mortal sin if you

stopped going to Mass on Sundays and holy days. I believe that your diagnosed anxiety/mood disorder, coupled with your heightened sensitivity to smells and sounds, dispenses you from regular attendance. Your disease is as real as any high fever or flu.

At the same time, I don't want you to be deprived of the Eucharist, which is the highest form of prayer and the strongest help to Christian holiness. Would you be comfortable going to Mass instead on a weekday, when there would be fewer distractions and hazards to your sense of peace?

You might also see if there is a religious community near where you live where you could participate in Sunday and holy day Masses that would not negatively affect your well-being.

In any case, I recommend that you speak about this with your pastor.

Q Can a homosexual man become an extraordinary minister of holy Communion in a Catholic church? (New York)

A It depends.

If a person is engaged in an active, open same-sex relationship, I believe that person should not be selected as an extraordinary minister of holy Communion. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, referencing the Scriptures, is clear in stating that homosexual acts are "disordered" and "contrary to the natural law" (#2357). And "*Redemptionis Sacramentum*," a 2004 instruction from the Vatican's Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments, has stated that those chosen to assist at liturgical celebrations "must be those whose Christian life, morals and fidelity to the Church's magisterium recommend them" (#46).

But many people with a homosexual orientation are not active sexually. Such people, if they otherwise meet the requirements listed in "*Redemptionis Sacramentum*," can serve as an extraordinary minister of holy Communion.

(Questions may be sent to Father Kenneth Doyle at askfatherdoyle@gmail.com and 30 Columbia Circle Dr., Albany, New York 12203.) †

My Journey to God

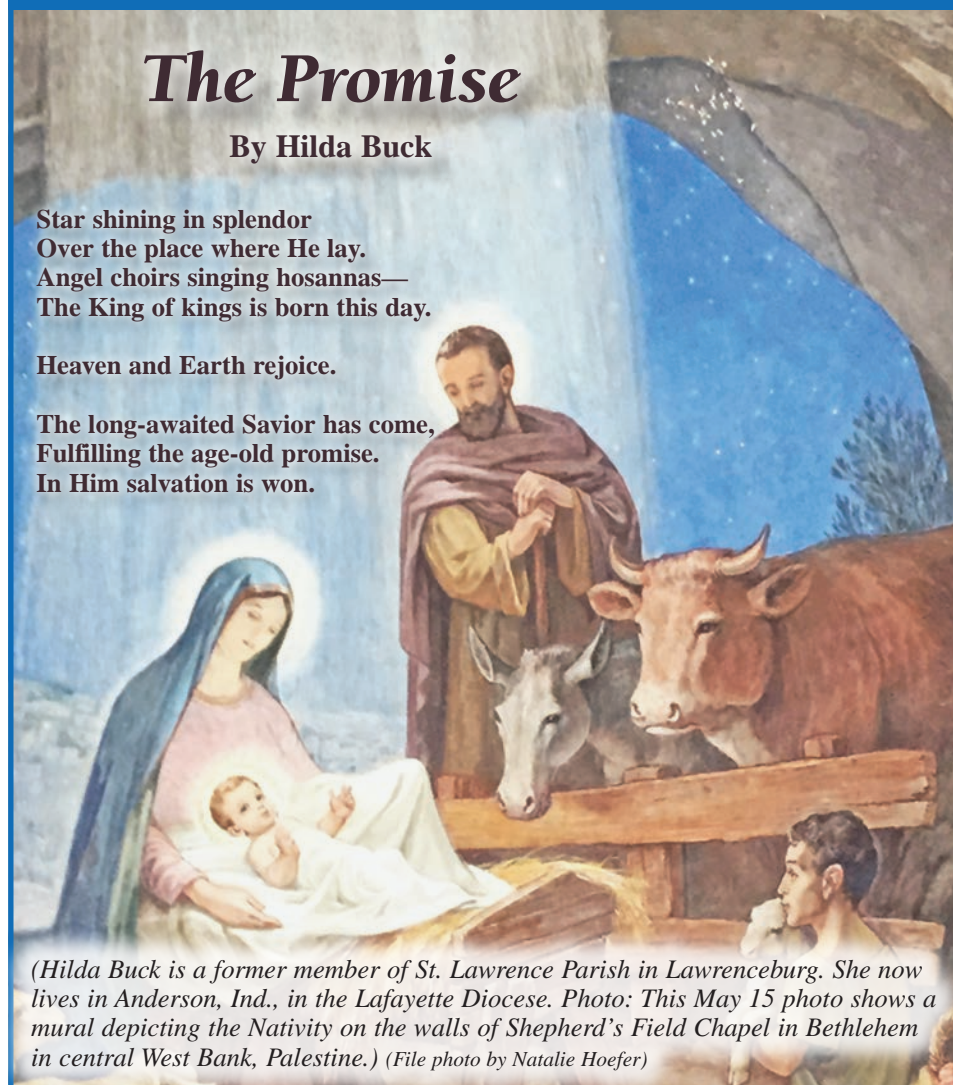
The Promise

By Hilda Buck

Star shining in splendor
Over the place where He lay.
Angel choirs singing hosannas—
The King of kings is born this day.

Heaven and Earth rejoice.

The long-awaited Savior has come,
Fulfilling the age-old promise.
In Him salvation is won.



(Hilda Buck is a former member of St. Lawrence Parish in Lawrenceburg. She now lives in Anderson, Ind., in the Lafayette Diocese. Photo: This May 15 photo shows a mural depicting the Nativity on the walls of Shepherd's Field Chapel in Bethlehem in central West Bank, Palestine.) (File photo by Natalie Hofer)

Rest in peace

Please submit in writing to our office by 10 a.m. Thursday before the week of publication; be sure to state date of death. Obituaries of archdiocesan priests serving our archdiocese are listed elsewhere in *The Criterion*. Order priests and religious sisters and brothers are included here, unless they are natives of the archdiocese or have other connections to it; those are separate obituaries on this page.

ADAMS, Beatrice M., 86, St. Pius X, Indianapolis, Dec. 4. Mother of Kim Farris, Lisa Nelson, Kristy Tutts and Larry Adams. Sister of Mary Alexander and Kay Hurley. Grandmother of nine.

BABB, Helen H., 95, St. Luke the Evangelist, Indianapolis, Dec. 3. Wife of Emerson Babb. Sister of Joseph Hawley. Grandmother of five. Great-grandmother of three.

BARR, Bernice I. (Schueler), 89, St. Mary-of-the-Knobs, Floyd County, Dec. 6. Mother of Susan Warner, Patty, James, Orville III and Paul Barr. Sister of Francis Schueler. Grandmother of 10. Great-grandmother of 10.

BISHOP, Nancy Sue, 78, St. Malachy, Brownsburg, Dec. 7. Mother of Jennifer Bruess, Joanne Shaw, Jerilyn Sinclair and Juliana Bishop. Grandmother of seven.

BURKETT, Anne (Walsh), 87, St. Joseph University, Terre Haute, Dec. 7. Mother of Mary Creamer, Becky Kaylor, Martha Lorenzano, John and Robert Burkett. Grandmother of 14. Great-grandmother of 18. Great-great-grandmother of one.

CARR, Ruth B., 76, St. Mary, Rushville, Dec. 10. Mother of Sandy Amenta, Diane Stewart, Kathy Stephens, Rick and Scot Carr. Sister of Angie Godar, Jeannie Hawley, Louise Hayes, Mary Hoeing, Patsy McVey, Carolyn Risk, Becky Stewart, Jerry, Lloyd, Virgil and Walt Herbert. Grandmother of 11. Great-grandmother of 13.

CROUCH, Patricia A., 79, St. Jude, Indianapolis, Dec. 2. Mother of Joyce Emrich, Mary Neffle, Daniel and Michael Crouch. Sister of David and John Seal. Grandmother of 17. Great-grandmother of 25.

ESCALANTE, Maria A., 85, St. Bartholomew, Columbus, Dec. 5. Mother of Elsa Miller and Joel Escalante. Sister of Rosa Maria Zambrano-Teran and Victor Manuel Zambrano. Grandmother of seven. Great-grandmother of five.

KORB, Shirley M., 88, St. Charles Borromeo, Milan, Dec. 7. Wife of Paul Korb. Mother of Nancy Griffiths, Steven and Tom Korb. Sister of Vivian Bloemker, Bernice Lobitz, Vera Wehmann, Audrey, Joe and Leonard Engel. Grandmother of 11. Great-grandmother of two.

MATOOLE, Joan V., 86, SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi, Greenwood, Nov. 26. Mother of Patrick Matoole.

MUCKRIDGE, Irene, 78, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Cambridge City, Dec. 8. Wife



Pilgrimage to Our Lady

A pilgrim walks on his knees outside the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe during an annual pilgrimage in her honor in Mexico City on Dec. 11. The feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, patroness of the Americas, was celebrated on Dec. 12. (CNS photo/Carlos Jasso, Reuters)

of Don Muckridge. Mother of Brent and Patrick Muckridge. Sister of Robert and Socorro Martinez. Grandmother of five. Great-grandmother of two.

STEARNS, Carolyn, 81, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Cambridge City, Dec. 4. Wife of Garris Stearns. Mother of Rhonda Bruns and J.D. Stearns. Sister of Diane Buhl, Joan Bundy and Dave Gethers.

Grandmother of five. Great-grandmother of seven.

STREICHER, Betty J., 95, St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower), Indianapolis, Nov. 21. Mother of Jack Streicher. Grandmother of four. Great-grandmother of nine.

WILLIAMS, Kenneth E., 74, SS. Francis and Clare of

Assisi, Greenwood, Nov. 11. Husband of Hannah Williams. Father of Bridget Golden, Mary Jean Whitney and Katie Ann Williams. Brother of Thomas Williams. Grandfather of three.

YOUNG, Betty A., 88, St. Mary, Greensburg, Dec. 7. Mother of Esther Lamport, Ruth Rudolf, Mary Jane Scheidler, Anthony,

Edward, Francis, Lawrence and Mark Young. Sister of Dodie and Ellie Amberger, Marty Doll, Regina Lowe, Mary Merkel, Rita Meyer, Theresa Nobbe, Carol Schwegman, Franciscan Sister Cleopha Werner, Charles, Kenny, Uriel and Virgil Werner. Grandmother of 16. Great-grandmother of 30. †

Martyrdom comes from following Christ without compromise, pope says



Pope Francis greets a group of Catholics from Chihuahua, Mexico, during his general audience in Paul VI Hall at the Vatican on Dec. 11. The group came to Rome to celebrate the Dec. 12 feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—There always will be martyrs among Christians in the world, Pope Francis said.

Martyrdom “is the sign that we are on Jesus’ path; it’s a blessing from the Lord that within the people of God there is someone who gives this witness of martyrdom,” he said on Dec. 11 during his weekly general audience in the Vatican’s Paul VI Hall, which was decorated with a large Christmas tree and Nativity scene.

The pope continued his series of talks on the Acts of the Apostles by looking at the increasing amount of suffering and persecution the Apostle Paul faced as he spread the Gospel.

“Paul is not just an evangelizer filled with passion, the intrepid missionary among pagans who brings new Christian communities to life, he is also a suffering witness of the Risen One,” the pope said in his catechesis.

Much like Jesus, Paul faced fierce persecution in Jerusalem, and he was put in chains following his arrest on charges of preaching against the law and the temple.

While most people saw his chains as a sign of him being a criminal, the pope said, Paul saw the chains with “the eyes of faith” as a sign of his love for Jesus.

“For Paul, his faith is not a theory, an opinion about God and the world, but it is the impact of God’s love in his heart, it is love for Jesus Christ,” he said.

“Paul teaches us perseverance amid trials and the ability to see everything with the eyes of faith,” the pope said. “Let us ask the Lord today, through the Apostle’s intercession, to rekindle our faith and help us be completely faithful to our vocation as Christians, as disciples of the Lord, as missionaries.”

To further underline how, even in modern times,

Christians still face suffering and persecution, the pope spoke about meeting with pilgrims from Ukraine earlier that morning.

He explained how Eastern-rite Catholics in Ukraine had been persecuted for their faith under communism, “but they did not negotiate the faith.”

“In the world today, including in Europe, many Christians are being persecuted. And they give their life for their faith,” he said.

“They are persecuted with ‘white gloves,’ that is, they are pushed aside, emarginated,” the pope said. “Martyrdom is the context of a Christian, of a Christian community. There always will be martyrs among us.”

The group of pilgrims that met with Pope Francis included bishops, priests, religious and laypeople from the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Mukachevo, which was celebrating the 30th anniversary of no longer having to practice the faith clandestinely under Soviet oppression.

The pope told them that their Church “is the mother of many martyrs,” recalling the example of their bishop, Blessed Theodore Romzha, who was killed by the Soviet secret police in 1947 and who was beatified as a martyr by St. John Paul II in 2001.

“In the darkest hours of your history,” Pope Francis said, “he knew how to guide the people of God with evangelical wisdom and courage, a tireless man,” who, like Christ the good shepherd, gave his life for his flock, the pope said.

Pope Francis noted that many of the pilgrims’ own relatives had to risk their freedom or life in order to hand down the “teaching of the truth of Christ” to them and future generations. †

Online Lay Ministry Formation

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis has partnered with the University of Notre Dame and Catholic Distance University (CDU) to offer not-for-credit online theology classes:

- Earn certificate in Lay Ministry
- Complete 12 courses online with ND STEP program
- CDU offers classes on Catechism of the Catholic Church
- 20% discount for all employees, volunteers, and parishioners

For more information, please log on to www.archindy.org/layministry



REPORT SEXUAL MISCONDUCT NOW

If you are a victim of sexual misconduct by a person ministering on behalf of the Church, or if you know of anyone who has been a victim of such misconduct, please contact the archdiocesan victim assistance coordinator. There are two ways to make a report:

- 1 Ethics Point Confidential, Online Reporting**
www.archdioceseofindianapolis.ethicspoint.com or 888-393-6810
- 2 Carla Hill, Archdiocese of Indianapolis, Victim Assistance Coordinator**
P.O. Box 1410, Indianapolis, IN 46206-1410
317-236-1548 or 800-382-9836, ext. 1548
carlahill@archindy.org

RINER

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dirty animal pen is the most unlikely, the last place anyone would expect to find Jesus?” Heads went down.

The Nativity scene mesmerized them. It had one unusual feature. The artist painted a tiny, barely visible white bird perched high on a beam behind the Holy Family.

Suddenly, an excited shout: “Hey, I see a chicken!” Twenty-six heads dropped to look. “No,” said one of the women wearing a Santa hat, still nursing a Coke, “It’s a pigeon.” Two warring camps emerged. This wasn’t catechesis. It was *Where’s Waldo?*

Soon, I was laughing. Everyone was laughing.

I looked at them, 27 precious people—all of them—these, the most unlikely. I realized I was looking directly at the Incarnation, the very scene I’d given them.

It was an unlikely place, an unlikely group and an unlikely moment to find Jesus in the second row, wearing a Santa hat, sipping a Coke while smiling at me.

(SPRED is an approach to faith formation for persons with disabilities supported by the archdiocesan Office of Catechesis. For more information, contact catechesis@archindy.org or 317-236-1550. Joann Riner, a member of St. Simon the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis, is a member of the Advent Retreat planning team.) †



Surrounded by priests, prelates and altar servers, Archbishop Amleto G. Cicognani, center, intones the "Te Deum" ("To You, God"), an ancient Latin hymn of praise to God, on Dec. 19, 1944, in SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis after the formal implementation of a decree of Pope Pius XII raising the then-Diocese of Indianapolis to an archdiocese. At the time, Archbishop Cicognani was apostolic delegate to the United States. (Archive photo)



Archbishop Amleto G. Cicognani, center, celebrates a Mass on Dec. 19, 1944, in SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis after the formal implementation of a decree of Pope Pius XII raising the then-Diocese of Indianapolis to an archdiocese. Archbishop Joseph E. Ritter, who became the first archbishop of Indianapolis the same day, is seen at right. He had been installed as bishop of Indianapolis in 1934. Archbishop Cicognani was apostolic delegate to the United States from 1933-58. (Archive photo)

Diocese of Indianapolis raised to the status of archdiocese 75 years ago

On Dec. 19, 1944, 75 years ago this month, a decree of Pope Pius XII was implemented that raised the then-Diocese of Indianapolis to the status of an archdiocese. As a result, the shepherd of the Church in central and southern Indiana at the

time, Bishop Joseph E. Ritter, became an archbishop.

Archbishop Amleto G. Cicognani, apostolic delegate to the United States at the time, came to SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis for ceremonies

to mark the occasion. They included a formal reading of the decree and a Mass.

On the same date, the Diocese of Evansville, Ind., was created out of territory that previously was part of the Diocese of Indianapolis.

Then-Father Henry J. Grimmelsman was ordained and installed as the first bishop of Evansville on Dec. 21, 1944. He led the Church in southwestern Indiana until retiring in 1965. Archbishop Ritter was named archbishop of St. Louis in July 1946. †

READINGS

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Saturday, December 28
The Holy Innocents, martyrs
1 John 1:5-2:2

Psalm 124:2-5, 7c-8
Matthew 2:13-18

Sunday, December 29
The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph
Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14

Psalm 128:1-5
Colossians 3:12-21
or Colossians 3:12-17
Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

Monday, December 30
Sixth Day within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord
1 John 2:12-17
Psalm 96:7-10
Luke 2:36-40

Tuesday, December 31
Seventh Day within the Octave of Christmas
St. Sylvester I, pope
1 John 2:18-21
Psalm 96:1-2, 11-13
John 1:1-18

Wednesday, January 1
Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God
Octave Day of the Nativity of the Lord
Numbers 6:22-27
Psalm 67:2-3, 5-6, 8
Galatians 4:4-7
Luke 2:16-21

Thursday, January 2
St. Basil the Great, bishop and doctor of the Church
St. Gregory of Nazianzen, bishop and doctor of the Church
1 John 2:22-28
Psalm 98:1-4
John 1:19-28

Friday, January 3
The Most Holy Name of Jesus
1 John 2:29-3:6
Psalm 98:1, 3-6
John 1:29-34

Saturday, January 4
St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, religious
1 John 3:7-10

Psalm 98:1, 7-9
John 1:35-42

Sunday, January 5
The Epiphany of the Lord
Isaiah 60:1-6
Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-13
Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6
Matthew 2:1-12

Monday, January 6
St. André Bessette, religious
1 John 3:22-4:6
Psalm 2:7-8, 10-12a
Matthew 4:12-17, 23-25

Tuesday, January 7
St. Raymond of Penyafort, priest
1 John 4:7-10
Psalm 72:1-4, 7-8
Mark 6:34-44

Wednesday, January 8
1 John 4:11-18
Psalm 72:1-2, 10, 12-13
Mark 6:45-52

Thursday, January 9
1 John 4:19-5:4
Psalm 72:1-2, 14, 15bc, 17
Luke 4:14-22a

Friday, January 10
1 John 5:5-13
Psalm 147:12-15, 19-20
Luke 5:12-16

Saturday, January 11
1 John 5:14-21
Psalm 149:1-6a, 9b
John 3:22-30

Sunday, January 12
The Baptism of the Lord
Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7
Psalm 29:1-4, 3, 9-10
Acts 10:34-38
Matthew 3:13-17

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From the ARCHIVES



School dedication at Nativity Parish in Indianapolis

In this photo from Aug. 28, 1955, priests, Sisters of Providence and parishioners of Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ Parish in Indianapolis process from the church to the new school on the occasion of its dedication. Archbishop Paul C. Schulte can be seen near the rear of the procession. The original church building, which appears in the background of this photo, was destroyed by fire on Nov. 17, 1965.

(Would you like to comment on or share information about this photo? Contact archdiocesan archivist Julie Motyka at 800-382-9836, ext. 1538; 317-236-1538; or by e-mail at jmotyka@archindy.org.)

Pope Francis tells his elderly peers the prayers of the old are powerful

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—On the eve of his 83rd birthday, Pope Francis met with a group of his peers—although many were a few years younger—and told them that “old age is a time of grace.”

“Grandparents, who have received the blessing of seeing their children’s children, are entrusted with a great task: transmitting the experience of life and the history of the family, the community, the people,” the pope said on Dec. 16 during an audience with members of the Italian National Association of Senior Workers.

The association represents workers with at least 20 years of seniority in a company, defending the rights of older workers and promoting volunteer service by older people.

Pope Francis, who was born on Dec. 17, 1936, told association members that one’s later years should be a “season

of dialogue,” because “the future of a people naturally presupposes a dialogue and encounter between the old and young to build a society that is more just, more beautiful, has more solidarity and is more Christian.”

As one grows older, he said, “the Lord renews his call to us. He calls us to preserve and hand on the faith; he calls us to pray, especially to intercede; he calls us to be alongside those who are in need.

“The elderly, grandparents, have a unique and special ability to understand the most problematic situations” the pope continued. “And when they pray for these situations, their prayer is strong, it’s potent.”

By living one’s senior years as a gift and a time for dialogue, he said, the elderly show the lie of “the traditional stereotype of the elderly: ill, handicapped, dependent, isolated, besieged by fear, left out, having a weak identity after losing their social role.”

Active seniors, he said, also fight a system that focuses more on “costs and risks” than on “resources and potential.”

“The future—and this is not an exaggeration—will be found in dialogue between the young and the old,” he said. “We are all called to fight this poisonous throwaway culture. With tenacity we are called to build a different society, one that is more welcoming, more human, more inclusive,” and one where the young aren’t ignored because they aren’t working yet and the old aren’t ignored because people think their financially productive years are over.

“Remember,” the pope told them, “talk to young people, not to clobber them, no. To listen to them, to sow something. This dialogue is the future.” †

‘Grandparents, who have received the blessing of seeing their children’s children, are entrusted with a great task: transmitting the experience of life and the history of the family, the community, the people.’



—Pope Francis

ST. MALACHY

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Mary-of-the-Woods near Terre Haute, “who provided teachers for St. Malachy School years ago,” Father Danda notes.

The final pilgrimage was to saints’ shrines in France. During Mass at Lourdes, the pilgrims presented intentions submitted at a prayer tent set up at the parish’s annual country fair this year.

Father Danda says the yearly festival and fundraiser, which began in 1974, “has been around since I was a kid growing up in the parish.”

Bursten says the country fair is a festival, but with roughly 10,000 attendees “it’s also the largest evangelization opportunity we have because it’s a community-wide event.”

The anniversary year ended on Nov. 3 when Archbishop Charles C. Thompson celebrated Mass at the church following St. Malachy’s feast day on Nov. 2.

‘Where God is leading us’

Knueven was struck by the archbishop’s homily.

“He commented that there were four parishes this year that celebrated their 150th anniversary,” she recalls. “He

said the Eucharist continues to bring us together as living members of the body of Christ, whether 150 years ago or now.”

Perhaps in another 150 years St. Malachy will celebrate its 300th anniversary. But Father Danda’s focus on the future is for the souls he shepherds to become saints.

To achieve that goal, the parish is launching an initiative called CLOVER—Confession, Life, Our Lady, Vocations, Eucharist and Revealed Word.

The parish website explains what each of the words entail:

“Those six principles are going to be principles by which we judge how we are growing spiritually as a community and on our own path to sainthood,” Father Danda explains.

Bursten is on board with the initiative, both in terms of how the concepts can be used by individuals as well as by the parish.

St. Malachy is “here to serve a purpose,” she says. “Every day is an attempt to figure out what that [purpose] is. We may never know fully, but we try.

“This year of celebration was a good way for our parish to come together and recognize how so much of what happened in the past has gotten us here today, and our obligation to make sure we’re still here in 150 years.” †



At the bottom of this undated photo taken outside of St. Malachy Parish’s second church building in Brownsburg is an inscription that reads, “First confirmation class of Bishop Chartrand.” Bishop Francis Silas Marean Chartrand was shepherd of what was then called the Diocese of Vincennes from 1918-1934. (Submitted photo)

CHAIRS

continued from page 8

wood already purchased by the parish for all of the sanctuary pieces. Kasnak calls the material—plus an added piece of pale Australian Lacewood—“exotic hardwoods for fine furniture use.”

The task of building the chairs, however, was not so easy.

“Chairs are among the most challenging of furniture items to build,” says Kasnak. “And these were exceptionally so due to the unusual, diagonally-oriented [legs], the extra-large size to fit the grand [sanctuary] space and the difficulty of the construction and decorative detail.”

Details like crafting a separate

wooden Celtic-style cross and circle inlay for the backrest of the presider’s chair. Or adding a Celtic trinity knot in 23-karat gold-leaf on the backrest of the deacons’ chairs. Or using the same gilding to cover the spires atop the back legs of all three chairs.

“It took four times longer than we thought it would,” Kasnak admits with a laugh. “The wives were getting impatient.”

Nevertheless, the team completed the presider’s chair in time for the September 2018 Mass, and the deacons’ chairs were finished for the parish’s feast day Mass in November.

In total, says Kasnak, the project took “a minimum of 1,600 hours and tens-of-thousands of dollars of volunteer labor.”

Father Danda appreciates the

parishioner-made pieces.

“In my five years [of priest formation] in Rome, I was so blessed to see generation after generation of art and handiwork in the churches of Europe,” he says. “Nowadays, we only allow the ‘professionals’ to build and adorn our churches.”

“So this was a breath of fresh air to me to receive the creation of some skilled parishioners in these beautiful liturgical chairs.”

Seeing the chairs when he’s worshipping at Mass at St. Malachy gives Kasnak “a sense of pride and satisfaction,” he says. “And I like where Father Danda set them under the crucifix. Before, the chairs were placed in the back behind the altar.”

The move of the sanctuary chairs

serves a deep purpose, says Father Danda.

“We placed them at the foot of our crucifix in our sanctuary symbolizing how the priest stands *in persona Christi capitis* [“in the person of Christ the head”], especially in celebrating the Mass.”

“I pray the young men of our parish will make this connection and begin to imagine themselves in that same role one day [while] discerning the possibility of a vocation to the priesthood in our archdiocese.”

And if one such young man discerns a call from God to be a shepherd, and another to be a permanent deacon, perhaps one day they will sit in the unique, hand-crafted, aesthetic sanctuary chairs with the year 2018 carved on the bottom. †