



The Criterion

Serving the Church in Central and Southern Indiana Since 1960



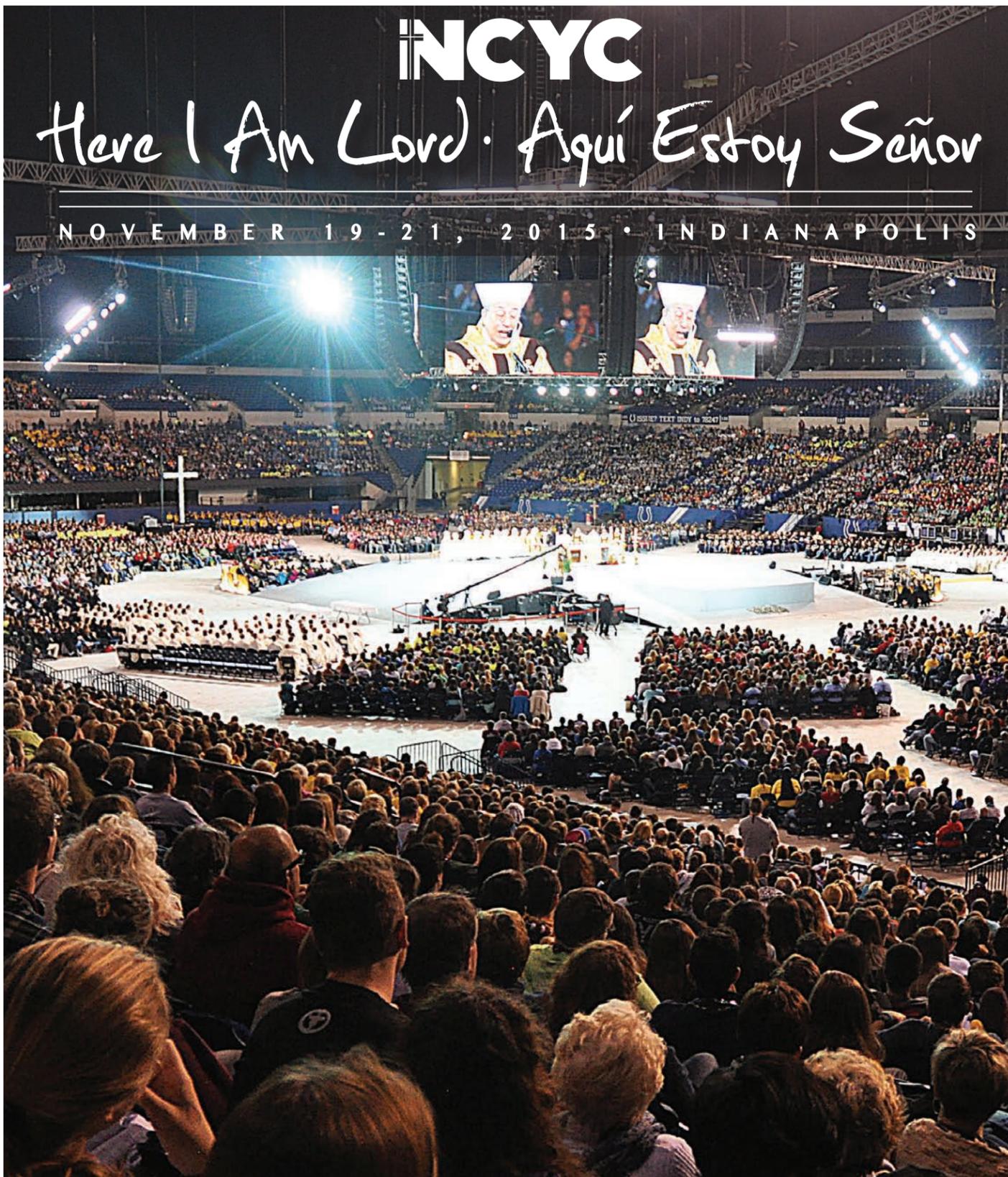
Emmaus Walk

Columnist Debra Tomaselli shares why she counts her blessings each day, page 16.

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Some 23,000 Catholic teenagers and chaperones listen on Nov. 21 in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis as Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga of Tegucigalpa, Honduras, preaches a homily during the closing Mass of the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) held on Nov. 19-21 at the stadium and the adjacent Indiana Convention Center. All coverage can be found online at www.CriterionOnline.com. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

Cardinal calls youths to extend Christ's kingdom during NCYC's closing Mass

By Sean Gallagher

As 23,000 youths from across the country worshipped together during the closing Mass of the National Catholic Conference (NCYC) in Indianapolis, Leanna Long felt "amazingly overwhelmed" to be in the midst of so many

people who shared her faith.

She attended the conference from her home in

North Carolina, where Catholics are a small minority of the overall population.

"We know the Church is large," said Leanna, a member of St. Thomas More Parish in Chapel Hill, N.C., in the Raleigh Diocese. "But to be able to see it and know that I'm not alone [is helpful]."

"We're told that where two or three are gathered, [Jesus] is in your presence. Well, I'm one of one in my school. Is God with me still? The answer is, 'Yes.' Even though I'm in North Carolina and someone else is in New Hampshire, we're still ... praying together. We're still gathered together, and he's there."

In her words, Leanna captured the Church's youthful vitality and diverse universality. Both were on display on Nov. 21 as conference attendees were led in worship on the feast of Christ the King by Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga of Tegucigalpa, Honduras.



Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga

During his opening remarks at the bilingual Mass celebrated in English and Spanish, Cardinal Rodriguez shared with his young listeners the mission they were being given as they returned to

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Above, Alex Okafer of St. John Parish in Columbia, Md., in the Archdiocese of Baltimore, proclaims the second reading during the NCYC closing Mass on Nov. 21. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

Left, Julia Olejko, left, and Violet Piskor, members of St. Mary Parish in Vermillion, Ohio, hold up a cross filled with prayers of parishioners during the general intercessions of the NCYC closing Mass on Nov. 21. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)



Elizabeth Dible of the Diocese of Columbus, Ohio, sings after receiving Communion during the NCYC closing Mass on Nov. 21. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

Advent penance services are scheduled at archdiocesan parishes

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

Batesville Deanery

- Dec. 4, 10 a.m.-10 p.m. at All Saints, Dearborn County, at the Yorkville campus
- Dec. 6, 1:30 p.m. at Immaculate Conception, Millhousen
- Dec. 9, 7 p.m. at St. Peter, Franklin County
- Dec. 9, 7 p.m. at St. Mary, Greensburg
- Dec. 10, 7 p.m. at St. Louis, Batesville
- Dec. 16, 7 p.m. at St. Michael the Archangel, Brookville
- Dec. 17, 7 p.m. at St. Catherine of Siena, Decatur County, at the Enochsburg campus

Bloomington Deanery

- Dec. 9, 6:30 p.m. at St. Paul Catholic Center, Bloomington
- Dec. 10, 7 p.m. at St. Vincent de Paul, Bedford
- Dec. 14, 7 p.m. at St. Martin of Tours, Martinsville
- Dec. 15, 7 p.m. at St. Agnes, Nashville
- Dec. 16, 6:30 p.m. at St. Jude, Spencer
- Dec. 17, 6 p.m. at St. John the Apostle, Bloomington
- Dec. 20, 1:30 p.m. at St. Charles Borromeo, Bloomington

Connersville Deanery

- Dec. 10, 6:30 p.m. at St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Rushville
- Dec. 14, 7 p.m. at St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Cambridge City
- Dec. 16, 6:30 p.m. at St. Gabriel, Connersville
- Dec. 22, 6 p.m., following 5:15 p.m. Mass for Richmond Catholic Community at St. Mary, Richmond
- Dec. 23, 7 p.m. at St. Rose, Knightstown

Indianapolis East Deanery

- Nov. 30, 7 p.m. for Our Lady of Lourdes and St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) at Our Lady of Lourdes
- Dec. 1, 7 p.m. at St. Thomas the Apostle, Fortville

- Dec. 2, 7:30 p.m. at Holy Spirit
- Dec. 3, 7 p.m. St. Philip Neri
- Dec. 10, 6:30 p.m. at St. Michael, Greenfield
- Dec. 14, 7 p.m. for Holy Angels and St. Rita at St. Rita
- Dec. 16, 7 p.m. at St. Mary

Indianapolis North Deanery

- Dec. 13, 2 p.m. deanery service at St. Luke the Evangelist
- Dec. 14, 7 p.m. deanery service at St. Luke the Evangelist
- Dec. 15, 7 p.m. deanery service at St. Luke the Evangelist

Indianapolis South Deanery

- Dec. 7, 2 p.m. at Good Shepherd
- Dec. 9, 6 p.m. at St. Barnabas
- Dec. 10, 7 p.m. for St. Mark the Evangelist and St. Roch at St. Roch
- Dec. 14, 6:30 p.m. at Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ
- Dec. 15, 7 p.m. at St. Jude
- Dec. 15, 7 p.m., for St. Joseph and St. Ann at St. Ann
- Dec. 19, 9 a.m. at SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi, Greenwood
- Dec. 21, 7 p.m. our Lady of the Greenwood, Greenwood

Indianapolis West Deanery

- Dec. 4, 7 p.m. at Holy Angels
- Dec. 9, 7 p.m. at Mary, Queen of Peace, Danville
- Dec. 9, 7 p.m. at St. Michael the Archangel
- Dec. 10, 7 p.m. at St. Susanna, Plainfield
- Dec. 15, 7 p.m. at St. Joseph
- Dec. 16, 7 p.m. at St. Gabriel the Archangel
- Dec. 21, 7 p.m. at St. Thomas More, Mooresville
- Dec. 22, 7 p.m. at St. Monica

New Albany Deanery

- Dec. 3, 7 p.m. at St. Augustine, Jeffersonville
- Dec. 9, 7 p.m. at St. Mary, Navilleton
- Dec. 9, 7 p.m. at St. Michael, Charlestown
- Dec. 10, 7 p.m. at St. Mary, Lanesville
- Dec. 15, 7 p.m. at Our Lady of Perpetual



A priest hears confessions along Benjamin Franklin Parkway before Pope Francis arrives at the Festival of Families in Philadelphia on Sept. 26. (CNS photo/Carlos Barria, Reuters)

- Help, New Albany
- Dec. 16, 6:30 p.m. for St. John Paul II, Sellersburg, at St. Paul Chapel, Sellersburg
- Dec. 17, 7 p.m. at Holy Family, New Albany
- Dec. 20, 4 p.m. at St. John the Baptist, Starlight

Seymour Deanery

- Dec. 10, 6:30 p.m. for St. Ann, Jennings County; St. Mary, North Vernon; and St. Joseph, Jennings County, at St. Joseph, Jennings County
- Dec. 13, 2 p.m. for Holy Trinity, Edinburgh, and St. Rose of Lima, Franklin, at St. Rose of Lima, Franklin
- Dec. 16, 7 p.m. for Our Lady of Providence, Brownstown, and St. Ambrose, Seymour, at St. Ambrose, Seymour
- Dec. 17, 7 p.m. at St. Bartholomew, Columbus
- Dec. 20, 4 p.m. for American Martyrs, Scottsburg, and St. Patrick, Salem, at American Martyrs, Scottsburg

Tell City Deanery

- Dec. 9, 6:30 p.m. at St. Meinrad,

- St. Meinrad
- Dec. 13, 2 p.m. at St. Paul, Tell City

Terre Haute Deanery

- Dec. 9, 1:30 p.m., deanery service at St. Margaret Mary, Terre Haute
- Dec. 9, 7:30 p.m., deanery service at St. Joseph University, Terre Haute
- Dec. 10, 7 p.m., deanery service at St. Paul the Apostle, Greencastle
- Dec. 16, 7 p.m., deanery service at Sacred Heart, Clinton †

Advent resources are available on archdiocesan Web site

During the season of Advent, the Archdiocese of Indianapolis will have a special webpage at www.archindy.org/advent.

The page contains various Advent resources, including links to the daily readings, past reflections from Archbishop Emeritus Daniel M. Buechlein, penance service schedules, images of past *Criterion* Christmas issue covers, and links of interest to other Advent websites. †



Tell us how mercy and forgiveness have made a difference in your life

Pope Francis has declared a "Holy Year of Mercy" in the Church, starting on Dec. 8 and continuing through Nov. 20, 2016.

As part of the "Year of Mercy," *The Criterion* is inviting our readers to share their stories of how their lives have been graced by the mercy and forgiveness

of God and other people—and how that mercy and forgiveness have made a difference.

We are also seeking stories from our readers who have shown mercy and forgiveness to others—and how that act of mercy and forgiveness has made a difference to the person offering it.

Please send your stories and responses to assistant editor John Shaughnessy by e-mail at jshaughnessy@archindy.org or by mail in care of *The Criterion*, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202. Please include your parish and a daytime phone number where you can be reached. †

Readers are invited to share favorite Christmas memories

The Criterion invites readers to submit a brief story about a special holiday memory for possible inclusion in our annual Christmas issue, which will be published on Dec. 18.

Your favorite Christmas story may be written about a humorous or serious topic related to your faith, family or friends.

Submissions should include the writer's name, address, parish and telephone number. Send your story to *The Criterion*, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202 or by e-mail to editor Mike Krokos at mkrokos@archindy.org by the Dec. 8 deadline. †



Pope Francis' prayer intentions for December

- **Universal: Experiencing God's mercy**—That all may experience the mercy of God, who never tires of forgiving.
- **Evangelization: Families**—That families, especially those who suffer, may find in the birth of Jesus a sign of certain hope.

(To see Pope Francis' monthly intentions, go to www.ewtn.com/faith/papalPrayer.htm.) †

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The Criterion

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Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga of Tegucigalpa, Honduras, left, holds up the Eucharist during the closing Mass of the National Catholic Youth Conference on Nov. 21 while Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin prays with him. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

CARDINAL

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their homes.

“This is not the end,” he said. “This is the beginning of another stage when you will go back to your places in order to spread the kingdom of Jesus Christ.”

In his homily, Cardinal Rodriguez reflected on the feast of Christ the King that the Church was celebrating that weekend.

“Today, we want to celebrate all his triumphs in one single feast, especially established to show Jesus as the only sovereign [in] a society that seems to want to turn its back on God and not acknowledge any of this,” said the cardinal, who is a close adviser of Pope Francis.

Cardinal Rodriguez later exhorted his “young brothers and sisters ... to spread out his reign of love, with all the values of the kingdom.”

The kingdom of Christ, he said, is “the salt of the Earth, the light of the world, the leaven of the dough, a sign of salvation in order to build a more just world, more brotherly, one based on Gospel values, the hope and eternal joy to which we are all called.”

The feast of Christ the King also leads the Church to consider its ultimate fulfillment at the end of time, and the relevance of that future event to the world here and now, he said.

“Today’s feast is like experiencing an anticipation of the second coming of Christ in power and majesty, the glorious coming which will fill the hearts and will dry forever the tears of unhappiness,” Cardinal Rodriguez said. “And, at the same time, it is an encouragement to make real this experience of the second coming by our good works, because the hope of a new Earth should not scare us.

“Rather, it should strengthen our commitment to cultivate the Earth, where that body of a new human family grows and can give us an advance taste of the new world.”

In addition to the 23,000 youths participating in the Mass, approximately 250 priests concelebrated. The liturgy also featured 18 bishops, 50 deacons and 50 seminarians.

The NCYC closing Mass capped the conference which began on Nov. 19, and took place in the Indiana Convention Center and Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis.

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis has hosted the last three conferences, which are held every two years. It is scheduled to host the next one in 2017. NCYC is sponsored by the National Federation of Catholic Youth Ministry.

While many Catholic youths traveled thousands of miles to attend NCYC, Frankie Auriemma’s trip to the conference only took about 20 minutes.

A member of St. Susanna Parish in Plainfield, Frankie was proud that the archdiocese was hosting so many Catholic youths from across the country as she looked upon the conference attendees in Lucas Oil Stadium prior to the start of the closing liturgy.

“It’s here in our hometown. That’s crazy,” she said. “I can say, ‘Yeah, I’m from Indianapolis. It’s cool. This is my home turf.’ It makes me really proud. This is where I grew up. I’ve been here my whole life.”

Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin expressed his pride in the Church in central and southern Indiana for working hard to host NCYC by telling the story of St. Mary Parish in Lanesville in the New Albany Deanery, which sent 20 youths to the conference, and also 40 volunteers.

“Young people face particular challenges today,” Archbishop Tobin said. “In the heart, we know what it means to be young. And we can serve them. I’m so pleased that so many people in the archdiocese believe in the young people.”

(For more photos from the National Catholic Youth Conference, log on to www.CriterionOnline.com.) †



Catholic youths from across the country stand in prayer on Nov. 21 in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis during the closing Mass of the National Catholic Youth Conference, which was attended by 23,000 youths from across the country.

(Photo by Natalie Hoefler)



A woman leads deaf participants in signing the *Gloria* during the closing Mass for the National Catholic Youth Conference on Nov. 21. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)



Concelebrating priests pray during the closing Mass of the National Catholic Youth Conference on Nov. 21. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)

NCYC helps ‘young people have an encounter with Christ,’ organizer says

By John Shaughnessy

The scene moved Kay Scoville to tears—a moment she regards as one of the many blessings from all her work and planning for the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) in Indianapolis on Nov. 19-21.

The scene unfolded in the early evening of Nov. 19 as Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin lifted the Blessed Sacrament and led a procession through the Indiana Convention Center where teenagers at the conference stopped what they were doing and knelt in reverence.



Kay Scoville

“There were thousands who participated, either walking in the procession or kneeling on the route,” said Scoville, in her 10th year as the archdiocese’s director of

youth ministry. “That always moves me to tears to see the reverence of the young people.”

Another highlight for Scoville was watching thousands of youths from across the country lining up to have their confessions heard at the conference.

“The goal of the planning team is the same as the goal of Pope Francis—that young people have an encounter with Christ,” she said. “They were encountering Christ in the sacrament of reconciliation, and they were taking another opportunity for that in the eucharistic adoration chapel.”

Seeing young people embrace those opportunities reveals what matters most to them, Scoville says.

“Every generation thinks that what the desires of the teens are, what their interests are, change. But when it comes down to it—in the past, present and future—what young people want are relationships, relationships with other teens and with adults. They’re looking for encounters—not through social media—but directly with others because

that’s how we are Christ to each other.”

Scoville’s encounters with some of the 23,000 youths at the conference—including 1,520 teenagers from the archdiocese—also had an impact on her faith.

“It’s really amazing to talk to the youths,” she said. “There was an overwhelming, positive response. I heard, ‘This is awesome,’ ‘we had a great time,’ ‘we’re coming back.’ They really enjoyed meeting Catholics [from] across the nation. And when you see young people embracing a devotion that’s been around for thousands of years, that just re-energizes your own faith, knowing we’re passing along the faith to them.”

Scoville praised the nearly 600 volunteers who set aside time to make the conference a memorable and safe experience for the youths.

“For many of the volunteers, this was their third time of helping with the conference since it’s been in Indianapolis. The volunteers are all ages, all abilities. We had some who were in wheelchairs. They were from places all

across the country, not just Indianapolis. They were always willing to help.”

She also saluted the members of the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department who patrolled the Indiana Convention Center, Lucas Oil Stadium and the streets outside both those conference venues.

“They were phenomenal in terms of making the experience safe and secure for the youths, which was a concern considering the situations that have been happening in Europe,” Scoville said. “The safety and security of the young people were at the top of the priorities for everyone this year.”

She is also thrilled that the conference touched the lives and influenced the faith of so many people.

“I just have a lot of gratitude for a really awesome event—and for the youths, the chaperones, the volunteers, the bishops, the priests, the seminarians, the speakers and the national staff that were all part of it.

“There’s a lot to be thankful for this Thanksgiving.” †



Rev. Msgr. Raymond T. Bosler, Founding Editor, 1915 - 1994

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Editorial



Teenagers from the Archdiocese of Atlanta enjoy the music of Matt Maher during the Nov. 20 evening session of the National Catholic Youth Conference. (Photo by Mike Krokos)

NCYC helps young Church grow in their lives of faith

The largest parish in the United States, as Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin of Indianapolis called it, gathered to grow in their lives of faith over the weekend.

And we can vouch that it was quite a celebration.

More than 23,000 teenagers attended the biennial National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) at the Indiana Convention Center and Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis on Nov. 19-21, and we came away realizing many of our young people are eager to embrace Christ and be a beacon of light to our world.

Presented by the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry and hosted by the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, the three-day pilgrimage of faith reminded young people they are never alone as they face life's challenges. It also served as a refresher for their chaperones—and the speakers, musicians, priests, bishops, deacons, seminarians and religious in attendance—that teenagers can get really excited about their faith when given the opportunity.

High school student Mikaila Heavrin, a member of St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Clarksville, said of NCYC, "It's been overwhelming. It's made me realize there's a lot of work that can be done, and it's opened my eyes to God more."

Patrick O'Herron, Jr., a high school senior from the Diocese of Helena, Mont., said the conference was "a life-changing experience," and was impressed by "the real embrace of everybody's faith coming together in one place."

The theme of this year's gathering, "Here I Am Lord" ("Aquí Estoy Señor"), implored the teens to put Jesus Christ at the center of all they do, and to partake of the sacraments—especially receiving the Eucharist and taking part in the sacrament of penance—to strengthen them as they move forward and live out their Catholic faith.

"The Church is never more Church

than when we gather around the altar," Archbishop Tobin told the thousands of teenagers during the opening session at Lucas Oil Stadium on Nov. 19. "It's at the altar when we are truly the family of God, gathered around his word and receiving his sacrament.

"It's at the altar where we get the strength to keep on keeping on," he added. "Keeping on" is a challenge many of the young people cited as they discussed the struggles and uncertainties they face in their families, in friendships, at school and in the world.

Knowing that many of their peers feel the same pressures helped the young people realize they are not alone.

"One of the messages during a breakout session was coming together as a community as 'we,'" explained Madison Holden, a high school senior from the Diocese of Pittsburgh. "Even in this large NCYC meeting, we find individualism, and it's not always embraced. We learned to embrace all of that, and to include everybody—whether you're from Honolulu or Maine. It doesn't matter. We're all brothers and sisters in Christ."

While many of the young people attended Mass each day during NCYC, the lines to go to confession were long as well.

The energy, emotions and electricity created by the teens at the gathering were evident, too. As at past NCYC gatherings, they traded hats, hugs and high fives. Clothespins were a popular tradeable this year, too. Many young people included their names and home parish on theirs.

At the closing liturgy on Nov. 21, Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga of Tegucigalpa, Honduras, reminded the young people what they learned must be carried and shared with others.

"This is not the end," he said. "This is the beginning of another stage when you will go back to your places in order to spread the kingdom of Jesus Christ."

We pray that the teenagers embrace Cardinal Rodriguez's charge, helping bring much-needed light to the world.

—Mike Krokos

Making Sense of Bioethics/Fr. Tad Pacholczyk

Parents and sex education

While some parents might be happy to avoid the awkward conversations



that arise around human sexuality by allowing the school system to provide their children's sex education, it is nonetheless important for parents to recognize that they are the most significant teachers and models for their own children as they mature sexually.

Instilling a healthy attitude about sexuality in young people involves a variety of considerations, including conveying a proper sense of constraints and boundaries.

These boundaries arise organically through the virtue of chastity, by which a person acquires the ability to renounce self, to make sacrifices and to wait generously in consideration of loving fidelity toward a future spouse, out of self-respect, and out of fidelity to God. This critical process of developing sexual self-mastery is an area where parents are particularly well suited to help their children.

At the end of the day, the parental duty to influence in a positive way a child's upbringing around sexuality cannot be abdicated or delegated. Parents know their children in a personal and individual way, and are able to determine their readiness for, and receptivity to, sexual information.

Moreover, the reality of parental love

toward their children enables a parent to say certain "hard things" in love that may need to be said, in a manner that only a parent may effectively be able to say it.

I recall the story that a middle-aged woman once shared with me about something that happened when she was 12. She was at home watching TV with her mother, who was the strong authority figure in the family.

At a certain moment, a scene came across the screen where a woman was removing her clothing and dancing in front of a group of men. Her mother glanced over at her and without skipping a beat said: "I'll kill you if you ever do that."

Her daughter understood, of course, that she didn't mean it literally, but appreciated that her mother cared enough about her to be very direct: "What my Mom said on that and many other occasions stayed with me for years afterward, and helped me to reflect carefully on the right use of my sexuality."

Parents influence their children in thousands of different ways, sometimes not even realizing how particular comments or observations they make can become highly significant to their child's thinking.

Helping children to think correctly about human sexuality remains a delicate and challenging task in the midst of a sex-saturated society like our own. Indeed, our thinking about human sexuality can easily go off the rails, and sexual activity itself can quickly degrade into a selfish and self-referential kind of activity, even within marriage, if we aren't careful to attend to deeper realities.

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Reflection/Sean Gallagher

Work with God's help to foster solidarity in the face of terror

The Islamic State militants that carried out horrifying terrorist attacks in Paris on Nov. 13 intended, at least in part, to rip apart the ties of human solidarity. They wanted to foster and carry on a great conflict that divides humanity between, in their eyes, true believers and infidels.

And indeed, there are conflicts all around our Earth in which people are set against each other and where violence rules. This has tragically been the case since the dawn of humanity when Cain raised his hand against his brother Abel.

But God did not create a world to be ruled by the principle that might makes right. He foresaw from all eternity a world in which people were to live in love and harmony with him, each other and creation as a whole. Adam and Eve's original sin shattered this harmony in ways that continue to reverberate today.

But in sending us Jesus, his Son, God gave us the means to overcome conflict and division. God's original plan in its fullness won't be restored until Christ comes again. But he calls us to advance this harmony here and now with the power that his ever-present grace gives to us.

Despite the vicious attacks in Paris that sought to divide people even further, the harmony that God intended in creating the human race was soon on display as people around the world showed their solidarity with the suffering people of France.

Famous buildings and monuments around the world were bathed in the colors of the French flag. That flag was carried into football and basketball stadiums across the country alongside the American flag. And people around the world changed their profile photo on Facebook, Twitter and other social media

platforms to show their solidarity with the French people.

This show of unity in the wake of the attacks, however, may have been attributed as much to the fact that Paris is much like the cities in which so many other people in the developed western world live, as to the nature of the attack itself.

For on the day before the attacks in Paris, two Islamic State suicide bombers killed 40 people in Beirut. In response to that, though, I didn't see people rushing to put the flag of Lebanon on social media profile photos.

Our embrace of those who suffer needs to be widened. The unjust victims of violence wherever it occurs are lovingly held in the compassionate hands of God. But he empowers us to be tangible and visible instruments of that compassion to people who bear the burden of injustice and war.

We can do this through supporting Catholic Relief Services (www.crs.org), the U.S. bishops' international aid agency, or supporting or volunteering for the Refugee Immigration Services office of Catholic Charities Indianapolis (www.archindy.org/cc/refugee). The former helps victims of violence and natural disasters where they live around the world. The latter helps settle in Indianapolis international refugees, such as people fleeing from ethnic and religious persecution in Myanmar.

Prayer, of course, is a means to foster solidarity that cannot be ignored or downplayed. At times like this, increasing the harmony that God intended can seem impossible. And, through human means alone, it is.

But when we invoke God's help in prayer, and cooperate daily with his grace, we contribute step by step to the restoration of his original vision for harmony among himself, humanity and all creation.

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

ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO JOSEPH W. TOBIN



REJOICE IN THE LORD

ALÉGRENSE EN EL SEÑOR

‘The days are coming, says the Lord.’ Are we ready?

Advent, which begins on Sunday, Nov. 29, is a time of preparation, an opportunity to begin anew by placing first things first.

The first and second readings for the First Sunday of Advent are hope-filled: “The days are coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and Judah. I will raise up for David a just shoot; he shall do what is right and just in the land. In those days, Judah shall be safe and Jerusalem shall dwell secure” (Jer 33:14-16). Our God keeps his promises. His righteousness assures safety and security for all those who strengthen their hearts “to be blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus” (1 Thes 3:13).

It’s important to keep in mind that our God is ever faithful because, frankly, lots of bad things will happen between now and the end of days.

As the Lord tells us in the Gospel of Luke for this Sunday, “There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on Earth nations will be in dismay, perplexed by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will die of fright in

anticipation of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken” (Lk 21:25-26). Our salvation in Jesus Christ does not make everything nice and worry-free. We will know trouble, even intense suffering and death, before the Lord comes again “with power and great glory” (Lk 21:27).

In every age, it’s tempting to see signs of the end time. Our Lord’s warning that “on Earth nations will be in dismay” (Lk 21:25) sounds very familiar to us.

Especially since the nuclear horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of the Second World War, we have lived with the threat of an unimaginable holocaust resulting from our inhumanity toward one another. That’s one reason the Church reminds us to “be vigilant at all times” (Lk 25:36).

We never know when disaster will strike us—as individuals, families, communities or nations. What we do know is that God is faithful. He keeps his promises, and he will not let us be destroyed by the evil forces that surround us—now or in the days to come.

What does it mean to be ready? The season of Advent reminds us to

keep our focus on things that matter. Do we love God with our whole heart and soul and strength? Do we love our neighbor as ourselves? The Lord admonishes us, “Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy from carousing and drunkenness and the anxieties of daily life” (Lk 21:34). It’s easy to lose sight of things that matter when we are confronted by the distractions posed by the world we live in. The “drowsiness” St. Paul warns against in his first letter to the Church in Thessalonica is not unlike Pope Francis’ concept of “indifference.” Both represent a state of inattention and uncaring that can blind us from recognizing, and responding to, the needs of others.

The call to be vigilant or, as St. Paul says, “to be blameless in holiness” (1 Thes 3:13) is challenging. Have you ever tried to stay awake when you were really tired or sick? It can only happen if we resist the temptation to let down our guard and relax. That means we must get up out of our easy chairs and do something!

We keep our hearts from becoming drowsy by paying attention to the needs

of others and by constant acts of love and service. When we are focused on the good of others, rather than our own wants and desires, we can shake off disappointment, self-centeredness and anxiety. Nothing stimulates a drowsy heart more effectively than a simple act of kindness. Nothing can ensure we will remain vigilant better than active engagement with our sisters and brothers in need.

Pope Francis consistently urges us to be a Church that is engaged with others, especially those who are most in need, “on the peripheries.” Why? Because that is what Christ did and what he asks us, his followers, to do in his name.

The Gospel for the First Sunday of Advent admonishes us: “Be vigilant at all times and pray that you have the strength to escape the tribulations that are imminent and to stand before the Son of Man” (Lk 21:36). These are strong words of warning, but they are also words of Advent hope. The Lord will come again as promised. Let’s do our part and make sure we’re wide awake, fully prepared for “the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his holy ones” (1 Thes 3:13). †

‘—Vienen días —dice el Señor.’ ¿Estamos preparados?

La temporada de Adviento que comienza el 29 de noviembre, es una época de preparación, una oportunidad para un nuevo comienzo y dar prioridad a lo que es verdaderamente importante.

La primera y la segunda lectura del Primer Domingo de Adviento están repletas de esperanza: “—Vienen días —dice el Señor— en que yo confirmaré las buenas promesas que he hecho a la casa de Israel y a la casa de Judá. Cuando llegue el día y el momento, haré que de David surja un Renuevo de justicia, que impondrá la justicia y el derecho en la tierra. En esos días Judá será salvado, y Jerusalén habitará segura” (Jer 33:14-16). Dios cumple Sus promesas. Su justicia garantiza la seguridad y protección de todos los que fortalecen sus corazones para que “sean ustedes santos e irreprochables delante de nuestro Dios y Padre, cuando venga nuestro Señor Jesucristo” (1 Tes 3:13).

Resulta importante recordar que nuestro Dios es realmente fiel ya que, francamente, ocurrirán muchas cosas malas antes de que llegue el final de los tiempos.

Tal como nos dice el Evangelio de San Lucas de este domingo: “Habrá entonces señales en el sol, en la luna y en las estrellas. En la tierra, la gente se angustiara y quedará confundida por causa del bramido del mar y de las olas. El miedo y la expectación de

las cosas que sobrevendrán en la tierra hará que los hombres desfallezcan, y los poderes celestiales se estremecerán” (Lc 21:25-26). Nuestra salvación en Jesucristo no significa que todo será color de rosa ni que no sufriremos agobios. Atravesaremos dificultades, intensos sufrimientos y muerte antes de que el Señor regrese “con poder y gran gloria” (Lc 21:27).

Estamos tentados a ver señales del fin de los tiempos en cada época. La advertencia de Nuestro Señor de que “en la tierra, la gente se angustiara” (Lc 21:25), nos resulta muy conocida.

Esto es especialmente cierto desde los horrores de Hiroshima y Nagasaki, al final de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, ya que desde entonces hemos vivido bajo la amenaza de que sobrevenga un holocausto inimaginable a consecuencia de nuestra crueldad. Esa es una de las razones por la que la Iglesia nos exhorta a mantenernos “siempre atentos” (Lc 25:36).

Nunca se sabe cuándo sobrevendrá la desgracia, ya sea individualmente, en nuestras familias, comunidades o países. Lo que sí sabemos es que Dios es fiel, que cumple con lo que promete y que no dejará que sucumbamos a las fuerzas del mal que nos rodean, ya sea hoy en día o en el futuro.

¿Qué significa estar preparados? La temporada del Adviento nos recuerda que debemos concentrarnos en todo aquello

que es verdaderamente importante. ¿Acaso amamos a Dios con todo nuestro corazón, nuestra alma y nuestras fuerzas? ¿Amamos a nuestro prójimo como a nosotros mismos? El Señor nos advierte: “Pero tengan cuidado de que su corazón no se recargue de glotonería y embriaguez, ni de las preocupaciones de esta vida” (Lc 21:34). Resulta muy fácil perder de vista aquello que realmente es importante cuando nos enfrentamos a las distracciones que nos presenta el mundo en el que vivimos. El “aletargamiento” contra el cual nos advierte San Pablo en su primera carta a la Iglesia en Tesalónica, no difiere del concepto de “indiferencia” que propone el papa Francisco. Ambas nociones aluden al estado carente de atención e insensible que puede llegar a cegarnos e impedir que reconozcamos y respondamos a las necesidades de los demás.

El llamado a estar atentos o, como lo dice San Pablo “santos e irreprochables” (1 Tes 3:13) es un reto. ¿Alguna vez ha intentado mantenerse despierto mientras estaba muy enfermo o cansado? Solamente lo podemos lograr si resistimos a la tentación de dejarnos caer y relajarnos. ¡También significa que debemos levantarnos del sillón y mantenernos activos!

Evitamos que nuestros corazones caigan en un aletargamiento al prestar atención a las necesidades de los demás y realizar constantemente obras de amor

y servicio. Cuando nos concentramos en hacer bien al prójimo, en vez de atender a nuestros propios deseos y anhelos, nos despojamos del descontento, el egocentrismo y la ansiedad. Nada estimula más a un corazón aletargado que un simple acto de amabilidad. La mejor garantía para mantenernos atentos es interactuar activamente con nuestros hermanos y hermanas necesitados.

El papa Francisco nos exhorta sistemáticamente a que seamos una Iglesia que interactúa con los demás, especialmente con los más necesitados o “que se encuentran en la periferia.” ¿Por qué? Porque eso es lo que hizo Cristo y lo que nos pide a nosotros, sus seguidores, que hagamos en su nombre.

El evangelio del Primer Domingo de Adviento nos presenta la siguiente exhortación: “Por lo tanto, manténganse siempre atentos, y oren para que se les considere dignos de escapar de todo lo que habrá de suceder, y de presentarse ante el Hijo del Hombre” (Lc 21:36). Estas son fuertes palabras de advertencia, pero también son palabras llenas de la esperanza del adviento. El Señor vendrá de nuevo, según lo ha prometido. Cumplamos con la parte que nos corresponde para asegurarnos de estar plenamente conscientes y preparados para “cuando venga nuestro Señor Jesucristo con todos sus santos” (1 Tes 3:13). †

Traducido por: Daniela Guanipa

Events Calendar

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

November 28

St. John the Evangelist Church, 126 W. Georgia St., Indianapolis. **Faithful Citizens Rosary procession**, 1 p.m., procession. Information: faithful.citizens2016@gmail.com.

December 2

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.

December 3

Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, gathering space, 5692 Central Ave., Indianapolis. **IHM Bereavement Ministry, "Hope for the Holidays,"** session two of two, 7-8:30 p.m. Information: 317-257-2266.

December 4

Marian University Chapel, 3200 Cold Spring Road, Indianapolis. **Lumen Dei Catholic Business Group**, Mass and monthly meeting, 6:30-8:30 a.m., breakfast, \$15 per person. Information: 317-435-3447 or lumen.dei@comcast.net.

Our Lady of the Greenwood Church, 335 S. Meridian St., Greenwood. **First Friday celebration of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus**, Mass, 5:45 p.m., exposition of the Blessed Sacrament following Mass until 9:30 p.m., sacrament of reconciliation available. Information: 317-888-2861 or info@olgreenwood.org.

St. Lawrence Church, 6944 E. 46th St., Indianapolis. **Charismatic Mass**, praise and worship, 7 p.m., Mass and healing prayer, 7:30 p.m. Information: 317-366-4854.

Most Holy Name of Jesus Parish, 89 N. 17th Ave., Beech Grove. **First Friday devotion**, exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, 5:30 p.m.; reconciliation, 5:45-6:45 p.m.; Mass, 7 p.m.; Litany of the Sacred Heart and prayers for the Holy Father, 7:30 p.m. Information: 317-784-5454.

December 5

Helpers of God's Precious Infants Prayer Vigil, Terre Haute. 7:30 a.m. Mass at the Carmelite Monastery at 59 Allendale, 9:25 a.m. parking on Ohio Blvd., 9:30 a.m. assemble on

sidewalk in front of Planned Parenthood at 30 S. 3rd St. for prayers, 10 a.m. travel to St. Patrick Adoration Chapel at 1807 Poplar St. for Divine Mercy Chaplet, completed around 10:30 a.m.

St. Michael Church, 145 St. Michael Blvd., Brookville. **First Saturday Devotional Prayer Group**, Mass, Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, rosary, confession, meditation, 8 a.m. Information: 765-647-5462.

St. John the Evangelist Church, 126 W. Georgia St., Indianapolis. **Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration Advent Day of Reflection for Single Catholic Women**, ages 16-30, 11 a.m.-5 p.m., includes lunch, adoration, confession, vespers. Information and registration: ssfpa.org/retreat/.

December 6

Marian University, 3200 Cold Spring Road, Michael A. Evans Center for Health Sciences, Indianapolis. **Richard G. Lugar Franciscan Center for Global Studies Speaker Series, "America and the World,"** Former Sen. Richard G. Lugar,

presenter, 6 p.m. Information: maple@marian.edu or 317-955-6775.

Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish, 1530 Union St., Indianapolis. **St. Nicholas dinner and Indianapolis Maennerchor Concert**, 6 p.m., \$15 per person, tickets are presale no tickets at the door. Information: sheartparish@sbcglobal.net or 317-638-5551.

Most Holy Name of Jesus Parish, 89 N. 17th St., Beech Grove. **Christmas bazaar**, craft and holiday booths, white elephant booth, chili luncheon, 12:30-4:30 p.m. Information: 317-784-6860 or p108cmaster@sbcglobal.net.

St. Mary-of-the-Rock Parish, 17440 St. Mary's Road, Batesville. **Preservation Society, whole hog sausage and pancake breakfast**, 7 a.m.-noon, free will donation. Information: 812-934-6348.

December 8

St. Paul Hermitage, 501 N. 17th Ave., Beech Grove. **Ave Maria Guild, Christmas party and pitch-in luncheon**, noon. Information: 317-888-7625 or vlgmimi@aol.com.

Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Church of the Immaculate Conception, 1 Sisters of Providence, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Taizé Prayer at the Woods**, 7-8 p.m., freewill offering. Information: 812-535-2932 or provctr@spsmw.org.

December 10

St. Mark the Evangelist Parish, Cenacle (house on parish grounds), Indianapolis. **Hope and Healing Survivors of Suicide support group**, 7 p.m. Information: 317-851-8344.

December 12

Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. **Shop Inn-Spiced Christmas Sale**, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Information: 317-787-3287.

St. Michael the Archangel Parish, 3352 W. 30th St., Indianapolis. **First Annual CYO Wrestling Coaching Symposium**, 3 p.m., no charge, Mass 5:30 p.m. Information: 317-926-0516 or dradams3@gmail.com.

Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Providence Spirituality and Conference Center, 1 Sisters of Providence,

St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Christmas Fun at the Woods**, 1-4 p.m., \$5 per person. Information: 812-535-2932 or provctr@spsmw.org.

December 13

Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, 1530 Union St., Indianapolis. **Advent/Christmas concert**, 2 p.m., reception following concert, no charge. Information: 317-638-5551 or sheartparish@sbcglobal.net.

St. Michael the Archangel Church, 3354 W. 30th St., Indianapolis. **Mass in French**, 1 p.m. Information: 317-523-4193 or acfadi2014@gmail.com.

St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) Church, 4720 E. 13th St., Indianapolis. **Class of '63 monthly gathering**, 6 p.m. Mass, optional dinner afterward. Information: 317-408-6396.

Calvary Cemetery Chapel, 435 W. Troy, Indianapolis. **Christmas Mass**, 2 p.m. Information: 317-574-8898 or smeacham@bhchanangroup.org. †

Food and festivities abound at 'Holidays Under the Spires' in Oldenburg on Dec. 5

Holidays Under the Spires is a 13-year-old tradition of the town of Oldenburg involving dining, shopping and holiday activities throughout the entire village on Dec. 5.

Holy Family Parish cafeteria, 3027 Pearl St., will be the site of the Knights of St. John breakfast with Santa from 8-11 a.m., and a roast beef dinner from 4-7 p.m. Oldenburg restaurants will also be open all day.

Oldenburg's specialty shops will offer registration to win prizes. There

will be an arts and crafts fair in the Holy Family Parish gymnasium, 3027 Pearl St., and at the Sisters of St. Francis campus, 22143 Main St. Christmas trees and wreaths will be sold in the chapel, and homemade goods will be on sale in the motherhouse.

Activities include the Jingle Bell Jog/Walk, model train display, choir concerts, ornament and gingerbread house making, wine tasting, trolley rides and more.

For more information, log on to www.holidaysunderthespires.com. †



Grant boosts shoe effort

"Warm Hearts, Warm Toes" project founders Becca Hattabough, left, and Becky Wilson, right, of Our Lady of Providence Parish in Brownstown, pose with Brayton Hattabough showing off new shoes they delivered to Brownstown Elementary School. The shoes will be given to children, many of whom wear flip-flops or shoes repaired with duct tape during the snowy winter months. A \$1,500 grant from Catholic Relief Services has more than doubled the number of children who received new shoes for the winter in Jackson County. Thanks to the grant, the project expanded from Brownstown and Crothersville schools to include two elementary schools in Seymour. Children also receive socks, underwear and sweats. (Submitted photo)

VIPs



Richard and Martha (Darnell) Knecht, members of St. Michael Parish in Greenfield, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on Nov. 25.

The couple was married on Nov. 25, 1965, at St. Mary Church in Rushville.

They are the parents of six children, Kris Leising, Katie Schwertfeger, Donna Strong, Greg, Doug and Duane Knecht.

They also have 16 grandchildren.

The couple celebrated with an Alaskan cruise, and attended the Golden Wedding Jubilee Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis. A family celebration was held earlier in November. †



Francis and Mary Jane (Wilhelm) Telles, members of St. Louis Parish in Batesville, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on Nov. 25.

The couple was married on Nov. 25, 1965, at St. Joseph Church in St. Leon.

They are the parents of six children, Becky Brown, Gary, Mark, Scott, Ted and Tim Telles.

They also have 11 grandchildren.

The couple will celebrate with a dinner for family and friends. †

Advent lessons and carols service planned for Dec. 7 at Saint Meinrad

Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology, 200 Hill Drive, in St. Meinrad, will present an Advent lessons and carols service in the school's St. Thomas Aquinas Chapel at 7 p.m. Central Time on Dec. 7.

The service, titled "From Eden to Heaven: The Story of Salvation," tells the story of the redemption of mankind through alternating Scripture readings and singing hymns and carols. The

service is expected to last an hour and 15 minutes, and is free and open to the public. A reception will follow in the Alumni Commons.

Parking is available in the Guest House and student parking lots.

For more information, contact Mary Jeanne Schumacher at 812-357-6501.

For updates on the day of the performance, call 812-357-6611. †

Sisters of Providence invite all to Advent prayer services, Mass

The Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods invite all to join them for Mass and prayer during this Advent season as a way to help prepare hearts and minds for the coming of the commemoration of the birth of Jesus.

Mass on the four Sundays of Advent, Nov. 29, Dec. 6, Dec. 13 and Dec. 20, are at 11 a.m., and are celebrated in the

Church of the Immaculate Conception.

The Blessing of the Advent Wreath takes place during the Nov. 29 Mass.

In addition, Mass for the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary will be celebrated at 11 a.m. on Dec. 8.

Linden Leaf Gifts, located in Providence Spirituality and Conference, will be open from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. during the Sundays of Advent. †

Archbishop Tobin gives charge to archdiocesan youths: 'If today you hear his voice, harden not your heart'

By Natalie Hoefler

As more than 1,000 high school youths, youth ministry leaders and chaperones from across central and southern Indiana gathered for the archdiocese's opening National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) Mass at St. John the Evangelist Church in Indianapolis on Nov. 19, something was noticeably missing, something NCYC is noted for: the crazy hats.

The youth of NCYC are known for donning hilarious headgear—cow heads, sharks, pizzas, hot dogs, tall hats, drooping hats, hats that light up.

But as they entered the 144-year-old spired church, the hats were tucked away in reverence for the sacrifice of the holy Mass in which they were about to partake.

After the opening song, led by a special choir consisting of NCYC participants from throughout the archdiocese, Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin put his fingers to his lips in contemplation, looking over the standing-room only congregation.

"You have no idea how good you look, not after where I've been in the last week," he said in reference to the time he spent in Baltimore for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' fall general assembly on Nov. 16-19.

Repeating the words from Psalm 95:7-8, "If today you hear his voice, harden not your heart," the archbishop used his homily to call the youth to focus on the present.

"All we really have is today," he said. "What other day is there? It's tempting to think I have many more todays ahead of me. But all I have is today. 'If today you hear his voice, harden not your heart' " (Ps 95:7-8).

Archbishop Tobin acknowledged that some days are harder than others.

"We proclaim that we should offer to God our praise in times of distress," he told the teens, their youth ministry leaders and chaperones. "But sometimes I wish today would go away. Sometimes my heart hardens. 'Why did you let this happen to me, God? If you loved me, you would take this trouble away.'

"God says, 'Call on me in times of

distress. I will rescue you, and you will glorify me.'

"Some days I can't do that. I feel too sorry for myself. Maybe I'll feel like doing it tomorrow. But I only have today. 'If today you hear his voice, harden not your heart' " (Ps 95:7-8).

The archbishop closed his homily with words looking to what the youths would experience during NCYC, for which this year's theme was "Here I Am, Lord. *Aquí estoy, Señor.*"

"God will speak to you today," he said. "And when Friday comes, God will speak again. And Saturday, God will speak again.

"I would like to say that NCYC will change me for the rest of my life, but it won't. What I really hope is that this experience will change me today. 'If today you hear his voice, harden not your heart' (Ps 95:7-8). Instead, let's simply say, 'Here I am, Lord. *Aquí estoy, Señor.*'"

After the Mass, the archbishop, preceded by the approximately 35 priests and 18 seminarians who joined him at the altar, processed with the Blessed Sacrament across Capitol Avenue to the Indiana Convention Center.

The raucous, energetic youths in the halls of the convention center removed their hats and dropped to their knees in reverent silence as Christ in the Blessed Sacrament was processed by, accompanied by a litany of hymns and antiphons sung by those in the procession.

The procession ended in a large ballroom where Mass had been celebrated for members of the Diocese of Lafayette, Ind. After Benediction, many remained for quiet prayer in the presence of Christ.

Abbi Hamm, a member of St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Clarksville, knelt for several minutes, head turned upward, eyes closed in prayer.

After leaving the ballroom, she shared a broad smile.

"I was praying about the whole idea of saying, 'Here I am, Lord'—use me this week," she said. "I asked him to speak to me, and I told him I'm saying 'yes' to him these next couple of days." †

NCYC
Here I Am Lord. Aquí Estoy Señor
NOVEMBER 19-21, 2015 · INDIANAPOLIS



Above, more than 1,000 youths, youth ministry leaders and chaperones from the archdiocese packed St. John the Evangelist Church in Indianapolis on Nov. 19 for a Mass celebrated by Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin at the beginning of the National Catholic Youth Conference. (Photos by Natalie Hoefler)



Left, Abbi Hamm, a member of St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Clarksville, prays before the Blessed Sacrament after the eucharistic procession from St. John the Evangelist Church to the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis on Nov. 19.



Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin processes through the halls of the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis with the Blessed Sacrament, preceded by priests and seminarians, during the opening of the National Catholic Youth Conference on Nov. 19.

God's love and Mary's 'yes' overcome haunting moments in life, speaker says

By John Shaughnessy

Chris Padgett got the laughs he wanted when he showed embarrassing photos from his childhood during his talk with the 23,000 youths at the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) in Indianapolis.

Yet Padgett's most lasting impression on the teenagers likely came when he shared two memories from his youth that still haunt his thoughts as an adult.

The first one involves a playground scene from his school days when recess became a time of picking teams—one player at a time—for a game of football.

"And then two people at the end remained, and I would always watch them and wonder, 'Why would you two nerdy people who are always picked last continue to subject yourself to the pain we call afternoon recess?'" Padgett

told the audience of teenagers on the morning of Nov. 20. "And the reason they did it is because they just wanted to belong.

"I remember it was always David and Ronnie, the last two picks. They would reluctantly pick David to be on one team, and the other team had Ronnie. But they wouldn't wait for Ronnie. They'd leave him standing there because the team knew in order to win the game that day they had to win it in spite of having Ronnie on their team."

Then Padgett shared his memories of a girl named Loretta: "Every day, she was picked on, and she was ridiculed because she looked funny, she talked funny, and she acted funny. Nobody wanted to play with Loretta."

Years later, Loretta was on Padgett's mind when it was time for a class reunion. Unable to attend, he phoned a friend to learn about the reunion and the

lives of his classmates. Finally, he asked the question that was most important to him: "What about Loretta?" His friend told him, "I think Loretta died."

"I hadn't seen her since I was 16, but I mourned for her that day," recalled Padgett, a speaker and author of books about the Catholic faith. "I wondered if anyone ever loved Loretta."

Padgett used those two memories to make a point about the way that God chooses people, the way God views people.

"God picks all sorts of people—the strange, the awkward," the father of nine noted. "He picks you to love and to live for him. You are never picked last when it comes to our faith. God is always there, choosing you."

Padgett also told the youths that God's love for us shows in the way he chose Mary, a humble teenager, to become the mother of Jesus. Still, we resist, he says.

"The reality is we have a hard time allowing Mary to be a model for us when it comes to spirituality because we're afraid that we don't look the part. I feel like when it comes to talking about God and talking about Mary that often times we have a preconceived idea of what God likes when it comes to living for him. And some of us think to ourselves, 'How can God use me? Clearly, he could use Mary. She was perfect. But me, I'm flawed.'"

Mary had those same feelings, Padgett

believes, but she trusted God's love and plan for her.

"Mary allowed herself to fully be seen by God in the entirety of who she is, and that willingness to be seen allowed her to say an authentic 'yes.' Because to be seen by God, his love brings peace and casts out fear."

People need to look beyond "the mess" that they think they are, and realize that God loves them and accepts them for who they are.

"I want you to stop worrying about what people think of you," Padgett told the youths. "I want you to stop pretending. Just for a moment, take off the mask. And I want you to think about that Jesus loves everything about you. I want you to say yes like Mary, to be a saint in this day. What will happen when you say yes? You will change the world."

That's the reality of Mary's life, and it's the reality she wants for everyone, Padgett said.

"We're going to have good days, and we're going to have bad days, and she's there interceding, body and soul, cheering us on.

"Some of you have been struggling with things. Some of you feel like Loretta. Some of you feel like David and Ronnie. You don't feel you belong, but Jesus looks at you and picks you and says, 'I love you. I love you so much I give you my mother. Would you let her hold you and see you?'" †



'I want you to stop worrying about what people think of you. I want you to stop pretending. Just for a moment, take off the mask. And I want you to think about that Jesus loves everything about you. I want you to say yes like Mary, to be a saint in this day.'

—NCYC speaker Chris Padgett



Music, humor, wisdom highlight opening general session at youth conference

By Natalie Hoefler



'Our world struggles. All of those people who are in harm's way battling between life and death, we pray for them, and we want to support them.'

**—Voluntas Dei priest
Father Leo Patalinghug**



Voluntas Dei Father Leo Patalinghug, who has a third-degree black belt in the martial arts, sails through the air to break a piece of wood with his foot during his keynote address at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis on Nov. 19 during the National Catholic Youth Conference. (Photos by Natalie Hoefler)



Teens from the Diocese of Springfield, Ill., watch in amazement as keynote speaker Voluntas Dei Father Leo Patalinghug prepares to break boards with his hands and feet using martial arts techniques during the Nov. 19 general session at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis during the National Catholic Youth Conference.

Music, martial arts, beatboxing and breakdancing. The opening general session on Nov. 19 for the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis offered it all—plus words of wisdom and spiritual encouragement.

Before the speakers took the stage, the stadium pulsed with the lights and beats of a rock concert as the Christian band For King and Country energized the youths with their popular songs.

Christian entertainers Jackie Francois Angel and Paul J. Kim served as emcees, and warmed up the crowd with spiritual humor. Kim wowed the crowd with his beatboxing, using nothing but his mouth and vocal chords to create music and songs.

But the highlight of the session was the keynote speaker, Voluntas Dei priest Father Leo Patalinghug. The Filipino is most known as the host and chef of the Eternal Word Television Network's cooking show "Savoring our Faith," and for creating "Grace Before Meals," an international apostolate to help strengthen families' relationships through sharing at mealtime.

Not as well-known are Father Leo's talents as a third-degree black belt martial arts teacher and an award-winning former breakdance choreographer.

It was his martial arts talent that Father Leo called upon to teach the 23,000 youths the tools to lead a spiritual life.

But first, he began with a prayer.

"I'm going to give you the most powerful prayer ever," he began. "Are you ready? OK, here we go.

'In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.' There you go. That's it.

"When you make the sign of the cross, you make yourself a target, asking God to look at you. You're saying, 'Here. I. Am. Lord.'" he explained, punctuating each word with a motion of the sign of the cross.

Touching briefly on one of his favorite topics—food—Father Leo gave the youth a "double dog dare" to make the sign of the cross and pray before meals when eating in a restaurant.

Like omitting the prayer before the meal when eating out, Father Leo noted that "sometimes, we don't want to be seen for our religious upbringing. Sometimes we want to be seen in the wrong light.

"That's because we are in a battle. It occurs in our souls, which is why I need to show you, as a martial artist—two-time third-degree black belt—how to fight."

He then taught the youths about the "A, B, C and D's" of spiritual combat: avoid, bypass, control, then destroy the devil.

Using a breakdown of martial arts movements—

and one affable teen from the crowd—Father Leo demonstrated how the youths can avoid the near occasion of sin, just as in combat a warrior can avoid an incoming fist.

Comparing a punching fist to temptation, he noted that the avoided fist will pass by, just as one can bypass temptation.

"Let the temptation pass you by," he said. "Be patient. Your worst temptation will not last forever. In fact, your worst temptation might last just 15 seconds, enough time for you to pray an Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be."

"If one can do those two things," Father Leo continued as he grabbed the teen's now-extended arm with its fist hand, "you can implement step C, which is 'control.'

"It's not controlling temptation, but your reaction [to it].

"And if you can control your reaction, then you can exercise step D, which is destroy the devil."

Making use of more martial arts moves to teach points of faith, Father Leo talked about breaking boards with the hand and foot, just as "in our lives we are constantly trying to break through barriers."

First, he said, the martial artist has to go with the grain of the wood—something he compared to cooperating with God's will.

"The second thing I've got to do is acknowledge that this is going to hurt a little bit," he said. "It really is going to require discipline. . . . If we don't have discipline, we won't be able to break through our barriers in life."

Next, he said, is to not aim for the board, but aim beyond the board.

"If I do that, that's like shooting for mediocrity," he explained. "When you present yourself to God, you can't be mediocre. You've got to live a life of excellence. That means I'm not aiming for the board—I'm aiming for heaven."

And lastly, he said, "You must practice"—and he proceeded to break through two boards with his bare hands and one board with his foot, feats that brought cheers from all sides of the stadium.

"Our world struggles," Father Leo said in closing. "All of those people who are in harm's way battling between life and death, we pray for them, and we want to support them.

"The best way to do that is stand with a brother or sister hurting, with the person who doesn't have any friends. Be a source of welcome, compassion and generous love.

"I guarantee you, you will be a target. Every time you pray the sign of the cross, realize that God is looking [at you] with love." †

Youth conference opens teenagers' eyes to variety of vocational paths

By Sean Gallagher

Catholic teenagers are at an age where they are starting to consider seriously the path they will follow as they become adults.

The Catholic faith encourages them to enter into this consideration through prayer, seeking to know the vocation to which God is calling them.

The 23,000 teens who participated in the National Catholic Youth Conference held on Nov. 19-21 at the Indiana Convention Center and Lucas Oil Stadium, both in Indianapolis, had many opportunities to have the seeds of vocations planted in their hearts.

Hundreds of diocesan priests, deacons and members of scores of religious orders took part in the conference.

"It's great to be energized by the youths and their enthusiasm," said Felician Sister Eliana Remiszewewska, who ministers at St. Turibius Parish in Chicago. "It's great to see so many young people who want to live their Catholic faith, who want to meet Christ."

Sister Eliana's life and ministry as a religious represents the diversity of vocations in the Church, and the twisting path that God can lead people on in their calling.

She was born in Poland and served as a missionary in Africa before ministering to Hispanic Catholics in Chicago.

"Christ is the one who is calling people," Sister Eliana said. "But we can always give a witness to how beautiful this life is when we really give everything to Jesus, and love him every day more and more."

Anna Schneider and Kauleen Dee came to NCYC from the Covington, Ky., Diocese. They appreciated the variety of vocations on display.

"There are a lot of Catholic organizations and religious orders," said Anna, 16. "It's cool to see how they all come together as one. Seeing so many people who love their

vocation makes you kind of lean toward it."

Kauleen, 17, said attending the conference opened her eyes to many religious communities that do not minister in her diocese.

"We have retreats at school where we go and visit nuns," she said. "But I think it's cool to see different nuns from different states talking about what they do in their vocation."

Sister Krista von Barstel, a member of the Sisters of St. Mary of Oregon, came to NCYC from across the country. But she knows just attending the conference was a big part of planting the seeds of vocations.

"We never know the impact of our presence. But God's in charge," said Sister Krista, who is director of the Catholic Youth Organization and Camp Howard for the Archdiocese of Portland. "Just our presence and being present with them makes an impact. You've got to be there."

In addition to meeting priests, deacons and religious in various settings at NCYC, youths also had the chance to pray about their vocation during liturgies and in a eucharistic adoration chapel at the conference. There was a quiet room with comfortable chairs called "Inspiration Nook" where youths could have more personal conversations with attendees representing various vocations.

The last afternoon of the conference featured a series of breakout sessions to help youths enter into vocational discernment.

Redemptorist Father Lamar Partin, a vocations director for the order's Denver Province, manned a booth in the conference's thematic park, where several religious orders also had booths and interacted with youths.

"It's a good sign for the young people to see that we're still here," said Father Lamar of the presence of so many religious. "We're energetic, and believe in what we're doing. And we love the vowed life. Hopefully, it will be a



Youths from the St. Cloud, Minn., Diocese play a Catholic trivia game on Nov. 19 with Felician Sisters Eliana Remiszewewska, left, and Mary Beth Bromer in the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis during the National Catholic Youth Conference. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

witness to them to join."

Dominican Father Raymond-Marie Bryce, associate pastor of the St. Paul Catholic Center in Bloomington, walked the halls of the Indiana Convention Center in his order's white habit.

He soon discovered that it was a "fantastic target" for youths to clip on clothespins that had their names and hometowns written on them—a favorite tradeable at the conference.

"About every 10 minutes, I have to look to check myself to see if they've tagged me," said Father Raymond-Marie with a laugh.

He reflected that just spending time at NCYC helped youths see that "religious life is not dour. We can have fun, smile, enjoy a cup of coffee and a slice of pizza just like everybody else." †



Bianca Siegenthaler, left, Taylor Alexander, Kierra Doyle and Caroline Pope, all of the Diocese of St. Petersburg, Fla., sing the lyrics to a song performed by Matt Maher on Nov. 20. (Photo by Mike Krokos)

Teens encouraged to bring hopes, stresses and fears to the altar of sacrifice

By John Shaughnessy

The moment brought goose bumps. Seconds earlier on Nov. 20, Grammy-nominee Matt Maher had been leading the 23,000 teenagers at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis in song—tuning up the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) audience for a night of praise and worship of God.

“So lay down your burdens, lay down your shame, all who are broken, lift up your face,” Maher sang before finishing with the lyric, “Earth has no sorrow that heaven can’t heal.”

As young people swayed and raised their arms and faces toward the heavens, Maher asked them, “Right now, could you take a second and worship God? And I don’t mean, ‘Think nice thoughts.’ I mean, maybe for the first time, just tell God how great he is—in your heart.”

After a time of silence, Maher followed that request by doing something that led to the memorable, goose-bump-inducing moment.

He softly sang the opening line of “Hear I Am, Lord.” And as the crowd joined in, Maher stopped singing and stopped playing music, realizing it was better to just let the voices of the 23,000 youths rise in unison together. And those youthful voices filled the stadium as they poured their hearts into the rest of the song’s refrain, “Is it I, Lord? I have heard you calling in the night. I will go, Lord, where you lead me, I will hold your people in my heart.”

It was a powerful, moving moment—a moment that led into a high-energy presentation by Mark Hart, the executive vice president of Life Teen, a Catholic youth ministry movement being used by 1,600 parishes in 26 countries.

Weaving back and forth across the stage, Hart focused on the altar that had been set up there.

“The focal point in the Catholic Church is always the altar—the altar of sacrifice,” Hart told the youths. “It’s not just a table, but an altar of sacrifice.”

“At Mass, do you know what’s really happening? It’s not just about the bread and the wine, it’s about what you’re willing to bring—your own hopes, your own fears, your own anxieties, your own stresses. Are you putting them on the altar and trusting that there is a God and that he does care, that he does hear you, that he wants good things for you?”

Hart stressed to the teenagers, “The God who created you, the God who died

for you, he understands you. And that’s why it’s so important for you to remember that the God of the universe, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, knows what’s it like to suffer.

“He knows your suffering. He’s experienced your suffering. He knows the betrayal, he knows the temptation, he knows the loneliness, he knows the pain. He knows. And he wants you to do something with it. He wants you to bring it to the altar so he can transform it, so he can change it.”

Hart then set the stage for the eucharistic adoration that would follow his talk, preparing the teenagers for the opportunity to spend time with God, to focus on him.

“In a few minutes, the God of the universe is going to come into this room in a beautiful vessel called the monstrance,” Hart said. “A monstrance comes from the Latin word to ‘show forth.’ It’s to be placed on an altar of sacrifice. What you do with this time is really up to you—because God is a lover, but he doesn’t force himself on you. You’ve got to be willing to let God love you tonight. This is your chance to allow God to transform you.”

Silence filled the stadium and the crowd fell to their knees as Father Louis Merosne of the Diocese of Anse-à-Veau, Haiti, slowly brought the monstrance to the altar.

“The summit of all existence, the reason for being is right here in front of us,” Father Merosne told the youths. “Our God has come down to restore truth and to restore your heart.”

“Tonight, God has come to show you a sneak preview of what he sees in you—the beauty and the preciousness, so good and so precious that it was worth the life of his son, Jesus. Each and every single one here, God is speaking to your heart and to your soul to show you how precious you are to him. He will show you the love for which he made you.”

When adoration ended, Father Merosne lifted the monstrance from the altar, holding it high as he processed from the stadium.

The silence that reigned was soon replaced by uplifting song as Matt Maher returned to the stage. With the crowd swaying together again, Maher and the youths sang, “Love will hold us together. Make us a shelter to weather the storm. And I’ll be my brother’s keeper. So the whole world will know that we’re not alone.”

Once again, their voices filled the night as the song filled their hearts. †

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‘Each and every single one here, God is speaking to your heart and to your soul to show you how precious you are to him. He will show you the love for which he made you.’

—Father Louis Merosne



Father Louis Merosne processes in Lucas Oil Stadium with a monstrance containing the Blessed Sacrament during the Nov. 20 evening session of the National Catholic Youth Conference. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)



Musician Matt Maher leads National Catholic Youth Conference participants in song on Nov. 20. (Photo by Mike Krokos)



Mark Hart, executive vice president of Life Teen, encourages teenagers to take their fears, hopes, anxieties, and stresses to God. (Photo by Mike Krokos)



Dan Wiegand, left, and Zach Eckroth, both of St. Susanna Parish in Plainfield, sport shirts proclaiming the often-heard call-and-response phrase at the National Catholic Youth Conference on Nov. 19. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)



Youths from the St. Cloud Diocese in Minnesota help form the NCYC sign inside Camp Tekakwitha on Nov. 19, the theme park for the National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)



Members of the Diocese of Dubuque, Iowa, kneel for the Liturgy of the Eucharist during the closing Mass of the National Catholic Youth Conference on Nov. 21. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)



Youths from St. Christopher Parish in Indianapolis sport unusual hats worn by NCYC participants before a conference general session on Nov. 21 in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)



Teens write petitions in a candle-lit area of the Prayer Corner in Camp Tekakwitha during the National Catholic Youth Conference on Nov. 20. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)



Animators perform moves to a dance on Nov. 19 during the National Catholic Youth Conference. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)



Alaina Sincich, a member of St. John Neumann Parish in Sunbury, Ohio, kneels in prayer during the closing Mass of the National Catholic Youth Conference on Nov. 21 at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

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Youths live out their faith at National Catholic Youth Conference



Catholic musician Tony Melendez, left, sings and plays a guitar with his feet on Nov. 21 in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis during a general session. Melendez, 53, was born without arms and is known for inspiring youths with his music and his story of overcoming his physical challenges. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)



Bishop Paul D. Etienne of Cheyenne, Wyo., gives a high five after the conclusion of the closing Mass on Nov. 21. Bishop Etienne was previously a priest of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)



Carolyn Woo, president of Catholic Relief Services, speaks on Nov. 21 at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis during a general session. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)



Youths place pins marking their hometowns on a map of the United States in Camp Tekakwitha during the National Catholic Youth Conference on Nov. 19. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)



Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin on Nov. 20 autographs the shirt of Jessica Boren, a high school freshman and member of St. Jude Parish in Spencer. (Photo by Mike Krokos)



Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin distributes Communion during the closing Mass of the National Catholic Youth Conference on Nov. 21 in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)



Youths stand in long lines to experience God's mercy in confession

By Sean Gallagher

The line went far down a hallway. Then it went into a room where it snaked around like the line for a theme park roller coaster.

The youths attending the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) weren't waiting patiently to buy food at one of the concession stands at the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis or to take part in one of the popular activities in the conference's exhibition hall.

They were in line to experience God's mercy through the sacrament of penance. As the conference progressed from its start on Nov. 19 to its conclusion two days later, more and more of the 23,000 youths from across the country who attended NCYC were wearing stickers that read "I'm forgiven," which they were given after taking part in the sacrament of penance.

"Going to confession [at NCYC] is just a way to go through the rest of the conference and feel like you've got a fresh start," said Nathan Wellman of Canton, Ohio, after going to confession on Nov. 20. "You feel like

you belong, like there's nothing wrong in your soul."

Dozens of priests and bishops filled a large conference room at the convention center to celebrate the sacrament of penance with conference attendees.

Many had signed up on a schedule for a specific time slot. Others volunteered on the spur of the moment. Extra purple stoles were on hand for the priests and bishops spending time in the confession room.

Many seminarians also helped guide those seeking to confess their sins to a priest or bishop who was free.

One of those seminarians was Matthew Long, a member of St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis. He is a freshman at Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary and Marian University, both in Indianapolis.

"It's pretty amazing," said Long of the large number of people seeking to experience the sacrament of penance. "You can see on their face that they're a little nervous when they

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Father Anthony Rowland, left, associate pastor of Holy Spirit Parish in Fishers, Ind., in the Lafayette Diocese, gives absolution on Nov. 20 in the sacrament of penance to a NCYC attendee in a room set aside for the sacrament in the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis.

(Photo by Sean Gallagher)

Extraordinary form of the Mass draws youths into quiet prayer

By Sean Gallagher

Many of the presentations and other events of the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) are marked by loud, high energy music and spotlights flashing across crowds of youths dancing while wearing a broad array of unusual hats and colorful T-shirts.

The more than 20 Masses that were celebrated during the three-day conference, by contrast, featured times of silence and opportunities for quiet, prayerful reflection for the teens attending it.

On Nov. 20, some 250 teens participated in a form of the liturgy that many of them had not experienced before and was new to NCYC. It was the extraordinary form of the Mass, also known as the traditional Latin Mass. Youths knelt quietly in prayer during it while a small choir of young women sang centuries-old Gregorian chant.

The extraordinary form of Mass is marked by the near-exclusive use of Latin (the only other language used being Greek), and the priest celebrant and the congregation facing the same direction. The Latin Rite of the Church celebrated this form of the Eucharist for centuries up to the start of the implementation of the restoration of the sacred liturgy during the Second Vatican Council 51 years ago.

Those who participated in the extraordinary form Mass at NCYC filled the conference room at the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis in which it was celebrated. Approximately 100 more attendees knelt in the hallway outside the room.

Mariana Canales, 16, attended the Mass with a group of Hispanic youths from the Brownsville, Texas, Diocese. Since Spanish, which is rooted in Latin, is their first language, they understood many of the prayers of the liturgy.

But her appreciation of the Mass extended beyond her ability to follow along more easily with the prayers.

"It was kind of relaxing," Marianna said. "You're there in the stadium with all of the noise [in a general session]. And then you come here, and you're calm."

Liam O'Brien, 15, of Queen of the Miraculous Medal Parish in Jackson, Mich., said the liturgy helped him enter more deeply into prayer.

"It was really peaceful and a new experience that I thought that I'd never get," he said. "It's easier to hear God's voice with that peace and quiet."

For many of the youths who participated in the liturgy, it was their first time to experience an extraordinary form Mass.

That was not the case for Laura Phillips, 24, a chaperone at the conference from St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Columbus, Ohio.

As a teenager, Phillips attended NCYC in 2005 in Atlanta, and served as an animator for the conference in 2007 in Columbus. Animators help to energize youth attendees by singing and dancing during general sessions, much like high school show choirs.

While a college student at the University of Alabama, she often attended an extraordinary form Mass celebrated regularly in Birmingham.

Phillips was impressed by the number of people attending the Mass at the conference this year.

"It was fabulous," she said. "It was such a blessing for all of the people who had never experienced it before being given the opportunity.

"They had the door opened for them to the Latin Mass and Gregorian chant and any of the traditional Latin prayers. They can take them back to their parishes and do them within their youth groups. That's really fantastic."

Sam Rosko, 17, assisted as an altar server at the Mass.



Father C. Ryan McCarthy elevates a chalice on Nov. 20 during a celebration of the extraordinary form of the Mass at the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis. The liturgy, attended by some 250 youths, took place during the National Catholic Youth Conference. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

A member of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Parish in Indianapolis, Sam has participated in the extraordinary form Mass for many years and appreciates its effect on his life of faith.

"It's deepened it a lot," he said. "It's given kind of a substance to my spirituality through the richness of the prayers."

Father C. Ryan McCarthy, pastor of Holy Rosary and celebrant of the extraordinary form Mass at the conference, said he wasn't surprised by the number of youths who participated in the liturgy since he sees so many young people attending such liturgies regularly at his parish.

"It was a beautiful thing," Father McCarthy said. "It was wonderful to see their devotion." †

Young adult siblings return to NCYC to volunteer as a means of 'giving back'

By Natalie Hoefler

Andrea "Andie" Grant attended the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) in 2005 and 2007. Her brother Luke participated in 2011 and 2013.

This year, they were back at NCYC—as volunteers.



Siblings Andrea "Andie" and Luke Grant pose at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis on Nov. 21 after the NCYC closing Mass. The siblings, both past NCYC participants, returned this year as volunteers. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)

"I loved NCYC, and I'm a big believer in giving back," said Luke, 19, of his reason for volunteering.

"I'd never been around that many Catholics, let alone high school Catholics," he recalled of his first experience at NCYC. "Being around 20,000 other Catholics is really energizing."

Andie, 26, agreed.

"It was neat to be around so many teens who were passionate about their faith, and to celebrate Mass, go to the sessions and meet people from around the country—California, Alaska, Hawaii. Even as a young adult, it's so reaffirming to see all these kids here."

Both young adults credit NCYC as part of the reason they are still active in their Catholic faith.

"It helped me continue to be active in my faith after high school," said Andie, who graduated from Aquinas College in Grand Rapids, Mich. She now works for a law firm, and is a member of Christ the King Parish in Indianapolis. "I surrounded myself with other Catholics in college who were active. It reinforced the kind of people that I wanted to associate with and be around."

Luke, a sophomore at Grand Valley State University in Allendale, Mich., is a member of his college's Catholic student ministry team.

"A lot of those people [on the team] went to NCYC,"

he said. "You meet these people later on that are still passionate about their faith."

"By the time I signed up to volunteer [for NCYC], everyone else was booked up and couldn't come, but they were all like, 'That's so cool! I want to volunteer at NCYC next time!'"

Luke hopes to go into youth ministry after graduating. When that time comes, he considers leading youth groups to NCYC a must.

"[NCYC] was a huge brick in the foundation of my faith life as a high schooler," he said. "I would definitely take kids to it."

"I think all but one of my friends have stopped practicing the faith. I want to make sure that doesn't happen to our next generation."

As for Andie, she plans on volunteering at NCYC again.

"I had such a great time when I went [as a youth], and it was a great opportunity to be a part of it again," she said. "You can talk to the kids and say, 'I went to NCYC when I was a kid, and you can come back as a volunteer or as a chaperone.'"

"It's important to tell them to come back after high school, because the more volunteers you have, the more [NCYC] is possible, and it keeps them active in their faith." †

Service opportunities in thematic park engage youths in 'a key part of our faith'

By Natalie Hoefler

As Clare Kelly wove the colorful yarn around the circular, plastic loom, she explained what she was doing.

"I'm making a hat for a poor person," said the youth of the Diocese of Wilmington, Del. "Cold weather is coming, and many people don't have hats, so it will be really helpful for them in the cold winter months."

Clare was making the hat in the service section of Camp Tekakwitha, the thematic park at the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) held at the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis on Nov. 19-21.

The service area was designed to engage youths in an important aspect of being Catholic—serving others, an aspect Clare seemed to already understand.

"It's important to be charitable," she said. "You never know when you might bring joy or hope into someone's life."

Aaron Frazita, a member of the thematic park committee, explained more about the role of service at NCYC.

"Service is such a key part of our faith," he said. "I don't think we can say we're Christians unless we put our faith into action. NCYC is a place where we need to make the young people aware of those things."

To accomplish that, the service section offered information and hands-on activities at nearly 10 stations, like the hat-knitting area.

Beggars for the Poor, a volunteer-run ministry that helps the homeless in Indianapolis, will give the knitted hats to those whom they serve.

"It makes the kids really aware that people need help—not just your financial support, but your volunteering," said Beggars for the Poor volunteer Lynda Knable. "The kids seem to really get it."

On the other side of the service section, youths sat at tables writing messages and making designs on T-shirts and tote bags for Haitians.

"We'll be sending these T-shirts and tote bags to our sister parishes in Haiti when all this is finished," said Father Thomas Clegg, pastor of St. John Paul II Parish in Clark County.

"It's also an opportunity to do a little education about Haiti at the same time. Teenagers naturally want to serve. To provide an opportunity for them to do that here [at NCYC] is not only a good thing, but is essential for their understanding of what a total Christian person looks like."

Mariah Brown of the Archdiocese of Kansas City, Kan., was excited about the opportunity to make an item to

send to Haiti.

"When I get older, I really want to go on mission trips," she said. "I hear about people who need our help, and I feel like I'm obligated to help because we have so many resources."

In another section of Camp Tekakwitha, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) operated food package preparation stations as part of their Helping Hands Program.

"It's a program where participants come together to package meals to send to our hungry brothers and sisters in Burkina Faso, which is a country in West Africa," said Rachel Malinowski, a program relief officer for CRS.

"[For] the people who live [in Burkina Faso], there's just not enough food available. It's not even an access problem—there just isn't enough food available. So these meals are life-changing for them."

Each pouch of food makes from 6-8 meals, Malinowski said. During NCYC, 50,000 pouches were completed.

Participants learn not just about the project to feed the hungry in Burkina Faso. They also learn about other Helping Hands programs.

"We do a pre-education session before folks go to package the meals," she said. "The meals do meet the short-term need, but more importantly, Helping Hands sends grant funds to the centers [in Burkina Faso] for long-term, income-generating projects so folks can learn skills to be able to lift themselves out of poverty in the long run and hopefully not need that food aid in the future."

Emma Wagner of the Diocese of Savannah, Ga., participated in the Helping Hands project, filling pouches with food.

"I like helping others, knowing it's doing some good in the world and being selfless," she said. "We're all God's children, and we need to help each other."

Bishop Emeritus John Kevin Boland of the Diocese of Savannah, stood across from Emma as he helped fill the food pouches.

"They voluntarily wanted to do this [project] as a spirit of giving, to give back," he said of the youths he accompanied. "We live in a society with plenty of food, and there are lots of places where there's no food. We find ourselves by giving, not receiving."

He looked around at all the youths busy at the Helping Hands stations, and beamed with pride.

"These kids [at NCYC] are the cream of the crop," he said. "You won't find better in the U.S." †



Bishop Emeritus John Kevin Boland of the Diocese of Savannah, Ga., left, helps fill food pouches to be sent to Africa for the Helping Hands project on Nov. 20 during the National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis. (Photos by Natalie Hoefler)



Katie Schisler, left, and Clare Kelly, both of the Diocese of Wilmington, Del., knit hats for the homeless as an act of service on Nov. 20 during the National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis.

Adoration, Prayer Corner offer opportunity for many forms of prayer

By Natalie Hoefler

When 23,000 youths come together, "quiet" is not an adjective often used to describe the scene.

But quiet was accomplished for the teens at the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) on Nov. 19-21 in Indianapolis as they took advantage of the conference's ample opportunities to experience various forms of prayer.

An Indiana Convention Center room designated as an adoration chapel was the

scene of a constant wave of quiet motion as youths, adults, priests and religious filtered in and out to adore Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.

Whether as groups or individuals, some stayed for a few minutes, others for an hour or more.

"I just came from confession," said Jessi Brintnall of the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph, Mo. "Adoration is one of my favorite things to do, just to be able to be close to the Lord and be able to talk to him. It was a really good

hour—I feel awesome!"

But there are many other forms of prayer, a fact made obvious at the Prayer Corner of NCYC's thematic park, Camp Tekakwitha.

Andrew Miller, associate director of vocations for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis and a member of the thematic park team, explained the role of the Prayer Corner.

"The Prayer Corner is to give kids an experiential opportunity, a chance to not only maybe sit and pray, but to maybe have an interactive form of prayer," said Miller. "We wanted tactile things, things they could touch, and [for them] to be able to be loud, to talk and interact with others while they're praying."

A walk through the Prayer Corner proved all the above to be true. In one area, youths collected and compared prayers from a makeshift tree.

Nearby, several teens wrote prayers on four boards, each board sporting one letter of the word ACTS—representing the acronym for the prayer forms of adoration, contrition, thanksgiving and supplication.

"I wrote a prayer of supplication for my friend's grandpa who just went in the hospital, and a prayer of thanksgiving for all the family and friends God put in my life," said Emma Cherwinski of the Diocese of Gaylord, Mich.

Next to the prayer boards, youths wrote prayers on colorful strips of cloth then tied them to strands of string.

Overhead, signs recommended forms of prayer for various personality types. Enthusiastic and adventurous? Try praying in a place where nature

abounds, and glorify God for the beauty. Compassionate and creative? Pick a psalm where God is speaking to the people of Israel, then replace "Israel" with your own name and contemplate the psalm's message.

Some youths sat quietly in a makeshift prayer garden, while others lit candles to offer up prayers.

Perhaps the most impactful form of tactile prayer was the 90-pound wooden cross beam hanging from the ceiling, giving participants an opportunity to feel the weight of the cross on their own shoulders and contemplate its impact on Christ during his Passion.

"It was tough," admitted Camron Sims of the Diocese of Pueblo, Colo. "I was hurting, and then I imagined wearing the crown of thorns and having been beaten, and walking about a mile. It really touches you."

Nick Ford, a member of St. Andrew the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis, was visibly moved by the experience.

"I can't imagine doing something like that, and to do it for people who act like they hate you," he said. "And touching the crown of thorns" on a pedestal next to the hanging beam, "I think that had the biggest effect on me. Just one touch and I could feel it all."

As Alex Hunter of the Diocese of Gaylord left the Prayer Corner, she reflected on her time there.

"I prayed for my family and friends, for God to be with them always," she said. "[The Prayer Corner was] really peaceful. It's nice to have some time with God with everything that's going on at NCYC." †



Above, National Catholic Youth Conference participants pray before the Blessed Sacrament on Nov. 20 in the adoration chapel at the Indiana Convention Center. Photos by Natalie Hoefler

Left, in this Nov. 20 photo, Camron Sims of the Diocese of Pueblo in Colorado lifts a 90-pound wooden beam representing the weight of the cross Christ carried. The experience was part of the Prayer Corner of the thematic park at the National Catholic Youth Conference.



'Faith wasn't a part of my life until I was adopted when I was 8. The family I was adopted into is Catholic. And the Church became my home, too. I'm grateful for it. All my friends are from church. My faith gives me high morals. And even when I fall short, I know God loves me.'



—Star DeRepentigny, a member of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Seaford, Del., in the Wilmington Diocese



Members of St. Rita Parish in Indianapolis, Kennedy Phillips, left, and Jabie Jones-Gates pose for a photo together during the National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis on Nov. 19-21. (Photos by John Shaughnessy)



While youth participant Megan Milroy, left, and chaperone Jackie Braun show the creative spirit of the National Catholic Youth Conference by wearing lampshades, Megan also talked about how teens can change their lives by turning on to God.

Youths share how faith makes a dramatic difference in their lives

By John Shaughnessy

They hoped to stand out, to fit in, to make someone laugh, to get a smile. And so, many of the 23,000 teenagers at the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) in Indianapolis on Nov. 19-21 wore fun and whimsical headgear—donning halos, corn husks, lampshades, cow ears, Viking horns, lobster claws, a cooked turkey, and even a slice of pumpkin pie topped with a dollop of whipped cream.

Yet for all their comical efforts to create a distinctive look, the youths left their most lasting—and unique—impression when they responded to an informal invitation to talk about the importance of their Catholic faith in their lives.

At 18, Star DeRepentigny shared her story of finding a home in the Church, after years of not feeling wanted as a child who was passed from one foster home to another.

"I wasn't born and raised Catholic," said Star, a member of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Seaford, Del., in the Wilmington Diocese. "I was in and out of foster homes, and I didn't feel I belonged.

"Faith wasn't a part of my life until I was adopted when I was 8. The family I was adopted into is Catholic. And the Church became my home, too. I'm grateful for it. All my friends are from church. My faith gives me high morals. And even when I fall short, I know God loves me."

It's a lesson that 16-year-old Alicia Paliza also learned as she struggled with depression in her early teen years. A white halo circled above her dark hair as she talked about finding light in her darkness.

"My faith has become a lot more important to me over the past three years," said Alicia, a member of Sacred Heart Parish in Lancaster, Calif., in the Los Angeles Archdiocese.

"Being with people in youth ministry at Sacred Heart has helped me a lot. It's given me a new way to see God. It's made me happier to see God wasn't a textbook or a series of prayers. He's become more of a friend who loves me. He's someone I can go to—no matter what happens."

That connection with God is part of

the foundation of the friendship between Jabie Jones-Gates and Kennedy Phillips, both 16 and members of St. Rita Parish in Indianapolis.

"My faith is my guide to live my life," Jabie said. "It guides me in each choice I make and the direction I want to go. I feel lost without my faith. It's like having another family for you."

Kennedy continued that theme of faith and family: "Being in a Catholic church, you know everyone has your back. It's really important for me to be in the youth programs at church. I go to Mass every Sunday. You know that God is always there for you. And you get to go to confession when you need to get something off your mind."

For 17-year-old Mireille Martinez, her commitment to her Catholic faith has led to a deeper commitment to help others.

"My religion isn't something I just look forward to on Sunday, it's the foundation of my life," said Mireille, a member of St. Edward Parish in Keizer, Ore., in the Portland Archdiocese. "It's allowed me to help out in the community. I help at a hospital and a clinic for people who don't have insurance. It's a way of 'paying it forward' for me."

Standing next to Mireille, fellow parish member Enrique Flores shared his need to have God in his life at 14: "When I struggle, it's helpful to know you can depend on God to be there for you, and to know that someone is watching over you."

As she walked through the conference's theme park, Megan Milroy drew a number of laughs and smiles as she wore a gold-toned lampshade—complete with small tassels on its bottom edge—over her head. She also shed some light on the challenges that face her fellow teenagers, and how welcoming God into their lives and relying on their faith can make such a difference.

"There are so many influences, both negative and positive, at our age. And we're susceptible to them," said Megan, a member of St. Marcus Parish in Clear Lake, Minn., in the St. Cloud Diocese.

"At this age, we're trying to figure out who we are. My Catholic faith has given me my values. It has kept me grounded in who I am and who I want to become." †

PACHOLCZYK

continued from page 4

Spouses who have made a lifelong marital commitment to each other in the presence of God are uniquely empowered to live in a way that exceeds merely viewing each other as objects, or as a means to satisfying their appetites. They become called to, and capable of, a higher kind of love that involves friendship,

sacrifice and self-giving.

Otherwise, a dominance of things over persons can take over, leading to forms of selfishness in which persons are used in the same way as objects are used. In the context of this kind of selfishness, a woman, for example, can become a mere "object" for a man, and children can be reduced to mere "hindrances" on the part of their parents.

The human sexual love that is nurtured within a healthy marriage, meanwhile,

generates communion between persons, as each comes to consider the good of the other as his or her own good. Marital sexuality is thus meant to go beyond merely existing with someone else and using them for selfish gain, and instead calls a person to existing for someone else through total self-gift.

As husband and wife seek to live out these truths of their human sexuality, they impart valuable and important lessons to their children about generosity, unselfish living and chastity, where that chastity is seen as the spiritual energy capable of defending love from the perils of selfishness and aggressiveness. Parents are in the unique position of being able to model for their children a healthy example of sexual integration, generosity and

self-mastery within marriage.

Under these circumstances, parents also convey to their children the beautiful message that human sexuality reaches far beyond the biological, and touches on the most intimate core of the human person, particularly as experienced in his or her capacity for personal and radical self-gift to another in marriage, faithful even unto death.

(Father Tadeusz Pacholczyk, Ph.D. earned his doctorate in neuroscience at Yale University and did post-doctoral work at Harvard University. He is a priest of the Diocese of Fall River, Mass., and serves as director of education at The National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia. See www.ncbcenter.org.) †

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Advent is a time of waiting in a culture that refuses to wait

By Effie Caldarola

If you're old enough to remember Mr. Rogers, whose "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" children's program ran on public television for years, you may remember his song, "Let's think of something to do while we're waiting."

Ring a bell? If it does, you'll be humming "while we're waiting" in your head long after you've finished reading this. That's OK, because waiting is something we all might ponder during Advent, the Church's season in which the faithful focus their hearts on waiting for the coming of Christ.

Mr. Rogers knew that waiting is difficult for kids. Remember how it seemed as if your birthday would never arrive? Can you imagine family vacations without that refrain, "Are we there yet?"

We've all been that little child, waiting for grandparents or cousins to arrive, gazing out the window and down the street, longing impatiently to see our loved ones. Little kids even have a hard time waiting for their parents to serve dessert.

Life explodes with events for which we can't wait, but we must wait.

Fast-forward a few years, and waiting isn't quite the same for us adults. We've lost some of our sense of eager anticipation, haven't we? We know something kids don't know: Life is finite, so why rush it?

And some of our waiting is hard, such as the times we wait for a lab report from our doctor or wait to hear the garage door open to know that a teenager is home safe. And that next big birthday? It does not seem so urgent anymore, and we'd be just as happy to postpone it for as long as we can.

We sometimes feel ambivalent about certain events, such as a relative's visit, a dinner party, a holiday. Such an event would have had us in knots of frenzied expectation when we were children or the first time we experienced it.

At the same time, and rather paradoxically, we live in a culture that doesn't want or expect to wait—ever. We send an e-mail and want an immediate response from the person to whom we sent it. We check our smartphones every few minutes. We don't wait to find out who wins a primary election because now we've become accustomed to poll results keeping us constantly informed.

Businesses devise new plans to get our purchases to us practically as soon as we've ordered them, and some are exploring the idea of employing a drone to do so more efficiently and quickly.

But our purchases aren't the only thing we can't wait for. Want to lose 30 pounds this month? We know that's impossible, but our eyes are drawn to those ads. We don't want to wait.

The season of Advent arrives in the midst of frenzied lives that now live in an extremely demanding culture, a culture that refuses to wait. It's a short season, only



Christmas ornaments are on display in one of the many shops at the popular Christkindmarkt in Vienna's Rathauspark. Vienna is known for its outdoor Christmas markets, which are popular destinations for locals and tourists during Advent, a season in which Catholics are invited to prepare spiritually for the coming of Christ. (CNS photo/Chaz Muth)

four weeks, made shorter by the craziness of December.

Let's admit it: How many of us have ever silently wished that this spiritual season came at a less busy time? There are so many Christmas parties, so much shopping to get done, cookies and other holiday goodies to make, presents to wrap. Who has time, right?

Yes, culturally we've subverted our season of waiting by making Christmas an overwhelming endeavor, almost a race, rather than a time that should cause us to slow down, pray and focus on the reason for Christmas.

We've forgotten that Advent is intertwined with Christmas and is a time of waiting. The word itself comes from the Latin "adventus," which means coming or arrival. It means we're not there yet, folks. It means we're waiting, that activity we don't do very well in this culture.

We who thump the steering wheel when the red light seems as if it will never change are asked to contemplate the people of God waiting centuries for a Messiah. And we're asked to anticipate Christ's coming again, in the fullness of time, which could be next week or in the next millennia.

How can I think about waiting for that? Who's got that

kind of time? Is that who we want to be?

Perhaps that's the challenge we might take up for Advent this year. We can think about waiting. We can think about slowing down and perhaps try to imagine ourselves as the kid with her nose pressed to the window single-mindedly willing Grandma to appear down the street.

Sure, it's a busy time. But maybe we can turn waiting into prayer to the Christ for whom we wait. Let your mind seek stillness as you wait in long checkout lines. Find God when the yellow traffic light heralds your next delay. Turn off the television and give yourself 10 minutes, waiting, in a darkened room with a glowing tree.

Wherever you happen to be waiting impatiently, remind yourself to be mindful of waiting for the God who is waiting for you. Make time to wait, don't wait for it to happen.

Wait like a kid, in joyful anticipation.

(Effie Caldarola is a freelance writer and columnist for Catholic News Service. She lives in Nebraska.) †

Mary is the prime example of patient waiting during Advent season

By Kelly Bothum

Patience is like a parking space at the mall on Black Friday. It exists, but it sure seems in short supply.

Instead, impatience has become the default. We don't like waiting for anything—for traffic lights, for weight loss or even commercials that interrupt our favorite shows. Even Christmas trees now come



Iraqis experience the graceful patience of Mary in her preparation to become the mother of Jesus during a re-enactment of the Nativity at Ainkawa refugee camp near Irbil, Iraq, on Dec. 19, 2014. (CNS photo/Sahar Mansour)

already decorated.

This contemporary abhorrence of waiting stands in stark contrast to Mary. Her graceful patience is something to consider, especially as Catholics begin the prayerful preparation of Advent.

Mary reminds us that waiting is part of our Catholic faith. Sometimes God's plan usually isn't visible. Sometimes it's nothing like we imagined. Sometimes the only thing we know is that we don't know.

In that way, Mary is Advent.

She didn't know what was happening the day the archangel Gabriel appeared to her. She was a frightened teenage girl already betrothed to Joseph. Gabriel tells her something that, on the surface, seems beyond understanding.

She, a virgin, would have a baby by the Holy Spirit, and this child would be the Son of the God. No details of how it will happen. Just wait for it to happen, Gabriel said.

And she accepted. She didn't ask Gabriel to let her think about it and have him return at another time. She didn't complain. She didn't ignore God's plan or wait to see if he'd forget it.

Instead, she said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word" (Lk 1:39).

Her waiting and patience extended far beyond those nine months of pregnancy. She endured so much more.

Gabriel might not have told her, but Simeon gave her a glimpse of what the future would hold when she and Joseph presented Jesus in the temple.

He said: "[and you yourself a sword will pierce] so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" (Lk 2:35).

Mary watches Jesus grow from an infant to a boy who stayed behind in the temple, and couldn't understand why his parents were worried. She watched him rise, inviting him at Cana to his first miracle, then suffered the ultimate heartache, standing at the foot of the cross watching her son die a terrible death.

And still Mary waits.

Her patient waiting provides a roadmap of faith for us. Steady, obedient, faithful, she follows the path God has drawn for her.

During Advent, we should all be so willing to wait and listen to what God is saying to us. That means slowing down and savoring the moment rather than pushing to get to the next great thing.

It also means accepting suffering, if need be, because we don't know when it will turn to joy. It means appreciating the struggles because eventually they can lead to successes. It's treasuring the unexpected.

Mary did just that, and look how it turned out for her—and all of us.

(Kelly Bothum is a freelance writer and mother of three.) †

From the Editor Emeritus/John F. Fink

Medieval Church: The golden age of papal power

(Sixteenth in a series of columns)

The first half of the 13th century was the golden age of papal power. It was the time when the papacy reached its medieval peak of authority, influence and prestige in the Church and in relations with civil rulers.



Pope Innocent III was pope from 1198 to 1216. He was only 37 when he was elected pope. He exalted the secular role of the pope higher than any previous pope, declaring that the pope was "set midway between God and man, below God and above man," given "not only the universal Church, but the whole world to govern."

Of course, he controlled the Papal States, virtually most of central Italy. He intervened in German politics, but so had previous popes. In England, he first excommunicated King John (the third of Eleanor of Aquitaine's sons to become king of England) for refusing to recognize Stephen Langton as archbishop of Canterbury, but, after the king submitted, declared the Magna Carta void as improperly extorted from the king by barons

without papal consent. Kingdoms such as Aragon, Portugal and Poland became fiefs of the Holy See.

It wasn't all politics, though. He combatted heresy and promoted Church reform, beginning with the Roman Curia, simplifying living standards and demanding good moral behavior among the clergy.

Innocent proclaimed the Fourth Crusade in 1202, but it was a complete disaster for East-West relations. Its leaders, the Venetians, abandoned the crusade's original purpose of trying to liberate the Holy Land and attacked Constantinople. The city fell on April 12, 1204, and was sacked by the crusaders, something that Greek Christendom has never forgotten or forgiven.

The crusaders established a Latin empire in Constantinople that lasted until 1261. Pope Innocent III accepted this *fait accompli* in the mistaken belief that a Latin patriarch in Constantinople would assist reunion of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. Of course, it did quite the opposite.

Innocent also called for a crusade within the Western Church itself, against the Albigensians in southern France. They believed that all matter was evil, the

creation of the devil. Sexual intercourse was inherently evil, they believed, and they refused to eat meat and other products that resulted from sexual intercourse. They rejected the doctrine of the incarnation of Christ and the sacraments. Somehow, this sect became firmly established and powerful in southern France.

Innocent first sent a series of preaching missions to France. But when that failed to convert the Albigensians, he sent an army. In 1209, it captured Beziers and massacred its inhabitants. It was the start of a long war that lasted until 1229, long after Innocent's death.

In 1215, Innocent called the Fourth Lateran Council that planned a new crusade, which didn't start until after Innocent's death. The council also summed up Innocent's reforms, issuing 70 decrees including a definition of the Eucharist, for the first time using the term "transubstantiation" to explain the change of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. It also ordered the annual reception of the sacraments of penance and the Eucharist.

More about Pope Innocent III next week. †

Faith and Family/Sean Gallagher

Penance during Advent can lead to true joy

For a period in the past, Advent in the Church was looked upon almost exclusively as a penitential season, a kind of "mini-Lent."



In recent decades, a more balanced and more historic view on Advent has come to the fore. It is still a time of preparation for Christmas. But it is marked more by the joy of

anticipation than by any sad penances.

Nonetheless, there is still a penitential aspect to this four-week season. The violet vestments worn by clergy in liturgies bespeak of penance. And parishes traditionally sponsor penance services during Advent when many Catholics experience the mercy of God through the sacrament of reconciliation.

Any lack of joy in earlier Advents may have been due to a misunderstanding of penance at that time. True penance does not exclude joy from one's life. It should foster it all the more.

A case can be made that an Advent marked by a true penitential preparation for the celebration of Christ's first coming at Christmas and his second coming at the end of time would foster a deeper, longer-lasting and more authentic joy in the hearts of all believers.

But why should we do penance during Advent? No doubt, we should show sorrow for our sins like the Church invites us to do throughout the year. We can experience from that the great joy of experiencing God's mercy and forgiveness in the sacrament of penance—either during a penance service or at ordinary times of confession in a parish.

But we can, in a way, also show sorrow for the way in which Christmas has become increasingly detached from its spiritual meaning in our society.

I'm not advising manning the front lines in the "Christmas wars," or showing disapproval of people who seem to forget about Advent and put up Christmas decorations immediately after Thanksgiving. There's nothing joyful in such tactics.

What we can do, though, is live out an alternative vision for the weeks leading up to Christmas that opens our hearts more to the deep spiritual joy of the season and puts its current materialism off to the side.

My family and I do this especially at supper time during Advent. We'll turn off the lights of our dining room at the start of the meal, and have it lit only by the candles of our Advent wreath while we pray our meal prayer and sing the opening verse of "O Come, O Come Emmanuel."

My sons also have fun taking turns during this ritual in opening a door of a homemade Advent calendar. This calendar isn't filled with chocolates or sentimental wintertime drawings like the store-bought ones that I experienced as a kid. It instead focuses on the saints of the season, the "O" antiphons (which are the basis of "O Come, O Come Emmanuel") and the spiritual meaning of various symbols of the season, such as Christmas trees, lights and gifts.

On Dec. 6, the feast of St. Nicholas, our boys will wake up to find small gifts in their shoes. They know the story of St. Nicholas, but they enjoy hearing it again.

The more we're used to jumping with both feet into our culture's commercialized and secularized vision of Christmas, the more pulling back from it to embrace the spiritual life of Advent can seem penitential.

Remember, though, that penance is not so much about punishment as it about purification. It cleanses us of the dross of this world, and lets shine like the sun the gold of truth and authentic joy.

Perhaps living out a more penitential Advent in this way can help us become more joyful witnesses to the coming of Christ for our family and all whom we meet in this season of grace. †

Cornucopia/Cynthia Dewes

It's time to really put on our thankful hats and celebrate

This is the season when we're supposed to be thankful and count our blessings. It's even a national holiday, and some people get to take off time from work. Now, there's something we may be thankful for.



Let's see. From what we hear on the nightly news, there doesn't seem to be a whole lot to be grateful

about. I mean, Donald Trump and global warming? Please.

Still, we should take time to reflect about our blessings, whatever they are. Many of us can be thankful that we have a job which furnishes our housing, our food and most of the things we need in daily life. If it's a job we love, that's an added reason to be thankful. If our work is satisfying and our co-workers pleasant, we've got it made, and if the work is helpful to others, that's another plus.

Maybe we have children, grandchildren, and "greats" who enrich our lives, even when they're naughty. Their imaginations enchant us, and their progress makes us proud. We marvel at their insights, their kindness and their loving responses to

others. Even when our kids are handicapped in some way, we can only admire their hopeful perseverance and grit, with pity or despair not among the possible options.

On the other hand, our children may come up with different kinds of problems that we can't solve. In that case, we have to settle for being thankful for God's grace. We need to listen and do whatever we can to help, but then back off and pray. Luckily, it's God who's in charge of every situation, and we can be grateful for that, too.

One thing I'm thankful for every moment of every day is a sense of humor. I've said this before, but there are very few occasions which I don't find funny in some way. Maybe that's denial or dimwittedness, but there it is. Life is often ridiculous, no doubt about it, and again as proof I cite Donald Trump.

Friends are a major reason to be thankful. Mine range in age, race, political persuasion, religion, you name it. But somehow, we're all on the same page when it comes to what we think is important or funny or inspiring. Some of us have a longtime shared past, and others not, but it doesn't matter. When I'm with the old friends I see only once a year, we take up

right where we left off. And when I'm with others I see often, our meetings are always fresh and interesting.

Some of these friends for whom I'm thankful are actually relatives. Naturally, or maybe unnaturally, chief among them is my husband. Then there are my children, grands and greats, plus the in-law kids, my two elderly aunts, my many cousins and even some of my husband's relatives. They all make family reunions mini-Thanksgivings in themselves.

When I consider the life I've had, I'm overwhelmed with gratitude. God gave me loving parents and a happy childhood. Not everyone is so lucky. After all, every family, including mine, is dysfunctional in some way. But if we think about it, we can value the experiences we've had and the lessons we've learned, good or bad.

Life is God's gift to us, and to show our thanks I think we should try to make our lives reflect the giver. Happily, in America, we have a national holiday on which to celebrate the idea! How clever of us. †

(Cynthia Dewes, a member of St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Greencastle, is a regular columnist for The Criterion.) †

Emmaus Walk/Debra Tomaselli

Counting my blessings with a sincere gratitude each day

It's Thanksgiving, and I'm in chemotherapy battling cancer, and I am overflowing with gratitude. Who would have thought?



After all, both my parents died of cancer, leaving me a bitter taste for chemo. I once told the oncologist that the minute he used the

word chemotherapy with me, it was the beginning of the end.

But God showed me another outcome. I work with 13 cancer survivors.

When I was first diagnosed with lymphoma, our youngest daughter was 5 years old. Now she's 25 and married, with a child of her own.

So add that to my gratitude list: Being healthy until my children were grown.

Indeed, getting the cancer label was alarming. However, it was a gift.

The lymphoma was discovered in its early stages, and monitored through routine office visits and labs, waiting to begin treatment. Nobody expected two healthy decades, but thankfully, that's what I got.

Living with the diagnosis changed my life.

This was God's school, teaching me to live in the moment, where he is found. I learned to treasure each day, as we all should. I learned to grow in faith, because it was all I had. It's all any of us has.

Thank God, thank God.

Another provision was developing.

Shortly after I was diagnosed, my husband's employer switched health plans. Unfortunately, our trusted doctor was not on the new plan. Should I change oncologists? What if I ended up in the expense of chemotherapy?

We visited a doctor on the new plan, but I left his office in tears even though I'd already known everything he told me.

We returned to our longtime doctor and explained the situation.

"You shouldn't have to worry about that at a time like this," he said. "I'll take whatever your insurance pays. We won't bill you."

For years, I paid for the office visits anyway. It was my thanks to God for continuing good health. Perhaps it would help the oncologist assist someone else. If I needed expensive treatments, we would accept aid. For now, it was affordable.

Through the years, our health plans changed randomly. Today, the worry about how our doctor will get paid is lifted from

my hands. He is fully covered by our plan.

Additionally, my husband and I purchased Aflac, which provides funds for out-of-pocket expenses. We won't have to touch our savings.

So, another category for the gratitude list—financial provision.

An old friend phoned today. She recalled when I was first diagnosed, when our children were little. "I can't believe it," she said, having learned the details of my physical struggles. "I'm glad this didn't happen when the kids were young."

"Me too," I said. I admitted that was my unspoken prayer through the years.

But something else is happening. Somebody is filling me with his grace and peace. Somebody is encouraging me to trust him with my life ... and beyond.

"I'm glad you got what you wanted," she said.

I agreed. I'm eternally thankful.

"But I'm not here to do what I want." I said. "I'm here to do whatever God wants me to do."

Add that to the list—a peace that surpasses all understanding.

(Debra Tomaselli writes from Altamonte Springs, Florida. She can be reached at dtomaselli@cfl.rr.com.) †

First Sunday of Advent/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

Sunday Readings

Sunday, Nov. 29, 2015

- *Jeremiah 33:14-16*
- *1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2*
- *Luke 21:25-28, 34-36*

With the First Sunday of Advent, the Church begins a new liturgical year. As such, the readings for Sunday for the year to come will be from the "C" cycle of the *Lectionary*, the collection of biblical texts used by the Church for readings at Masses.



The first reading for this weekend is from the Book of Jeremiah, written when times

were hard for God's people. The dynasty formed by King David had disappeared, extinguished by infighting and internal intrigue. Its collapse had deep religious implications.

God had a covenant with David, and with his successors. Their task was not just to govern, but also to keep the nation of Israel faithful to God.

With the end of the unified monarchy under David and his heirs, no other figure or authority had God's commission to exercise the role of strengthening the national bond with the Almighty.

More ominously, it seemed as if the instrument selected by God for this purpose, namely the Davidic dynasty, somehow yielded to pressures and temptations. It seemed as if too often the kings forgot their obligation to preserve the people's relationship with God.

Despite these circumstances, Jeremiah promised that indeed God's faithfulness would endure. His justice would endure. The people must not lose faith.

For its second reading, the Church presents a passage from St. Paul's First Epistle to the Thessalonians. In it, Paul calls upon the Christians of Thessalonica to love each other. The call was simple, but not easily achieved given human nature. Christians must love all, no one excluded.

Paul insists that the Lord soon will return to Earth in triumph as the great judge. It will be a revolutionary moment. All evil

will be subdued. Good and truth will reign supreme. Jesus will reign.

Christians should prepare themselves for this great event by loving others in the model of Jesus, who loved all humanity, even to the point of sacrifice on Calvary.

St. Luke's Gospel furnishes the last reading. When reading or hearing a reading from any of the Gospels, it is important to realize that they were likely written generations after Jesus.

This does not mean that the Gospels are fiction. Rather, it recognizes the fact that each evangelist saw the coming of Christ and happenings in the life of Christ with his own perception, and also as the meaning of this life influenced by events occurring after Jesus. The message of Jesus is timeless.

When Luke's Gospel was written, the tide was turning against Christians. The culture was against them. So was the law. They were in danger.

St. Luke recalled words of Jesus to encourage and embolden Christians. Come what may, so the Gospel reassures, the Lord will return. Despite the anguish of a particular moment, Jesus will be victorious and will come again.

Reflection

Advent often is described as a time to prepare for Christmas. It is this, but it has two other purposes. It exists to enable us to reform ourselves, so that the Lord can come to us on any day.

Finally, it calls us to prepare ourselves for the decisive coming of Jesus when we die, and at the end of time, by reminding us that we are mortal, and that Jesus will return to the Earth. He will vindicate the right. The forces of evil will wither and die. They will fall before the glory of the risen Lord.

He will reign forever. Everything else will pass away.

We must be with the Lord or place ourselves in opposition to the Lord. If we reject God, we shall die and be separated from him forever.

How do we prepare for all this? We prepare by keeping first and foremost our purpose to love God above all else, and by making everything secondary to that determination. †

My Journey to God

Thank You Lord

By Greg Hublar

When the glass appears to be half-empty rather than half-full,
Lord, I thank you that you have given me the glass.

When I have a difficult and stressful day at work,
Lord, I thank you that you have given me a job.

When I am pushed beyond my limits and have no patience at home,
Lord, I thank you for blessing me with a family of my own.

When the bills stack up and there is debt that I cannot repay,
Lord, I thank you for reminding me that it all belongs to you anyway.

When I am lost and overcome with fear and anxiety,
Lord, I thank you for already making a safe path home for me.

When I feel so small and fail to recognize that I can never earn your love,
Lord, I thank you that you have already freely given to me your unconditional love.

When the road is dark and the future appears to provide no comfort,
Lord, I thank you that this life is temporary, and that the best is yet to come.

When I have chosen myself over others and I have turned my back on you,
Lord, I thank you for taking away my sins even before I loved you.

And when I can no longer take another step on my journey,
Lord, I thank you that my journey will be complete, arriving safely in your arms!

Amen.

(Greg Hublar is a member of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in New Albany.)

Daily Readings

Monday, November 30

St. Andrew, Apostle
Romans 10:9-18
Psalms 19:8-11
Matthew 4:18-22

Tuesday, December 1

Isaiah 11:1-10
Psalms 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17
Luke 10:21-24

Wednesday, December 2

Isaiah 25:6-10a
Psalms 23:1-6
Matthew 15:29-37

Thursday, December 3

St. Francis Xavier, priest
1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23
Psalms 117:1bc, 2
Matthew 16:15-20

Friday, December 4

St. John Damascene, priest and
doctor of the Church
Isaiah 29:17-24
Psalms 27:1, 4, 13-14
Matthew 9:27-31

Saturday, December 5

Isaiah 30:19-21, 23-26
Psalms 147:1-6
Matthew 9:35-10:1, 5a, 6-8

Sunday, December 6

Second Sunday of Advent
Baruch 5:1-9
Psalms 126:1-6
Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11
Luke 3:1-6

Question Corner/Fr. Kenneth Doyle

Buying and selling at parishes permissible but should be done with discretion

QI am wondering about Church law (and your own feelings) on people coming to Mass and being confronted every week with different parish clubs and organizations trying to sell something.



In my parish on any given Sunday, there might be as many as three "sales" going on before and after Mass.

I've always thought that we go to Mass to show our reverence for the Lord and not to walk into a flea market. (New York)

AFrom time to time, I have heard people decry the practice of selling anything on Church property—with the claim that it violates the direct teaching of Jesus who is seen in all four Gospels evicting moneychangers from the temple.

A careful reading of those Gospel accounts, though, shows a more nuanced lesson: What troubled Jesus was not the practice itself, but the fact that the merchants were defrauding people—selling sacrificial animals at considerable personal profit or exchanging money at an extortionate rate.

The transactions themselves were understandable: Worshippers making their annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem's sacred site could not be expected to carry sheep with them from a considerable distance, and the Roman currency of the realm was not acceptable for paying the temple tax.

How, then, does the action of Jesus translate to the current practice you reference—selling food, religious books or tapes, raffle tickets, etc., in the gathering area of the church?

To your question, I am not aware of any Church laws that relate to this, and there is certainly no absolute prohibition against it. Rather it is, I believe, a matter of balance and discretion. From time to time in our parish, I have approved the sale of merchandise as people exit Mass—handmade goods crafted by poor people from around the world; coffee to support efforts to raise people out of poverty; even, on occasion, Girl Scout cookies to support a local troop or tickets to an upcoming Christmas dinner for parish seniors.

I do, however, have rules. It should only happen occasionally, and there should never be multiple sales on the same day. Parishioners should not be made to

"run the gauntlet" as though they were in a shopping mall. Also, it should be done as people exit Mass, not as they arrive.

QI have always heard that usury is a sin, but I'm not sure exactly what usury is. Is it any interest on a loan or just an excessively high interest rate (more than just to cover the cost of handling the loan)? And if charging interest is a sin, can a Catholic morally take out loans which have interest, such as mortgages or student loans—or even own a bank account which pays a small amount of interest? (London)

AIn recent centuries, usury is thought of as exploiting the poor by lending money at an exorbitant rate of interest. But for the first 1,500 years of the Church, it was taken to mean charging any interest at all and was generally condemned by Church fathers, popes and councils. The history of how the current position developed is complex.

In the Gospel of St. Luke, Jesus says, "Love your enemies and do good to them, and lend expecting nothing back" (Lk 6:35). Situated in the passage on the Beatitudes, this would seem to be an appeal for Christian generosity rather than a proclamation on the intrinsic immorality of interest-taking.

In fact, in the parable of the talents, Jesus criticizes the "lazy" servant for failing to invest his money where it could have borne interest (Mt 25:14-30).

In the largely agrarian society of medieval Europe, lending money involved the few rich people making loans to their dirt-poor neighbors for basic needs such as food or winter clothing. In such circumstances, it was thought to be wrong to profit from another's distress.

By 1515, though, usury had acquired a more nuanced definition. The Fifth Lateran Council in that year declared that charging interest was morally acceptable when it involved some work and risk-taking by the lender. Church teaching regarding usury has developed along these lines since then.

So, to sum up, charging a moderate rate of interest is permitted by the Church. Mortgages and student loans meet the test, as does gaining interest on a bank deposit.

(Questions may be sent to Father Kenneth Doyle at askfatherdoyle@gmail.com and 40 Hopewell St. Albany, N.Y. 12208.) †

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.

BIERMAN, Thelma M., 87, St. Mary-of-the-Knobs, Floyd County, Nov. 13. Wife of Merrel Bierman. Mother of Janice Bezy, Marilyn Francke, Marcia Huth, Theresa Loftus, Jim, Joe and Tony Bierman. Grandmother of 20. Great-grandmother of 20.

BOUSLOG, James Thomas, Jr., 71, St. Anne, New Castle, Nov. 13. Husband of Pat (Mobley) Bouslog. Father of Veronica Brandenburg, Julie Mueller and Brian Bouslog. Brother of Joseph Bouslog. Grandfather of six.

D'ANGELO, Phillip DeFelice, 66, St. Augustine, Jeffersonville, Oct. 22. Father of Kathryn Shearer, Paul and Phillip D'Angelo II. Brother of Ida Crump and Frank D'Angelo. Grandfather of five.

DORREL, Kirby D., 76, St. Gabriel, Connersville, Nov. 15. Father of Kelly Gettinger. Brother of Keith Dorrel. Grandfather of two.

ELIAS, Dolores Ann, 82, St. Barnabas, Indianapolis, Nov. 16. Wife of Thomas Elias. Mother of Katie Cordell, Karen Szczepanski, Bob and Jim Elias. Grandmother of nine. Great-grandmother of two.

FAGAN, James Reynolds, 83, St. Charles Borromeo, Bloomington, Nov. 11. Husband of Lou Fagan. Father of Mary Butler, Elizabeth Funck, Debra

and Dan Fagan. Grandfather of 11. Great-grandfather of two.

FUCHS, Carl, 89, St. Paul, Tell City, Nov. 9. Father of Jeannette Criss, Liz McCallister, Patty Rudolph, Dennis, James, Mike and Paul Fuchs Sr. Grandfather of 10. Great-grandfather of 21. Great-great-grandfather of five.

GELARDEN, Michael W., 64, St. Boniface, Fulda, Nov. 5. Husband of Pearl Gelarden. Father of Renee Alger, Laura Helmer and Kevin Gelarden. Son of Earl Gelarden. Brother of Dan, Jim and Mark Gelarden. Grandfather of five.

GETTELFINGER, Paul Vincent, 101, St. Joseph, Corydon, Nov. 9. Father of Marilyn O'Connor, Cathy Sherrod, Brian, David, Jerry, Louis, Richard, Ronald and Steve Gettelfinger. Grandfather of 14. Great-grandfather of 28.

GOSS, Mary Rita, 85, St. Mary, Lanesville, Nov. 11. Wife of Norman Goss. Mother of Ann Scroggham, Becky Shoemaker, Lisa Worden, Frank and Joe Goss Jr. Sister of Grace McClure, Mary Renig and Patricia Watkins. Grandmother of eight.

GROSSMAN, Albert N., 77, Holy Family, Oldenburg, Nov. 12. Husband of Viola (Schomber) Grossman. Father of Melissa Jones, Shannon Reeves, Brian, Darryl, Roger and Steve Grossman. Brother of Aima Carson, Mary Ann Maple, Rita Mae Robbins, Ruth Wager, Leonard, Martin and Raphael Grossman. Grandfather of 15. Great-grandfather of four.

GUYER, Vivian M., 95, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, New Albany, Nov. 17. Mother of Mary Forsee and John Guyer. Grandmother of three. Great-grandmother of six.

HAMMOND, Marjorie A., 82, St. Michael the Archangel, Indianapolis, Oct. 26. Mother of Marybeth Fehribach, Dennis, Murray and Robert Hammond.



Vatican Christmas tree

The Vatican's Christmas tree is positioned in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican on Nov. 19. The tree is an 82-foot spruce fir from Germany's Bavarian region. It arrived earlier than usual to be ready for the Dec. 8 opening of the Holy Year of Mercy. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

Sister of Judith and Dennis Yaggi. Grandmother of nine. Great-grandmother of five.

HUTT, Norma M., 93, Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jeffersonville, Nov. 13. Mother of Bob and Mike Hutt. Sister of Jane Coleman. Grandmother of four. Great-grandmother of five.

KENNEDY, Leila Iona, 70, St. Augustine, Jeffersonville, Oct. 18. Mother of Lorie Robinson, Leslie and Shawn

Kennedy. Grandmother of six. Great-grandmother of two.

LEACH, Nancy, 79, St. Augustine, Jeffersonville, Sept. 28. Wife of William Leach. Mother of Sharon Armstrong, Deborah Browning and William Leach. Sister of William Orberson. Grandmother of four.

MOLINA, Mary E., 69, St. Augustine, Jeffersonville, Oct. 30. Wife of Angel Molina.

MORGAN, Rose Ann (Snyder), 67, St. Gabriel, Connersville, Nov. 7. Wife of Ken Morgan. Mother of Joseph and Paul Morgan. Sister of Dorothy King, Charlotte Raby, Ruth Ross, Genevieve, James, John and Norman Snyder. Grandmother of five.

OYLER, Theresa Margaret, 76, Holy Spirit, Indianapolis, Nov. 6. Mother of five. Grandmother of seven. Great-grandmother of five.

STERGAR, Dorothy Grace (Marley), 83, St. Anthony, Indianapolis, Nov. 5. Mother of Susan Sheets, Edward and Michael Stergar. Sister of Anna Mae Pride, Claude and John

Marley. Grandmother of five. Great-grandmother of one.

VANDERPOHL, Mary M., 91, Immaculate Conception, Millhouses, Nov. 11. Mother of Bernice Cook, Rita Cox, Kate Fry, Theresa Koester, Irvin Jr., Paul and Thomas Vanderpohl. Sister of Ruth Huguenard and Franciscan Sister Bernice Roell. Grandmother of 14. Great-grandmother of 18.

VISSING, Elizabeth Ann, 78, Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jeffersonville, Oct. 31. Wife of Bernie Vissing. Mother of Derek, Michael and Paul Vissing Jr. Sister of Brenda Hill. Grandmother of six. †

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Faith leaders say refugees require compassion, acceptance

WASHINGTON (CNS)—A Boston cardinal and the Maryland Catholic Conference were among hundreds of faith leaders who called for compassion in addressing the world refugee crisis, and stressed the importance of developing a national immigration policy based on humanitarian need.

Acknowledging that the times are “dangerous,” and that “enhanced security procedures are needed,” Cardinal Sean P. O’Malley in a statement on Nov. 19 cautioned that in developing an immigration policy, “decisions concerning the specific measures taken require careful deliberation.”

In a Nov. 18 statement, the Maryland Catholic Conference, which includes the Baltimore and Washington archdioceses and the Diocese of Wilmington, Del., called on the country to welcome “those feeling persecution in other countries, including refugees seeking asylum from Syria.”

The statements came as lawmakers in Congress and governors—including Indiana Gov. Mike Pence—opposed measures to resettle Syrian refugees in response to a string of extremist attacks in Paris on Nov. 13 that left 130 people dead and hundreds more injured.

Republicans in the House of Representatives on Nov. 19 won a veto-proof majority, 289-137, on a bill blocking Syrian and Iraqi refugees from entering the U.S. The bill’s status in the Senate was uncertain, however. In addition, governors in at least 30 states have called for an end to Syrian resettlement until security concerns can be addressed.

Cardinal O’Malley said that proposals that “simply exclude Syrian refugees as such lack the balance and humanitarian perspective needed at this time.” Christian and Muslim Syrians, he noted, have been fleeing their homeland for months only to be “set adrift in a chaotic world, unprepared to provide for their safety or honor their humanity.”

“The barbaric attacks in Paris, which demand a strong response and require policies that as best possible prevent recurrence, should not be used to efface the memory of Syrians and others from the Middle East and Africa who are desperately in need of shelter, support and safety,” the cardinal’s statement said.

The Maryland Catholic Conference said it was prepared to offer assistance in partnership with Catholic Relief Services to Syrian and Iraqi families fleeing oppression and brutality carried out by the Islamic State.



‘This family with small children fled Syria in 2012, and has gone through an extensive screening process. They have already waited three years to gain clearance to come to the United States.’

—David Bethuram, director of Catholic Charities Indianapolis

“We urge all Marylanders to consider their plight with an open heart, and to learn more about the multiple layers of interviews and security checks these refugees must undergo in order to resettle in our country,” the statement said.

The statements followed comments from the chairman of the U.S. bishops’ Committee on Migration, who said on Nov. 17 that he was disturbed by calls from federal and state officials for an end to the resettlement of Syrian refugees in the U.S.

“These refugees are fleeing terror themselves—violence like we have witnessed in Paris,” said Seattle Auxiliary Bishop Eusebio Elizondo, committee chairman. “They are extremely vulnerable—families, women and children who are fleeing for their lives. We cannot and should not blame them for the actions of a terrorist organization.”

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis has been working with one such Syrian family.

“We are working with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Migration and Refugee Services and the governor’s office on how to best resolve this situation to help this family who is scheduled to arrive in Indianapolis in December,” said David Bethuram, director of Catholic Charities Indianapolis. “This family with small children fled Syria in 2012, and has gone through an extensive screening process. They have already waited three years to gain clearance to come to the United States.”

While the Archdiocese of Indianapolis has no other Syrian refugee families slated to be resettled in central and southern Indiana, Heidi Smith hopes that “any concerns Governor Pence has concerning Syrian refugees will be resolved quickly because the lives of so many families are

at risk.

“Thousands of refugees from the Middle East, primarily from Syria, have been fleeing their homeland due to the barbaric acts by terrorists—the same groups responsible for recent terrorist acts in other parts of the world,” said Smith, director of refugee services for the archdiocesan Refugee and Immigrant Services operated by Catholic Charities. “Regardless of their religious affiliation, refugees from Syria deserve our respect, care and protection from this horrible persecution.”



Heidi Smith

A group of 14 Catholic organizations added their voices in a call to Congress to welcome Syrian refugees on Nov. 22, saying that “to reject Syrian refugees out of fear would be wrong.”

“That many governors and presidential candidates would have the United States stop accepting Syrian refugees or accept only Christians is deplorable and a form of structural violence. The faithful response is to open our hearts and our homes to Syrians of all faiths in recognition of our sacred call to protect and nourish life,” the groups noted in a shared statement.

(Reporter Natalie Hoefer contributed to this story. To view the steps required by the U.S. government before refugees and immigrants are granted admittance to the United States, log on to goo.gl/xX4WNx.) †

Pornography, politics statements take center stage at bishops’ meeting

BALTIMORE (CNS)—The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) approved a formal statement on pornography and additions to their quadrennial statement on political responsibility at their Nov. 16-19 fall general meeting in Baltimore.

The votes were made during the public portion of the meeting, which ran on Nov. 16-17. The bishops met in an executive session on Nov. 18-19.

The 2015 version of political responsibility document, “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship,” passed 210-21 with five abstentions, and a separate vote on the statement’s introductory note passed 217-16 with two abstentions; two-thirds of diocesan bishops, or 181 votes, were needed for passage.

Additions to the document were made to reflect the teachings of Pope Francis, and the later encyclicals of Pope Benedict XVI. But some bishops said the document does not adequately address poverty, as Pope Francis has asked the Church to do.

The pornography statement, “Create in Me a Clean Heart: A Pastoral Response to Pornography,” says that “producing or using pornography is gravely wrong,” and is a “mortal sin” if committed with deliberate consent and urges Catholics to turn away from it. Approval of the statement came on a vote of 230-4 with one abstention, with 181 votes needed for passage.

Bishop Richard J. Malone, of Buffalo, N.Y., chair of the bishops’ Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth, described pornography as a “dark shadow in our world today.” He added pornography

is a “particularly sinister instance of consumption” where men, women and children are “consumed for the pleasure of others.”

The bishops approved a budget for the work of their national conference in 2016, but their vote was inconclusive on a proposed 3 percent increase in 2017 to the assessment on dioceses that funds the conference.

The budget was approved by the bishops by voice vote on Nov. 17. But a separate written ballot on the diocesan assessment failed to gain the required two-thirds majority of bishops who head dioceses or eparchies. The vote was 123-49 in favor of the 3 percent increase, and 132 votes were needed to reach the two-thirds majority. Heads of dioceses who were not present at the Baltimore meeting will be polled by

mail on the matter.

The bishops approved priorities and strategic plans for 2017-20 in a 233-4 vote on Nov. 17. The document emphasizes five major areas: evangelization; family and marriage; human life and dignity; religious freedom; and vocations and ongoing formation.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano of Bridgeport, Conn., in a Nov. 17 presentation, said 13,000 people were already registered for World Youth Day, to be held on July 25-31, 2016, in Krakow, Poland, with U.S. registration expected to top 30,000.

Pope Francis, in inviting young people and young adults to the celebration, connected World Youth Day with the Year of Mercy. The event in the southern Polish city will become a “youth jubilee,” Bishop Caggiano said. †

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Tree house at theme park will take root at CYO camp in Brown County

By John Shaughnessy

Crouched in runners' stances, good friends Jacob Riley and Quinton Bell smile and give each other the kind of goofy, competitive looks that often mark made-up tests of questionable skills between guys.

In a moment, the two teenagers will explode toward the huge rope net in front of them, climb as quickly as they can toward the top of the wooden tree house, and then race to see who will be the first to make it down a 16-foot-slide.

When the race ends seconds later, Jacob jumps and raises his hands in triumph as he taunts Quinton, who is momentarily sullen. Yet before long, the focus of the friends changes as they're raving about the tree

house that was the center of Camp Tekakwitha, the interactive theme park of the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) in Indianapolis on Nov. 19-21.

"It's way cool to have something to do like this," says Jacob, 17, a member of St. Ambrose Parish in Anderson, Ind., in the Lafayette Diocese, the same parish as Quinton.

"It's awesome," adds Quinton, 18. "I like the feel of it—the camping and the outdoors."

For three days during breaks from the Masses, eucharistic adoration and more serious workshops and faith-filled sessions, the theme park inside the Indiana Convention Center became the place where 23,000 youths from across the United States relaxed, socialized, considered their futures, and played games from their childhood. And the tree house was a big hit, creating smile after smile from the youths who climbed up it and slid down it.

Still, no one smiled more by the tree

house than Kevin Sullivan, the co-director of Camp Rancho Framasa, the year-round camp of the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

When the national conference ended, Sullivan and his staff started the process of taking down the tree house that they built—and a nearby wooden pavilion—so they could reassemble them on the grounds of the CYO camp in Brown County.

"For years, I've always said I wanted a playground at camp, and the tree house will be a major part of it," Sullivan says. "I'm hoping to add to it in the future. I see it as a place where a counselor can go to the top of the tree house and be there with the kids, hanging out together. When they start to talk about something deeper, about our faith, that's where the ministry happens."

Sullivan also envisions the pavilion as being a welcome addition to Camp Rancho Framasa. The plan is to reassemble it near the high-ropes area of the camp where campers put on helmets and harnesses for an outdoor adventure near the treetops.

"With the pavilion, we'll be able to keep our equipment cleaner, and it will be a great place to talk about the experience," Sullivan says.

Designing and building the tree house proved to be a great learning experience for the staff at Camp Rancho Framasa, and it became even more memorable when they saw how much it was enjoyed by the youths at the national conference.

"They've seen the big picture of having [23,000] kids from all over the country here," Sullivan says. "They see how big the Catholic Church is, how strong the faith is."

Striving to strengthen the Catholic faith is a year-round goal for Sullivan and his staff.

"We offer retreats and outdoor experiences year-round. We're winterized," Sullivan says. "Ours is a Catholic camp. The spiritual ties to the camping experience are stronger than you will find at a secular camp. We give them a shared experience that brings them together, and that's part of the values of the Catholic Church." †



Jacob Riley, left, and Quinton Bell, both members of St. Ambrose Parish in Anderson, Ind., in the Lafayette Diocese, pose on the rope net that is part of the tree house that was at the center of Camp Tekakwitha, NCYC's interactive theme park. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)



Kevin Sullivan



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CONFESSION

continued from page 12

come in. And then they're smiling when they leave. And it's definitely cool to see priests doing this. They're there to console people through this."

Although he has many years of priestly formation ahead of him, helping out in the confession room at NCYC was special for Long.

"It definitely encourages me," he said. "This is something that I would like to do. This is something that I would want to see myself eventually doing at some point, God willing."

When the conference was held in Indianapolis in 2011 and 2013, Father Michael Keucher was in Long's position. He was a seminarian who volunteered in the confession room.

Ordained in June, Father Keucher experienced NCYC in a different way this year, celebrating the sacrament of penance with many conference attendees.

"It enlivens me and gives me a great sense of joy to see the pure desire that is alive in our young Church," said Father Keucher, associate pastor of Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish in Greenwood. "There's a great spirit here. There's a great love for God that is very evident in the lives of these people. And, as a priest, I get to see it in a much more intimate way than before."

Ordained last May in St. Louis, Dominican Father Raymond-Marie Bryce took a turn in the confession room and marveled at the line of people waiting to experience the sacrament of penance.

"That means that the Lord is quite at work, inspiring people to come and be reconciled, in some cases after months or even years," said Father Raymond-Marie, associate pastor of the St. Paul Catholic Center in Bloomington.

He expressed his hope that the priority that so many conference attendees placed on confessing their sins in the sacrament would make the upcoming Holy Year of Mercy spiritually fruitful for them.

"I think that people who have been away for a while and come back and realize how wonderful the sacrament can be will be all the more inclined to take advantage of what the Holy Father is providing us in the Year of Mercy," Father Raymond-Marie said. "I'd like to see an upsurge of confessions myself, just for the benefits that accrue from the sacrament."

Witnessing so many youths going to confession was also powerful for conference volunteer Mary Ann Kenney, a member of St. Matthew the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis, who handed "I'm forgiven" stickers to conference attendees.

"It's wonderful," she said. "It's unbelievable. You can't believe it until you see it."

Nathan Chasey, 16, who attended NCYC from St. Cecilia Parish in Ames, Iowa, was equally amazed by the steady flow of people through the confession room.

"It's astonishing," he said. "Everyone is trying to have God forgive them for their sins. They feel confident to trust God that he will forgive them, no matter how bad they are."

After experiencing God's mercy himself in the sacrament of penance at the conference, Nathan said the change in his soul was palpable.

"I just feel like I'm walking on a cloud," he said. "I feel so light. I feel new. It's great." †