



# A Christmas Message from Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

Blessed Solemnity of the Incarnation of the Living Word of God made Flesh as Savior of the World! Amid all the pomp and circumstance of the Christmas season, let us not overlook the true meaning of this special grace-filled time, namely, the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Mary.

Try as we may with all the glitter, lights, bows, ribbons, packages, feasts, festivities and gifts, we simply cannot overstate the meaning of Christmas.

Because of original sin, stemming from the disobedience rooted in human pride, humanity had gone astray in our relationship with God and one another.

The Son of God was sent, not to condemn, but to save and redeem us from the effects of sin and death. We must always celebrate the birth of our

Savior in the context of keeping before us his passion, death and resurrection. In fact, apart from the cross and empty tomb, the manger lacks any real sense of meaning.

As in past times, many live in very adverse situations of war, violence, injustice, economic hardship, poverty, sickness, disease and despair.



A deep sense of polarization has caused us to relate to one another with suspicion and disregard, leading to various means of shaming, dehumanizing and even demonizing those who disagree in practically every cultural facet of society.

The temptation of adherence to radical individualism is trying to create God in one's ideological image rather than cherishing the fact that each of us is created in the image of God. We simply cannot save ourselves.

God chose to break through the drudgery of the human condition by becoming one like us in all things but sin. In Jesus Christ, we are provided the saving grace to overcome the condemnation effected by sinful pride, disobedience, idolatry, cruelty and indifference.

In Christ, hope is restored, and we have reason to rejoice in the Good News of Salvation.

So, bringing forth our gifts like the magi, let us prepare ourselves to embrace Pope Francis' theme for the upcoming Jubilee Year 2025 as "Pilgrims of Hope."

Wishing you a blessed Christmas, with assurance of my prayers for each and all, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

*+ Charles C. Thompson*

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

# Mensaje de Navidad del Arzobispo Charles C. Thompson

Queridas hermanas y hermanos en Cristo:

¡Bendita solemnidad del Verbo Encarnado de Dios en la figura del Salvador del mundo! En medio de toda la pompa y circunstancia de la temporada navideña, no pasemos por alto el verdadero significado de este tiempo especial lleno de gracia, a saber, el nacimiento de nuestro Señor y Salvador Jesucristo, Hijo de Dios e hijo de María.

Por mucho que lo intentemos con todo el brillo, las

luces, los lazos, las cintas, los paquetes, las fiestas, los festejos y los regalos, no podemos opacar el sentido real de la Navidad.

A causa del pecado original, derivado de la desobediencia enraizada en el orgullo humano, la humanidad se había extraviado en su relación con Dios y entre sí.

El Hijo de Dios fue enviado para salvarnos y redimirnos de los efectos del pecado y de la muerte, no para

Above: This stained-glass window at St. Aloysius Church in Great Neck, N.Y., depicts Jesus in a manger surrounded by Mary, Joseph and three shepherds. (OSV News photo/Gregory A. Shemitz)



# Service, procession before Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral on Dec. 29 will help mark start of Jubilee Year of Hope

**Criterion staff report**

The Church celebrates a jubilee year every quarter of a century. Pope Francis has designated “Pilgrims of Hope” as the theme for the 2025 Jubilee Year, which begins on Dec. 24.

To mark the launch of the Jubilee Year, a prayer service will take place in Indianapolis on Dec. 29 at 10 a.m. at the Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center, 1400 N. Meridian St., followed by a procession ending with Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, 1347 N. Meridian St.

Father James Brockmeier, director of the archdiocesan Office of Worship and rector of SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, will lead the service and procession and celebrate the Mass.

The service will take place in Assembly Hall at the Catholic Center. It will include the reading of a proclamation



of the beginning of the Jubilee Year and a Gospel reading about hope.

A procession will follow from Assembly Hall, with Father Brockmeier leading the way with a cross, which he calls “the sign of hope and central image leading us into the Jubilee Year.”

The first stop (weather permitting) will be the Xavier Building on the Catholic Center grounds. Home to several archdiocesan charitable ministries, the Xavier Building serves as “a sign of the work that takes place every day in our archdiocese that brings hope to those in need, and a reminder of our call to be a source of hope for others,” says Father Brockmeier.

The procession will then make its way for a solemn entrance into SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral for Mass.

Parking will be available behind the cathedral and at the Catholic Center.

For more information, call SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral at 317-634-4519. †

# Three 2025 Jubilee of Hope pilgrimage sites are established in archdiocese, leading to a plenary indulgence

**Criterion staff report**

The Church celebrates a jubilee year every quarter of a century. Pope Francis has designated “Pilgrims of Hope” as the theme for the 2025 Jubilee Year, which begins on Dec. 24.

Three Jubilee of Hope pilgrimage sites have been established in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis:

—**SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral**, 1347 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis.

—**The Shrine of St. Mother Theodore Guérin and the Church of the Immaculate Conception**, 1 Sisters of Providence Road, Saint Mary-of-the-

Woods, St. Mary of the Woods.

—**Saint Meinrad Archabbey Church**, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad.

Pilgrims can receive a plenary indulgence by visiting a Jubilee pilgrimage site and participating in Mass or any other public prayer, a time of adoration, or a rosary while there.

A person seeking a plenary indulgence would also need to complete the ordinary requirements accompanying a plenary indulgence. More information can be found at [www.archindy.org/jubilee](http://www.archindy.org/jubilee).

Look for more information about indulgences in the Jan. 10 issue of *The Criterion*. †

# Nativity scenes are reminder of Lord’s love and tenderness, pope says

ROME (CNS)—Making his customary visit to the Rome Basilica of St. Mary Major, Pope Francis also met and prayed with dozens of actors staging a living Nativity scene.

For the third year in a row, the basilica and an Italian association that promotes the tradition of Nativity scenes, including living representations, turned the neighborhood around the basilica into a small Bethlehem with the manger on the basilica’s steps.

After a noon Mass on Dec. 14, parishes, prayer groups, confraternities and Italian folklore groups provided the actors and the tableau.

Later, after Pope Francis prayed before the Marian icon “*Salus Populi Romani*,” he met inside the basilica with the living Nativity participants.

Pope Francis told participants, “Christmas always brings us joy. Christmas brings us the tenderness of a baby.” †



Public Schedule of

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

December 24, 2024–January 17, 2025

<b>December 24 – 10 p.m.</b> Christmas Eve Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis	<b>January 8 – 11:30 a.m.</b> Strategic Pastoral Planning Initiatives meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center
<b>January 5 – 9:30 a.m.</b> Mass at Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary, Indianapolis	<b>January 9 – 8:15 a.m.</b> Virtual judicatories meeting
<b>January 5 – 5 p.m.</b> First Sunday dinner with archdiocesan priests, Indianapolis	<b>January 9 – 10 a.m.</b> Leadership Team meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center
<b>January 7 – 10:30 a.m.</b> Priest Personnel Board meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center, Indianapolis	<b>January 12 – 10 a.m.</b> Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral
	<b>January 13-17</b> Cross Catholic Outreach Board of Directors Vision Trip, Guatemala

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

This week’s issue of *The Criterion*, which is our annual Christmas publication, is the last issue of 2024.

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

The Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center will be closed from Dec. 20 through Jan. 5 in observance of the holidays.

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

# ARZOBISPO

continúa de la página 1

condenarnos. Por lo tanto, debemos celebrar siempre el nacimiento de nuestro Salvador en el contexto de su pasión, muerte y resurrección. De hecho, el pesebre carece de todo sentido si lo separamos de la cruz y del sepulcro vacío.

Como en épocas anteriores, muchos atraviesan situaciones sumamente adversas de guerra, violencia, injusticia, dificultades económicas, pobreza, enfermedad y desesperación.

Debido a la profunda polarización existente hoy en día, nos relacionamos con los demás con recelo y desprecio, lo que ha dado lugar—en prácticamente todas las esferas de la sociedad—a diversas formas para avergonzar, deshumanizar e incluso demonizar a quienes son distintos.

La tentación del individualismo radical intenta recrear a Dios según la propia imagen ideológica, en lugar de valorar el hecho de que cada uno ha sido creado a imagen de Dios. Es un hecho que no podemos salvarnos a nosotros mismos.

Dios eligió romper la monotonía de la condición humana haciéndose uno como nosotros en todo menos en el pecado. En Jesucristo, se nos brinda la gracia salvadora para superar la condenación que provoca el orgullo pecaminoso, la desobediencia, la idolatría, la crueldad y la indiferencia.

En Cristo se restablece la esperanza y tenemos motivos para alegrarnos de la Buena Nueva de la Salvación.

Así que, al igual que los Tres Reyes Magos, ofrezcamos nuestros dones y preparémonos para acoger el tema del Papa Francisco para el próximo Año Jubilar 2025 como “Peregrinos de la Esperanza.”

Les deseo una Navidad bendecida y les ofrezco la certeza de mis oraciones por todos y cada uno.

De ustedes en Cristo,

+ Charles C. Thompson

Arzobispo Charles C. Thompson



Phone Numbers:

Main office..... 317-236-1570  
Advertising..... 317-236-1585  
Circulation / Subscriptions ... 317-236-1425

Price:

\$22.00 per year, 75 cents per copy

Postmaster:

Send address changes to *The Criterion*, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367

Web site :

[www.CriterionOnline.com](http://www.CriterionOnline.com)

E-mail:

[criterion@archindy.org](mailto:criterion@archindy.org)

Published weekly except the last week of December, the first week of January and every other week from June to August (*summer schedule*). Mailing address: 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367. Periodical postage paid at Indianapolis, IN.

Copyright © 2024 Criterion Press Inc. ISSN 0574-4350.

NEWS FROM YOU!

Do you have something exciting or newsworthy you want to be considered to be printed in The Criterion?

E-mail us: [criterion@archindy.org](mailto:criterion@archindy.org)

Staff:

Editor: Mike Krokos  
Assistant Editor: John Shaughnessy  
Reporter: Sean Gallagher  
Reporter: Natalie Hoefer  
Graphic Designer / Online Editor: Brandon A. Evans  
Executive Assistant: Ann Lewis

MEMBER

CPA

CATHOLIC PRESS ASSOCIATION


The Criterion

(ISSN 0574-4350) is published weekly except the last week of December, the first week of January and every other week from June-Aug.

1400 N. Meridian St. Indianapolis, IN 46202 317-236-1570 [criterion@archindy.org](mailto:criterion@archindy.org)

Periodical postage paid at Indianapolis, IN. Copyright © 2024 Criterion Press Inc.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Criterion Press Inc. 1400 N. Meridian St. Indianapolis, IN 46202



12/20/24

Moving?

We'll be there waiting if you give us two weeks' notice! Use the form below or at [archindy.org/moving](http://archindy.org/moving).

Name

E-mail

New Address

City

State/Zip

New Parish

Effective Date

Note: If you are receiving duplicate copies please send both labels.

The Criterion • 1400 N. Meridian St. • Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367



# Pope’s new book shares how police stopped terrorists planning to kill him

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—On Pope Francis’ 88th birthday, two major newspapers on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean published two different excerpts from his new book on hope.

The *New York Times* published the pope’s words on the importance of humor as a “guest essay” in its opinion section, while Italy’s *Corriere della Sera* ran, as a news story, the pope’s recollection of his March 2021 trip to Iraq, revealing that two suicide bombers had been planning to attack him, but were intercepted and killed by police.

“I was warned as soon as we landed in Baghdad the previous day. The police had alerted the Vatican gendarmes to a report that had come from British intelligence: a woman loaded with explosives—a young suicide bomber—was on her way to Mosul to blow herself up during the papal visit. And a van had also left at full speed with the same intent,” he said in the new book.

“When I asked the gendarmes the following day what was known about the two bombers, the commander replied succinctly, ‘They’re gone.’ The Iraqi police had intercepted them and detonated them. That, too, struck me deeply. This, too, was the poisoned fruit of war,” he wrote.

The excerpts published on Dec. 17 were from the book, *Hope: The Autobiography*, written with the journalist Carlo Musso. The book is set for global release in 80 countries on Jan. 14.

The *New York Times* coverage was the second time the paper published Pope Francis’ words as a “guest essay.” In November 2020, it ran “A Crisis Reveals What Is in Our Hearts,” adapted from his then-new book, *Let Us Dream: The Path to a Better Future*, written with Austen Ivereigh.

The Dec. 17 essay, titled, “There Is Faith in Humor,” offered a light-hearted reflection on the need to “avoid wallowing in melancholy at all costs, not to let it embitter the heart.

“Life inevitably has its sadnesses, which are part of every path of hope and every path toward conversion,” he wrote. But people of faith must avoid the temptation to let sadness turn into bitterness.

“Irony is a medicine, not only to lift and brighten others, but also ourselves, because self-mockery is a powerful instrument in overcoming the temptation toward narcissism,” he wrote in the essay, which was replete with humorous pope-related jokes.

Pope Francis recounts one of them: He

is speeding down the streets of New York in a limousine after convincing the driver to let him have a turn at the wheel. When the police pull him over, the officer is shocked and radios his boss about what to do since “I’ve stopped a car for speeding, but there’s a guy in there who’s really important.”

After a lengthy back-and-forth between the boss and officer about who could be that important, the joke ends, “Look, boss, I don’t know exactly who he is, all I can tell you is that it’s the pope who is driving him!”

“The Gospel, which urges us to become like little children for our own salvation, reminds us to regain their ability to smile,” Pope Francis wrote, saying, “nothing cheers me as much as meeting children,” who are “often my mentors.”

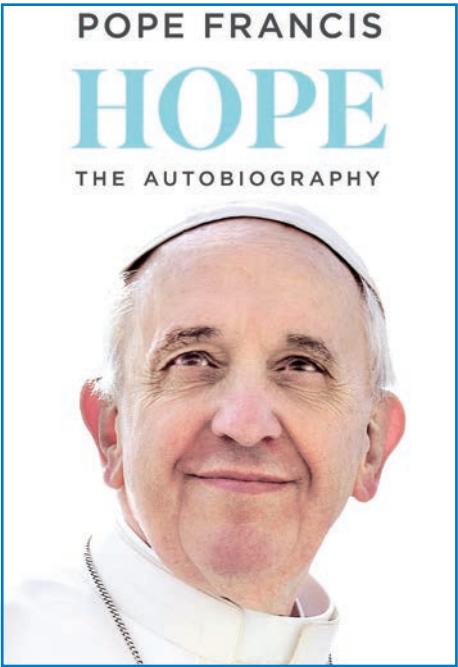
He praised the elderly who know how to “bless life, who put aside all resentment” and who have “the gift of laughter and tears, like children.”

Those who find it hard to “cry seriously or to laugh passionately” are on a downhill slide toward becoming “anesthetized” and unable to do anything good for themselves, society or the Church, he wrote.


“Those who give up their own humanity give up everything,” he wrote.

The book’s Italian publisher, Mondadori, said Pope Francis began working on the book in 2019 with the understanding it would be published only after his death, but the Holy Year 2025 and its focus on hope led him to permit the early release.

“With a wealth of revelations and




unpublished stories, moving and very human, poignant and dramatic, but also capable of real humor, Pope Francis’ memoir starts off in the early years of the 20th century with the story of his Italian roots and his ancestors’ adventure of emigration to Latin America, moving on to his childhood, adolescence, choice of vocation, adult life, covering the whole of his papacy up to the present day,” said a press release from Viking, which will publish *Hope* in the United Kingdom. Random House will publish it in the United States, and Penguin Random House Canada will publish it in Canada. †



### Pope’s prayer intentions for January

- **For the right to an education**—Let us pray for migrants, refugees and those affected by war, that their right to an education, which is necessary to build a better world, might always be respected.

See Pope Francis’ monthly intentions at [archindy.org/popesintentions](http://archindy.org/popesintentions).




CATHOLIC COMMUNITY FOUNDATION, INC.

## This Christmas, Share Your Blessings and Fuel the Mission of the Church

The Christmas season is not only for giving and receiving gifts, it’s also a great time to take stock in our many blessings. December is a time countless donors typically give from their God-given blessings to the Church and our many ministries. Your generosity fuels the mission of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis and all of our parishes, schools and ministries. Please know our immeasurable gratitude for your sacrificial giving to the Catholic Church. God works through your hands.

To learn more, contact our team at [ccf@archindy.org](mailto:ccf@archindy.org) call 317-236-1482 or scan QR code to the right.





**Trusted & Compassionate Care**  
(317) 255-5700 [www.HuserSpecialCare.com](http://www.HuserSpecialCare.com)

**Serving Individuals with Developmental Disabilities & Autism**

- Family-owned and operated – Kathy and Terry Huser
- Medicaid Waiver Provider (CIH & Family Supports)
- Residential, Community, Respite and PAC Services
- In client residence, family home, community or supported living
- Staff carefully screened and trained to meet client-specific needs
- Support with social skills, daily living, communication, personal-care, community living, and activities

**Full-time and Part-time Employment Opportunities Available**

- Must be compassionate, caring, dependable and trustworthy
- Comprehensive training program provided
- Flexible work hours with competitive pay
- Apply on-line @ [www.HuserSpecialCare.com](http://www.HuserSpecialCare.com) “Our Team” tab

## "Heating - Heat Pump - Air Conditioner"

Our staff has over 76 years of Catholic Education

# 142<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Sale

68 YEARS Catholic Education

140<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Sale

### FREE LABOR

On the installation of a FURNACE, HEAT PUMP OR AIR CONDITIONER

Cannot be combined with any other offer. Must be presented at time of order. EXPIRES: 01/03/25 THIELE 639-1111

140<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Sale

### 1/2 OFF SERVICE CALL

Save \$45 with Paid Repair

Cannot be combined with any other offer. Must be presented at time of service. EXPIRES: 01/03/25 M-F 8-4 THIELE 639-1111

140<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Sale

### FREE 10 YEAR WARRANTY ON PARTS & LABOR

90% Furnace, Heat Pump or High Efficiency Air Conditioner.

Cannot be combined with any other offer. Must be presented at time of order. EXPIRES: 01/03/25 THIELE 639-1111

CALL TODAY! **639-1111**

Still Locally Owned & Operated

**WWW.CALLTHIELE.COM**

SERVING CENTRAL INDIANA

# THIELE

Heating & Air Conditioning

SINCE 1883







Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, *Publisher*
Sally Krause, *Associate Publisher*  
Mike Krokos, *Editor*

Editorial



Pope Francis looks at a Nativity scene from Bethlehem in the Vatican audience hall on Dec. 7. Around the star, written in Arabic and Latin, are the words of the angels: “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to people of good will.” (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

Let’s do our part to keep the light of Christ alive in the world

*“And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father’s only Son, full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:14).*

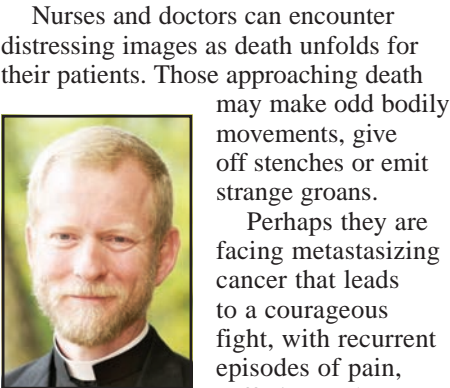
We again are a few days away from marking the Nativity of the Lord, where we celebrate the great gift our Creator gave our world in his Son, Jesus. Make no mistake: while many in secular circles try to make Christmas a time for parties, gift-giving and other celebratory inspirations, we know this day goes beyond those sentiments. We rejoice because the Advent season of expectation and hope has led us to today: On Christmas, we reflect on the gift of our Redeemer, a baby born in the distressing disguise of the poor in a manger in Bethlehem, who, despite his situation, came into our world bearing God’s mercy and enlightenment. Through the mystery of the incarnation, we believe that Jesus was both fully human and fully divine. Scripture instructs us that the eternal Word of God leaped down from heaven when half-spent was the night (Wis 18:14-15). And we learn he is a child waiting to be loved. Much has changed since our Savior was born 2,000-plus years ago, yet much remains the same. In reflecting on Christmas several years ago, our former shepherd Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein shared the following: “The birth of Jesus Christ 2,000 years ago moves us to think about simplicity, humility and the need for faith. Perhaps romanticizing Christmas so much is our way of dealing with an awesome mystery and a perplexing paradox. The Creator becomes man, which is his own creation. The all-powerful who is without sin becomes one of us to save us from sin. Almighty God becomes one of us in the earthiest poverty. No one need be a theologian to recognize that we are talking about incredible love that could only be God’s. Surely, we are moved to love God despite ourselves.

That is true for the most part. We must admit Christmas is a bright star in a dark night of the human family. We are awed by God’s unconditional love because we see too little authentic love,” Archbishop Buechlein continued. “Individualism and narcissism and the profit motive overshadow genuine love. Marriages come together and come apart too quickly, causing broken hearts for young and old alike. We argue about the right to have—or not to have—children as if they are negotiable property. There are heartbreaking numbers of lonely and poor people. Misguided energy goes into making promiscuous sex and drug abuse ‘safe.’ There are reasons why our human family is skeptical about unconditional love . . . .” Travel across the country and around the globe and you see Archbishop Buechlein’s words from 20-plus years ago are as true today as they were then. As people of faith, this sad reality should challenge us to do our part to make Christ more present in our call to discipleship. As we celebrate Christmas and move into a new year, may Christ be born, here and now, in the stable of our hearts. May each of us answer the ongoing call to think with Christ, to feel with Christ, to have in us the same attitude of Christ. May we open our eyes and see Christ hidden in the sick, hidden in the poor, hidden in the prisoner, hidden in the immigrant, hidden in the unborn and hidden in so many of our brothers and sisters who lack many things, including love. May we have the courage to go to the peripheries to assist those in need. As we continue living out our respective vocations with the help of God’s grace that flows to us through the Christ Child, let us pray we continue to be rays of light in a world with much darkness. And as we mark Christmas and move into 2025, let us especially pray nothing ever extinguishes the light of Christ.

—Mike Krokos

Making Sense Out of Bioethics/Fr. Tad Pacholczyk

Getting ‘death with dignity’ right



Nurses and doctors can encounter distressing images as death unfolds for their patients. Those approaching death may make odd bodily movements, give off stench or emit strange groans. Perhaps they are facing metastasizing cancer that leads to a courageous fight, with recurrent episodes of pain, suffering and sadness, followed by humble submission and eventually giving way to a lifeless corpse, mouth agape. Where, one can ask, is the dignity in this manner of dying? Indeed, the physical aspects of dying and death can be very challenging, as we face the prospect of losing control of our bowels and bladder, our mind and autonomy. Margaux Killackey sums it up this way in an essay: “All flesh will harden and turn to dust. If we judge from appearances, this is an ugly picture.” But she goes on to offer a key insight, namely, that by “looking beyond the physical aesthetics, we can find not only a life well-lived, but a death well-died.” So what does a “death well-died” look like? One might anticipate it would arise organically out of a “life well-lived,” and that both of these would involve our continued and strengthened connectedness to others, including family, friends and God. A good death will typically be a communal event. St. Teresa of Calcutta once lamented how “we have forgotten that we belong to each other.” To die surrounded by the care and support of others is to transcend our decaying bodily existence as we are sustained in a kind of wholeness through the experience of being loved. When it comes to what a “death with dignity” should look like, Mother Teresa best described it this way: “Death with dignity is to die with grace, in the knowledge that [you] are loved.” Today, as efforts continue apace to legalize physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia, flawed notions of “death with dignity” continue to enter and subvert our discussions. One group in Britain pushing for assisted suicide and euthanasia calls itself the “Campaign for Dignity in Dying.” But suicide is never dignified, no matter how much we repackage it by passing laws that grant doctors and nurses immunity from prosecution as they dole out death in place of healing. These legislative maneuvers provide professional and legal cover for patient abandonment. Physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia are quicker, easier and cheaper than remaining vigilant at the bedside, holding a sick person’s hand and accompanying him or her through the twists and turns of their final journey home.

Canadian euthanasia data from Québec for 2022-23 indicates that 70% of those choosing euthanasia listed “loss of dignity” as one of the motivations. We are being cajoled as a society into believing the contradiction that “death with dignity” means killing ourselves or letting someone else kill us. If some insist that they want access to physician-assisted suicide or euthanasia, this should remind us how much they need our care, support and love. It should also serve to remind us of how fearful they may be at the prospect of their illness and sufferings and of the loneliness that may accompany it. This should prompt us to redouble our efforts at providing not only tailored treatments and appropriate pain management, but also compassion, companionship and faithful accompaniment. When Mother Teresa began her ministry in Calcutta, she would take a wheelbarrow and walk around the city to pick up individuals who were destitute and dying alone in the gutter. She would bring them back to her home for the dying. There, she and her sisters would care for them, pray with them and remain in their presence until they passed on. Mother Teresa would offer them the chance to receive a gift—what she termed a “special ticket of St. Peter”—the sacrament of baptism. No one, she said, ever declined the gift. Although their human frame was wasting away as death approached, and even though flies may have buzzed nearby, these dying individuals were able to surrender their life surrounded by love, warmth and care, both human and divine, and experience, most assuredly, a blessed and dignified death—a “death well-died.” A 2024 Vatican document titled “Infinite Dignity” reminds us of the important point, often overlooked in these discussions, that suffering “does not cause the sick to lose their dignity, which is intrinsically and inalienably their own. Instead, suffering can become an opportunity to strengthen the bonds of mutual belonging.” The acceptance of the twin evils of physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia, far from promoting or supporting our core human dignity, constitutes a broadside attack against it. Both threaten those who are sick and vulnerable with systematic abandonment, not only by denying the basic protections to which they are entitled as members of the human family, but also by taking away the dignified care and loving human accompaniment due them in the final stages of their journey. (Father Tadeusz Pacholczyk, Ph.D., earned his doctorate in neuroscience from Yale and did post-doctoral work at Harvard. He is a priest of the Diocese of Fall River, Mass., and serves as senior ethicist at the National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia. Visit [www.ncbcenter.org](http://www.ncbcenter.org) and [www.fathertad.com](http://www.fathertad.com).) †

Letters Policy

Letters from readers are published in The Criterion as part of the newspaper’s commitment to “the responsible exchange of freely-held and expressed opinion among the People of God” (Communio et Progressio, 116). Letters from readers are welcome and every effort will be made to include letters from as many people and representing as many viewpoints as possible. Letters should be informed, relevant, well-expressed and temperate in tone. They must reflect a basic sense of courtesy and respect. The editors reserve the right to select the letters that will be published and to edit letters from readers as necessary based on space limitations, pastoral sensitivity and content (including spelling and grammar). In order to encourage opinions from a variety of readers, frequent writers will ordinarily be limited to one letter every three months. Concise letters (usually less than 300 words) are more likely to be printed. Letters must be signed, but, for serious reasons, names may be withheld. Send letters to “Letters to the Editor,” The Criterion, 1400 N. Meridian Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367. Readers with access to e-mail may send letters to [criterion@archindy.org](mailto:criterion@archindy.org). †



ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO CHARLES C. THOMPSON



# Christ the Cornerstone

## Mary responds to the gift of God’s love by sharing it with us

*“Behold, a Virgin shall conceive and bear a son; and his name will be called Emmanuel” (Is 7:14).*

Mary’s response to the astonishing news that she was to be the mother of Israel’s long-awaited Savior was completely unselfish. She did not think about her own needs or about what people would think of her unusual pregnancy.

Instead, St. Luke tells us that she set out “in haste” on a difficult journey to the town of Judah “in the hill country” to help her older cousin Elizabeth, who was also expecting a child (Lk 1:39-45).

Mary is often seen as a contemplative, someone who waits patiently and who ponders the mysteries of her life in her heart.

Yet, the Gospel reading for the Fourth Sunday of Advent shows us a side of Mary’s personality that can only be described as “active.” Mary is a doer and a helper as well as one who waits in joyful hope for God’s will to be accomplished in her. That’s why Elizabeth, the grateful recipient of Mary’s generosity, praises her, saying, “Blessed are you who believed that

what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled” (Lk 1:45).

Mary is the fulfillment of ancient Old Testament prophecies about the birth of the Savior. She exemplifies the both/and that is so prominent in Catholic teaching. She is both humble and distinguished—unique among all women. She both reflects carefully and acts decisively. She is both the Mother of God and the faithful missionary disciple of her Divine Son.

The first reading for the Fourth Sunday of Advent from the Book of Micah reflects the many ancient prophecies that Mary is called to fulfill:

*“You, Bethlehem-Ephrathah, too small to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel; whose origin is from of old, from ancient times. Therefore the Lord will give them up, until the time when she who is to give birth has borne, and the rest of his kindred shall return to the children of Israel. He shall stand firm and shepherd his flock by the strength of the Lord, in the majestic name of the Lord, his God; and they shall remain, for now his greatness shall reach to the ends of the Earth; he shall be peace” (Mi 5:1-4a).*

From obscurity, a region “too small to be among the clans of Judah,” will come the “one who is to be ruler in Israel.” Once the woman chosen to give birth to God’s only begotten Son has accepted her absolutely unique role in salvation history, the Messiah will come and take his rightful place as the Shepherd of God’s people and the Prince of Peace.

Mary’s “yes,” and her willingness to trust in God’s Providence, set in motion both the Incarnation and the Paschal Mystery that caused our redemption. Mary is both the calm recipient of God’s grace and an active participant in the history of our salvation. She is one who generously shares the abundant gifts that God has given her, and in the process, she enriches the lives of all who call on her loving protection and care.

The second reading for the Fourth Sunday of Advent from the Letter to the Hebrews (Heb 10:5-10) speaks of the divine will that Mary accepted freely: “Behold, I come to do your will” (Heb 10:9) reflects Mary’s “Behold I am the Lord’s handmaiden. Be it done to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38). By this “will,” the Letter

to the Hebrews says, “We have been consecrated through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb 10:10).

Mary speaks for us, but she also invites—and challenges—us to respond as she did. Mary inspires us to wait patiently for the coming again of Jesus. She also urges us to act now in thanksgiving for the gifts we have already received from her Son—most especially his gift-of-self to us in the holy Eucharist.

At the conclusion of every Mass, we are told to imitate Mary by going forth to love and serve the Lord with joyful hope as missionary disciples of Jesus. We are commanded to share Jesus’ abundant gifts with others, and to be both contemplative and active in our eucharistic adoration.

As with Mary, our waiting in joyful hope is not meant to be simply passive. We are also called to be alive and passionate in sharing the gifts we have received with others.

As we observe the final days of this holy Advent season, let’s ask Mary to help us both wait patiently and act decisively as missionary disciples of Jesus Christ her Son. †



# Cristo, la piedra angular

## María responde al don del amor de Dios al compartirlo con nosotros

*“La virgen concebirá y dará a luz un hijo, y lo llamará Emanuel” (Is 7:14).*

La respuesta de María a la sorprendente noticia de que iba a ser la madre del tan esperado Salvador de Israel fue un acto totalmente desinteresado. No pensó en sus propias necesidades ni en lo que pensaría la gente de su inusual embarazo.

En cambio, san Lucas nos dice que emprendió camino “de prisa” en un viaje difícil a la ciudad de Judá “en la región montañosa” para ayudar a su prima mayor Isabel, que también esperaba un hijo (Lc 1:39-45).

A menudo se ve a María como una figura contemplativa, alguien que espera pacientemente y que medita en su corazón los misterios de su vida.

Sin embargo, la lectura del Evangelio del cuarto domingo de Adviento nos muestra un lado de la personalidad de María que solo puede describirse como “activo.” María es una persona dinámica que ayuda, así como también alguien que espera con gozosa esperanza que se cumpla en ella la voluntad de Dios. Por eso Isabel, la agradecida destinataria de la generosidad de María, la alaba al decirle: “¡Dichosa tú que has creído, porque lo que

el Señor te ha dicho se cumplirá!” (Lc 1:45)

En María se cumplen las antiguas profecías del Antiguo Testamento sobre el nacimiento del Salvador. Ejemplifica el *tantoy el como* que prevalece en la enseñanza católica: es tanto humilde como excepcional, única entre todas las mujeres; tanto reflexiona cuidadosamente como actúa con decisión; es tanto la Madre de Dios como la fiel discípula misionera de su Divino Hijo.

La primera lectura del cuarto domingo de Adviento, tomada del libro de Miqueas, refleja las numerosas profecías antiguas que María está llamada a cumplir:

*Pero de ti, Belén Efrata, pequeña entre los clanes de Judá, saldrá el que gobernará a Israel; sus orígenes se remontan hasta la antigüedad, hasta tiempos inmemoriales. Por eso Dios los entregará al enemigo hasta que tenga su hijo la que va a ser madre, y vuelva junto al pueblo de Israel el resto de sus hermanos. Pero surgirá uno para pastorearlos con el poder del Señor, con la majestad del nombre del Señor su Dios. Vivirán seguros, porque él dominará hasta los confines de la tierra. ¡Él traerá la paz! (Mi 5:1-4a).*

De un lugar remoto, una región “pequeña entre los clanes de Judá,” vendrá “el que gobernará a Israel.” Una vez que la mujer elegida para dar a luz al Hijo único de Dios haya aceptado su papel absolutamente único en la historia de la salvación, el Mesías vendrá y ocupará el lugar que le corresponde como Pastor del pueblo de Dios y Príncipe de la Paz.

El “sí” de María y su voluntad de confiar en la Providencia de Dios pusieron en marcha tanto la Encarnación como el Misterio Pascual que causó nuestra redención. María es a la vez la pasiva receptora de la gracia de Dios y participante activa en la historia de nuestra salvación. Comparte generosamente los abundantes dones que Dios le ha dado y, en el proceso, enriquece las vidas de todos los que recurren a su amorosa protección y cuidado.

La segunda lectura del cuarto domingo de Adviento de la Carta a los Hebreos (Hb 10:5-10) habla de la voluntad divina que María aceptó libremente: “Aquí me tienes: He venido a hacer tu voluntad” (Heb 10:9) refleja el “Aquí tienes a la sierva del Señor. [...] Que él haga conmigo como me has dicho” de María (Lc 1:38). Por esta “voluntad,” dice la Carta a los

Hebreos, “somos santificados mediante el sacrificio del cuerpo de Jesucristo, ofrecido una vez y para siempre” (Hb 10:10).

María habla por nosotros, pero también nos invita—y desafía—a responder como ella. Nos inspira a esperar pacientemente el regreso de Jesús y también nos exhorta a actuar ahora como agradecimiento por los dones que ya hemos recibido de su Hijo, muy especialmente su don de sí mismo en la Sagrada Eucaristía.

Al final de cada Misa, se nos dice que imitemos a María al amar y servir al Señor con gozosa esperanza como discípulos misioneros de Jesús. Se nos ordena compartir los abundantes dones de Jesús con los demás, y ser tanto contemplativos como activos en nuestra adoración eucarística.

Al igual que María, nuestra espera en la esperanza gozosa no debe ser simplemente pasiva; también estamos llamados a ser dinámicos y apasionados a la hora de compartir con los demás los dones que hemos recibido.

Mientras observamos los últimos días de este tiempo sagrado del Adviento, pidamos a María que nos ayude a esperar con paciencia y a actuar con decisión como discípulos misioneros de Jesucristo, su Hijo. †



## Events Calendar

For a list of events for the next four weeks as reported to The Criterion, log on to [www.archindy.org/events](http://www.archindy.org/events).

### December 20-Jan. 5

St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross Parish, 23345 Gavin Lane, Lawrenceberg. **Bright Lights Drive-Thru Christmas Light Display**, Mon.-Sat. 6-10 p.m. and Sun. 6-9 p.m., free. Information: 513-788-1596, [brightlightsdcc@gmail.com](mailto:brightlightsdcc@gmail.com).

### December 29

St. Mary Parish, 529 Clay St., North Vernon. **Lessons and Carols**, 6 p.m., music and Scripture service telling the story of salvation history, free. Information: 812-346-3604, [communications@stmarysnv.com](mailto:communications@stmarysnv.com).

### 2025

### January 3, February 7

Women’s Care Center, 4901 W. 86th St., Indianapolis. **First Friday Mass**, 5 p.m., optional tour of center to follow. Information: 317-829-6800, [womenscarecenter.org](http://womenscarecenter.org).

Our Lady of the Greenwood Church, 335 S. Meridian St.,

Greenwood. **First Friday bilingual celebration of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus**, Mass 6 p.m. followed by adoration until 9 p.m., sacrament of reconciliation available. Information: 317-750-7309, [mrossl@hotmail.com](mailto:mrossl@hotmail.com).

St. John Paul II Church, 2253 St. Joe Road W., Sellersburg. **First Friday Devotion**, 11:40 a.m., litany, consecration to the Sacred Heart, Divine Mercy Chaplet followed by noon Mass. Information: 812-246-2512.

### January 3-5

Cincinnati, Ohio (location given upon registration). **Retrouvaille Retreat**, for those in a struggling marriage. Information, registration: 513-258-8622, [CincinnatiRetrouvaille@gmail.com](mailto:CincinnatiRetrouvaille@gmail.com), [helpourmarriage.org](http://helpourmarriage.org).

### January 4, February 8

St. John Paul II Church, 2253 St. Joe Road W., Sellersburg.

**First Saturday Devotion**, 8 a.m., rosary, litany, consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, confession 8-8:30 a.m. followed by 8:30 a.m. Mass. Information: 812-246-2512.

### January 7, February 7

**Virtual Prayer with the Sisters of Providence**, 7-7:45 p.m., for single women ages 18-42, prayer and sharing on topic of vulnerability. Information, registration: [events.sistersofprovidence.org](http://events.sistersofprovidence.org), 361-500-9505, [jluna@spsmw.org](mailto:jluna@spsmw.org).

### January 8, February 5

MCL Cafeteria, 5520 Castleton Corner Lane, Indianapolis. **Solo Seniors**, 5:30-8:30 p.m., Catholic, educational, charitable and social singles—separated, widowed or divorced—age 50 and older, new members welcome, also call about regular Friday night dinner events. Information: 317-796-8605.

### January 8-Feb. 12

Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, 5692 Central Ave., Indianapolis. **Divorce Support and Recovery Group**, 6:30 p.m., six consecutive Wednesdays (Jan. 8, 15, 22, 29, Feb. 5, 12), facilitated by Deacon Bob Angelich and divorce coach Leah GiaQuinta, \$10 registration fee, space is limited. Information, registration: [tinyurl.com/ihmdivorcesupport](http://tinyurl.com/ihmdivorcesupport), 317-257-2266, [leahgiaquinta@gmail.com](mailto:leahgiaquinta@gmail.com).

### January 12, Feb. 9

Marian University, Norman Center Room 222, 3200 Cold Spring Road, Indianapolis. **People of Peace OFS Monthly Meeting**, 12:30-3 p.m., explore Franciscan spirituality with lay Franciscans, free. Information: 317-762-6259, [popofsindy@gmail.com](mailto:popofsindy@gmail.com).

### January 15-April 30

St. Jude Parish, Guérin Room,

5353 McFarland Road, Indianapolis. **Surviving Divorce Program**, 6:45-9 p.m., three Wednesdays a month for a total of 12 sessions (Jan. 15, 22, 29, Feb. 12, 19, 26, March 12, 19, 26, April 9, 23, 30), \$30, scholarships available. Registration, information: 317-786-4371, [pcollins@stjudeindy.org](mailto:pcollins@stjudeindy.org).

### January 8, Feb. 19

Calvary Mausoleum Chapel, 435 W. Troy Ave., Indianapolis. **Mass**, 2 p.m. Information: 317-784-4439, [catholiccemeteries.cc](http://catholiccemeteries.cc).

### January 16, Feb. 20

Our Lady of Peace Cemetery and Mausoleum, 9001 Haverstick Road, Indianapolis. **Mass**, 2 p.m. Information: 317-574-8898, [catholiccemeteries.cc](http://catholiccemeteries.cc).

### January 17

Northside Events and Social Club, 2100 E. 71st St., Indianapolis. **Catholic**

**Business Exchange**, presenter TBA, rosary 6:35 a.m., Mass 7 a.m., buffet breakfast and program following, \$18 members, \$24 non-members. Register by 4 p.m. on Jan. 14. Information, registration: [cutt.ly/CBE-Reg](http://cutt.ly/CBE-Reg).

### February 14-16

Louisville, Ky. **Retrouvaille Retreat**, for those in a struggling marriage, location disclosed upon registering. Information, registration: 502-479-3329, [3012@helpourmarriage.org](mailto:3012@helpourmarriage.org), [helpourmarriage.org](http://helpourmarriage.org).

### February 16

Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, 1530 Union St., Indianapolis. **Indianapolis Symphony Sphinx Series Concert**, 2-4 p.m., featuring string quartet of Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra musicians, tour of Sacred Heart Church available after concert, free. Information: 317-902-3006, [judithessex@icloud.com](mailto:judithessex@icloud.com). †

## Retreats and Programs

For a complete list of retreats as reported to The Criterion, log on to [www.archindy.org/retreats](http://www.archindy.org/retreats).

### January 9, Feb. 19

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Day of Silence**, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., \$45, includes room, lunch, Mass and use of common areas and grounds, overnight stay available for additional \$32, dinner additional \$11. Registration:

[archindy.org/fatima-events](http://archindy.org/fatima-events), 317-545-7681, [lcoons@archindy.org](mailto:lcoons@archindy.org).

### January 10, Feb. 7

Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **A Day of Quiet Renewal**, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., \$20, \$80 with spiritual

direction. Information, registration: 812-933-6437, [oldenburgfranciscancenter.org](http://oldenburgfranciscancenter.org).

### January 11

Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **Grieving into Love**, 9:30-11:30 a.m., chaplain and counselor Richard Brendan

presenting, \$30. Information, registration: 812-933-6437, [center@oldenburgosf.com](mailto:center@oldenburgosf.com), [oldenburgfranciscancenter.org](http://oldenburgfranciscancenter.org).

### January 17-19

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **TOBIT Marriage Preparation Weekend**, 7 p.m. Fri.-11:45 a.m. Sun., \$330 per couple, separate rooms, includes meals and materials. Registration: [fjm.retreatportal.com/events](http://fjm.retreatportal.com/events), 317-545-7681, [lcoons@archindy.org](mailto:lcoons@archindy.org).

Mother of the Redeemer Retreat Center, 8220

W. State Road 48, Bloomington. **Silence, Solitude and the Presence of God**, 5 p.m. Fri.-10 a.m. Sun., Franciscan Friar of the Immaculate Gabriel M. Cortes facilitating, \$241 for single, \$302.90 double, \$368 triple, \$433.12 quadruple, includes four meals and room for two nights, commuters \$50.70 includes lunch and dinner on Sat. Information, registration: 812-825-4642, ext. 1, [motheroftheredeemer.com](http://motheroftheredeemer.com).

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Making**

**“Soma” from “Sarx:” The Transformative Power of the Gospel**, Benedictine Father Adrian Burke presenting, \$350 single, \$550 double. Registration: 812-357-6611, [saintmeinrad.org/retreats](http://saintmeinrad.org/retreats).

### January 25

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **St. Paul’s Conversion and Ours: An Experience of Metanoia**, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. CT, Jane Feliz Rush presenting, includes lunch, \$75. Registration: 812-357-6611, [saintmeinrad.org/retreats](http://saintmeinrad.org/retreats). †

## St. Bartholomew Care for Our Common Home Ministry to host presentation on community solar power on Jan. 7

A presentation titled “An Introduction to Community Solar” will take place in the lower-level hall of St. Bartholomew Parish, 1306 27th St., in Columbus, at 7 p.m. on Jan. 7.

The event is sponsored by the St. Bartholomew’s Care for Our Common Home Ministry. It will feature a presentation by Faith in Place policy coordinator Christine Glaser. Faith in Place is the Indiana affiliate of Interfaith Power and Light, an organization of people of diverse faiths dedicated to creating healthy,

just and sustainable communities.

Glaser will discuss community solar programs designed to make solar more accessible to all U.S. households, particularly to those with low-to-moderate incomes, renters and other community members for whom traditional rooftop solar is unavailable.

For more information on this free presentation or about the Care for Our Common Home Ministry, contact Dave Wildemann at [wildemann@att.net](mailto:wildemann@att.net) or 812-447-4015. †

## Jason Evert will give double-feature of talks on Theology of the Body at St. Malachy in Brownsburg on Jan. 16

Nationally known Catholic speaker Jason Evert will give two separate talks, “Purified” and “Gender and the Theology of the Body,” at St. Malachy Church, 9833 East County Road 750 N., in Brownsburg, from 6-9:15 p.m. on Jan. 16.

This double-feature event is geared toward teenagers in seventh through 12th grade, and for young adults and parents.

“Purified” brings parents and teens together to discover God’s plan for love and opens up an opportunity for them to continue the discussion about this important topic at home, in a healthy and easy way with resources that work. Evert mixes humor with down-to-earth practicality, making the difficult conversations about love much easier.

After a break, Evert will speak on “Gender and the Theology of Your Body.” Geared for teens and adults, the talk looks at the meaning of sex, gender and the human body. In a society where the truth of masculinity and femininity are being questioned, this talk reveals how one’s body as a man or woman reveals one’s identity and calling.

The event includes adoration, praise and worship, and an opportunity to receive the sacrament of reconciliation.

Tickets are \$25, with group discounts available. When registering, enter the code EARLYBIRD for a \$5 discount.

For more information or to register, go to [chastity.com/purified](http://chastity.com/purified). For information about the venue, contact the St. Malachy parish office at 317-852-3195. †

## Wedding Anniversaries

**MICHAEL AND MARY ELLEN (METCALF) DUGAN**, members of St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis, will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary on Dec. 26.

The couple was married in SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis on Dec. 26, 1964.

They have two children: Katherine Longo and Kelly Remy.

The couple also has five grandchildren and one great-grandchild.



**THOMAS AND BARBARA (SCHMITT) WEISBROD**, members of St. Nicholas Parish in Ripley County, will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary on Dec. 26.

The couple was married in St. Vivian Church in Cincinnati on Dec. 26, 1964.

They have four children: Dan, Daren, Dave and Doug Weisbrod.

The couple also has 23 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren.



**JOE AND JUDY (JETT) WILLIAMS**, members of Holy Spirit Parish in Indianapolis, will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary on Dec. 26.

The couple was married in St. Simon the Apostle Church in Indianapolis on Dec. 26, 1964.

They have three children: Jeannene Talbott, Jeff and Joe Williams.

The couple also has four grandchildren.



Announcements for couples celebrating 50, 55, 60, 65, 70 or more years of marriage are accepted. Go to [cutt.ly/anniversaries](http://cutt.ly/anniversaries) or call 317-236-1585.





# The Face of Mercy

By Daniel Conway



## Our hearts can be transformed by the love of Jesus

*“What we contemplate and adore is the whole Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, represented by an image that accentuates his heart” (“Dilexit Nos,” #48).*

Pope Francis’s new encyclical, *“Dilexit nos”* [“He loved us”]: on the Human and Divine Love of the Heart of Jesus Christ,” is a sustained meditation on the love of God incarnate. The image that the Holy Father uses is the ancient symbol of the human heart, which stands for what is most human in us, and what is most like God.

“It is essential to realize that our relationship to the person of Jesus Christ is one of friendship and adoration,” the pope says, “drawn by the love represented under the image of his heart” (#49). We adore the Sacred Heart of Jesus, “the same Christ who loved us to the very end, opening wide his arms on the cross, who then rose from the dead and now lives among us in glory” (#51).

Throughout *“Dilexit Nos,”* Pope Francis draws on the words and example of saints and spiritual writers who were known for their devotion

to the Sacred Heart. “The venerable image portraying Christ holding out his loving heart also shows him looking directly at us, inviting us to encounter, dialogue and trust,” the pope teaches. This image of the Sacred Heart also “shows his strong hands capable of supporting us and his lips that speak personally to each of us” (#54).

St. Augustine, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Francis de Sales and St. Margaret Mary Alacoque are just a few of the holy women and men who have testified to the power of God’s love manifested in and through the holy heart of Jesus. “The image of the heart should lead us to contemplate Christ in all the beauty and richness of his humanity and divinity” (#55), the pope says, making the case for the heart as the place where God and humankind are united.

“Standing before the image, we stand before Christ, and in his presence, love pauses, contemplates mystery, and enjoys it in silence” (#57).

Human persons are made in the image and likeness of God, who is love. It’s only right that the deepest, most powerful image of God is one

that shows how our hardened hearts are transformed by the holy heart of God’s only Son. “The deepest part of us, created for love, will fulfill God’s plan only if we learn to love,” Pope Francis teaches. “And the heart is the symbol of that love” (#59).

The mystery of the Incarnation unites divinity and humanity in powerful ways.

“In gazing upon the Lord’s heart,” Pope Francis says, “we contemplate a physical reality, his human flesh, which enables him to possess genuine human emotions and feelings, like ourselves, albeit fully transformed by his divine love” (#60).

The emotions expressed by Jesus are human but not distorted by sin. His ego never interferes with his feelings or his actions. Christ assumed all that is part of our human nature, so everything about us (mind, heart and body) might be sanctified (#62).

The image of the Sacred Heart means far more than a pious devotion. It is a way of seeing what is most important in ourselves as people made in God’s image. As Pope Francis teaches:

*In contemplating Christ’s heart,*

*we also see how, in his fine and noble sentiments, his kindness and gentleness and his signs of genuine human affection, the deeper truth of his infinite divine love is revealed. In the words of Benedict XVI, “from the infinite horizon of his love, God wished to enter into the limits of human history and the human condition. He took on a body and a heart. Thus, we can contemplate and encounter the infinite in the finite, the invisible and ineffable mystery in the human heart of Jesus the Nazarene” (#64).*

In Jesus, we see the face of God, and in his Sacred Heart we connect with God’s incomparable love and mercy. The mystery of who we are, and how we are expected to live, is revealed in the holy heart of Jesus. “It is precisely in his human love, and not apart from it, that we encounter his divine love: we discover the infinite in the finite” (#67).

God loves us and we see this love most intimately expressed in the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

*(Daniel Conway is a member of The Criterion’s editorial committee.) †*

“Jesus of Nazareth, by his words, his actions, and his entire person reveals the mercy of God.”

–Pope Francis, *“Misericordiae Vultus”* (“The Face of Mercy”)

“Jesús de Nazaret con su palabra, con sus gestos y con toda su persona revela la misericordia de Dios.”

–Papa Francisco, *“Misericordiae Vultus”* (“El rostro de la misericordia”)

El rostro de la misericordia/Daniel Conway

## El amor de Jesús puede transformar nuestros corazones

*“Lo que contemplamos y adoramos es a Jesucristo entero, el Hijo de Dios hecho hombre, representado en una imagen cuya donde está destacado su Corazón” (“Dilexit Nos,” #48).*

La nueva encíclica del Papa Francisco titulada *“Dilexit nos* [Nos amó]: sobre el amor humano y divino del corazón de Jesucristo,” es una meditación sostenida sobre el amor de Dios encarnado. La imagen que utiliza el Santo Padre es el antiguo símbolo del corazón humano, que representa lo más humano que hay en nosotros y lo más parecido a Dios.

“Es indispensable destacar que nos relacionamos en la amistad y en la adoración con la persona de Cristo, atraídos por el amor que se representa en la imagen de su Corazón” (#49). Adoramos el Sagrado Corazón de Jesús, “el mismo que nació en Belén por amor, es el que caminaba por Galilea sanando, acariciando, derramando misericordia, es el que nos amó hasta el fin abriendo sus brazos en la cruz. En definitiva, es el mismo que ha resucitado y vive glorioso en medio de nosotros” (#51).

A lo largo de *“Dilexit Nos,”* el Papa Francisco recurre a las palabras y al ejemplo de santos y escritores espirituales que se distinguieron por

su devoción al Sagrado Corazón. “Esa imagen venerada de Cristo donde se destaca su corazón amante, tiene al mismo tiempo una mirada que llama al encuentro, al diálogo, a la confianza; tiene unas manos fuertes capaces de sostenernos; tiene una boca que nos dirige la palabra de un modo único y personalísimo” (#54).

San Agustín, Santa Catalina de Siena, San Francisco de Sales y Santa Margarita María Alacoque son apenas algunos de los hombres y mujeres santos que han dado testimonio del poder del amor de Dios manifestado en y a través del santo corazón de Jesús. “La imagen del corazón debe referirnos a la totalidad de Jesucristo en su centro unificador y, simultáneamente, desde ese centro unificador debe orientarnos a contemplar a Cristo en toda la hermosura y riqueza de su humanidad y de su divinidad” (#55), nos dice el Papa para aducir que el corazón es el lugar donde se unen Dios y humanidad.

“Mirando la imagen nos situamos frente a Cristo, y ante él el amor se detiene, contempla el misterio, lo disfruta en silencio” (#57).

La persona humana está hecha a imagen y semejanza de Dios, que es amor; por lo tanto, es justo que la imagen

más profunda y poderosa de Dios sea la que muestra cómo nuestros corazones endurecidos se transforman mediante el corazón santo del Hijo único de Dios. “El centro íntimo de nuestra persona, creado para el amor, sólo realizará el proyecto de Dios cuando ame”—nos enseña el Papa Francisco—. “Así, el símbolo del corazón al mismo tiempo simboliza el amor” (#59).

El misterio de la Encarnación une de manera poderosa la divinidad y la humanidad.

“La mirada dirigida al Corazón del Señor contempla una realidad física, su carne humana, que hace posible que Cristo tenga emociones y sentimientos bien humanos, como nosotros, aunque plenamente transformados por su amor divino” (#60), nos explica el Papa Francisco.

Las emociones expresadas por Jesús son humanas, pero no están distorsionadas por el pecado. Su ego nunca interfiere en sus sentimientos ni en sus actos. Cristo asumió todos los elementos que forman parte de nuestra naturaleza humana, para que todo en nosotros (mente, corazón y cuerpo) pudiera ser santificado (#62).

La imagen del Sagrado Corazón significa mucho más que una devoción piadosa; es una forma de ver lo que es más importante en nosotros mismos

como personas hechas a imagen de Dios. Tal como nos enseña el Santo Padre:

*Contemplando el Corazón de Cristo reconocemos cómo en sus sentimientos nobles y sanos, en su ternura, en el temblor de su cariño humano, se manifiesta toda la verdad de su amor divino e infinito. Así lo expresaba Benedicto XVI: “Desde el horizonte infinito de su amor, Dios quiso entrar en los límites de la historia y de la condición humana, tomó un cuerpo y un corazón, de modo que pudiéramos contemplar y encontrar lo infinito en lo finito, el Misterio invisible e inefable en el Corazón humano de Jesús, el Nazareno” (#64).*

En Jesús, vemos el rostro de Dios, y en su Sagrado Corazón nos conectamos con el amor y la misericordia incomparables de Dios. El misterio de quiénes somos, y cómo se espera que vivamos, se revela en el corazón santo de Jesús. “Precisamente en su amor humano, y no apartándonos de él, encontramos su amor divino; encontramos “lo infinito en lo finito” (#67).

Dios nos ama y vemos este amor más íntimamente expresado en el Sagrado Corazón de Jesús.

*(Daniel Conway es integrante del comité editorial de The Criterion.) †*



# Beauty of faith leads artist to create sacred art to draw others to God

By Sean Gallagher

Creating beauty in a work of art can be mysterious and mystical.

The lines between the creator and the created can be blurred. Aspects of the life of the artist can affect and be manifested in what is created. At the same time, a work of art and the act of creating it can change its creator.

And for believers, hovering over it all is the work of the ultimate artist, God the Creator of all, who seeks in his providential designs to make a work of art of everyone.

During the past five years, Jay Parnell has entered into this mysterious and mystical web of relationships among artist, art, beauty and the Creator of them all.

Educated as a Protestant Christian at St. Joan of Arc School in Indianapolis in the 1970s and 1980s, Jay, along with his wife Kendra, was drawn to the Church by the beauty found in its worship and teachings.

They were received into the full communion of the Church in 2020 at Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Parish in Indianapolis, where they continue to be parishioners.

A local artist known in the past for painting what he describes as “narrative portraits,” embracing the Catholic faith led Jay to use his God-given artistic skills to draw others through beauty to Christ and the Church, creating paintings of saints and other images of faith.

“When you see art, you let your defenses down,” he said. “You just release. All of this beauty comes to you through God’s voice of truth and beauty.

“For me, that’s why I’m slowly making the shift toward doing more sacred art. I want to not only make things that are beautiful, I want to paint things that are truthful and are beneficial for your soul.”

It took a long journey of faith and perseverance for Parnell to arrive at this point. And it’s that journey, which he has

made with Kendra, that is its own work of art created by God.

The more Parnell recognizes that fact, the more he seeks to work with God in his own artistry.

“My art is an act of worship,” he said. “That’s why I pray every time before I paint. I ask for the grace to have my hands, heart and creativity in line with God’s will. That is my prayer in every single session.”

## ‘I was being catechized without even knowing it’

Little did he know at the time, but Parnell’s time at St. Joan of Arc School planted seeds of faith in him. They only came into full bloom decades later.

He saw the beauty of the faith every time he went into St. Joan of Arc Church with its classic Romanesque architecture, its soaring marble canopy over its main altar and mosaics adorning its side altars.

“I was being catechized without even knowing it,” Parnell recalled. “The beauty of the art and the sanctuary at St. Joan of Arc really influenced me deeply.”

In addition to experiencing the beauty of the faith portrayed in stone in the church, Parnell was also introduced to the beauty of a life shaped by the Catholic faith—even if it likewise took years for these lessons to sink in.

“I had a nun for a teacher,” he said. “I was a bad kid and didn’t really like her at the time. Now, as a grown man, I look back and say, ‘Sister Mary Ann had it right.’

“She was really subtle, but she was also effective. A lot of the things that I learned really stuck with me.”

Parnell grew up around art in his home. His father was an artist and his mother wrote poetry. He later majored in telecommunications at Ball State University in Muncie, Ind. His education led to employment as a photographer and illustrator while he worked as a painter on the side in Indianapolis in the 1990s.

While at Ball State, Parnell met Kendra. They married in 1995 and are the parents of three children and grandparents of two.

Staying committed to each other for nearly 30 years has required deliberate effort on their part, since their own extended families have been marked by divorce.

“We made a pact with each other a long time ago that we were never going to get divorced,” Kendra said. “We were going to stay true to our marriage, no matter what the problem was. We were going to work through it. And we taught our children the same thing.”

## ‘He’s the true artist’

Up until about 2019, Jay, Kendra and their family attended a variety of churches for periods in their life together. But none seemed to satisfy them.

“Everything had seemed so soft and not ready for this world,” Jay said. “What this world was bringing was very, very dark and strong.



Jay Parnell poses in front of paintings he has created. After being received into the full communion of the Church in 2020, Jay has sought to use his artistic talents to create sacred art to draw others closer to God and the Church. He is a member of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Parish in Indianapolis. (Submitted photo)

If you don’t have a muscular form of Christianity to combat it, you’re going to fall.”

Then the COVID-19 pandemic struck in early 2020.

“God took that opportunity to turn us around to something completely different that we had never thought of,” Kendra recalled.

That new form of worship for them was actually centuries old—the traditional Latin Mass.

During the pandemic, the couple became familiar with this form of the Mass online. Then they discovered that it was celebrated nearby at Holy Rosary.

“It was under our noses the whole time,” Kendra said.

“This is how God makes things possible,” Jay added.

“He’s the true artist,” said Kendra.

## Saved by hope, and beauty

Not long after the Parnells were received into the Church at Holy Rosary in 2020, Father C. Ryan McCarthy, Holy Rosary’s pastor, commissioned Jay on behalf of the parish to create a painting of St. Josephine Bakhita.

Born in 1879 in what is now Sudan, Josephine was abducted as a child and sold into slavery, abused and tortured. She was eventually purchased by an Italian diplomat and later freed after moving to Italy with the family that saved her from slavery.

There she converted to Catholicism and became a Canossian sister in Venice in 1896. She died in 1947 and was declared a saint in 2000.

Father McCarthy chose St. Josephine as the subject of the work that the parish commissioned in part because of her connections to Italy, since Holy Rosary was founded by Italian immigrants to Indianapolis. But there was something more to her story that he wanted to share through Jay’s artistry.

“In her story, you see someone who’s overcome all kinds of evil and was able

to fully embrace Christ in ways that seem unfathomable,” Father McCarthy said. “I thought she was a great example of hope to put before the eyes of my parishioners.”

Hope is a definite theme of the painting of St. Josephine that now hangs next to the sanctuary at Holy Rosary.

At the bottom of the painting are the Latin words, “*Spe Salvi*,” which in English means, “Saved by hope,” taken from St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans (Rom 8:4). That’s also the title of a 2007 encyclical letter on hope by Pope Benedict XVI, in which the pontiff used the story of St. Josephine as an example of the power of Christian hope.

Above the words in the painting are seen a barefoot St. Josephine in her religious habit standing on a whip, a symbol of her previous life as a slave. She stands in front of young Black children. Jay explained that he included the children in the painting because St. Josephine is a patron saint of the victims of child trafficking, since she herself was such a victim.

“Working on this painting put me on the fast track to understanding my faith,” Jay reflected. “When the painting was in my home studio, I venerated her and prayed for her intercession before every painting session. Now I see her in the parish [church], and I still pray for her intercession. This has deepened my faith and sharpened my dedication to becoming a saint.”

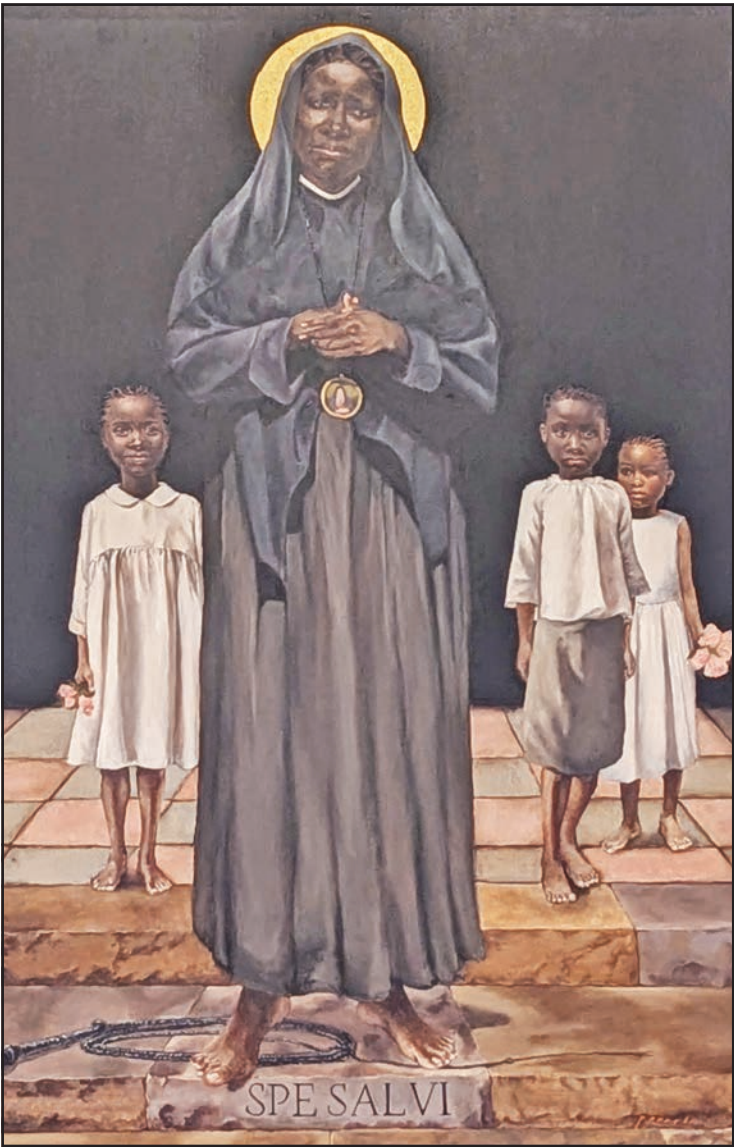
More recently, Jay has created a painting of St. Thérèse of Lisieux and one of the late Benedictine Father Boniface Hardin, a Black monk of Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad who ministered for decades in the Black community in Indianapolis and who helped found Martin University on the city’s east side.

“This is only the beginning of my journey into the creation of sacred Catholic art,” said Jay. “My goal is to use my God-given artistic talents to promote the faith through the creation of beautiful art.”

(To view the work of Jay Parnell and for more information about his work as an artist, visit [jayparnell.com](http://jayparnell.com).) †



Kendra Parnell



A painting of St. Josephine Bakhita created by Jay Parnell hangs in Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Church in Indianapolis. The parish commissioned Parnell to create the painting of the Sudanese-born saint, a victim of child trafficking in the 19th century who later became a religious sister in Italy. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)



# Three blessings of the season: the gifts of friendship, love and gratitude

(The Criterion has invited our readers to share a special thank-you with someone who has influenced their lives in a positive and powerful way. Here is the sixth part of a continuing series.)

By John Shaughnessy

Friendships begin in many ways, and one of the special paths to that gift happens when someone takes the time to notice a stranger who is struggling.

Eight years ago, Kathie Ponder felt at a loss in her faith and her life when she stopped her car in the parking lot of St. Joseph Church in Corydon. Walking inside the church, the then-55-year-old non-Catholic wasn't sure what she was hoping to find there. But she found it when Mary Olges approached her with a smile.

"Mary talked with me and made me feel welcomed," recalls Ponder about that simple outreach that started a dramatic change in her life, helping her overcome her anxieties and the scars of past relationships.

"I attended several Sundays, and I was then invited to the Christ Renews His Parish [CRHP] program. My life was forever changed that weekend," Ponder says. "I had attended various churches my whole life, but I never found Jesus Christ until I found the Eucharist."

That experience led her to a desire to join in full communion with the Catholic Church through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) program.

"Mary and her husband Jack walked with me through every step of RCIA," Ponder recalls. "She helped me learn the prayers and feel at home. I began to understand so many things I had read and studied in the Bible. The Bible became a living word. And Jesus living in the Eucharist, living in me."

"During my journey, I got deathly ill. Mary and several church members came to my work to pray over me. To my work! This was the day before a serious surgery. The healing process was long, but Mary and the other church ladies cared for me."

Ponder marvels at how Olges "has never left my side" since that first meeting in church.

"I have lost my mother, and she has become a second mother to me," Ponder says. "She is the perfect role model for me and many others. Mary attends several Masses weekly and goes to adoration faithfully. She goes out to area nursing homes—visits and calls on all in need."

"I am 63 now. I feel great peace. I have lots of friends, and I no longer suffer with anxiety disorders. Mary Olges took me by the hand and didn't let go. I am so thankful for her."

**A gift of love**

The gift would become the greatest blessing of Starlette Ragsdale's life, a gift she initially didn't want.

"I never wanted children," she recalls. "But God decided I did."

It didn't take long for her to connect with God's plan.

"I prayed so hard for the baby I was carrying, because I was told I would probably lose her to complications while I was pregnant," Ragsdale says. "Each day, I prayed often while touching my tummy to assure the baby was moving."

"Nine months later, I had a baby girl, Christina—healthy and vibrant and beautiful—who has become my biggest blessing of my life. She is exactly who taught me what love is."

**The gift of friendship, part two**

When Luretta Clark began thinking about someone who has had a positive impact on her life, her thoughts

immediately turned to a friend she has always trusted and who has a gift for making people smile.

"I instantly knew Dave Young was my answer," says Clark about her friend, a fellow longtime AT&T employee who also served as a local representative for the Communications Workers of America labor union 4900.

"We worked together for years, and he was a union person that we all trusted and respected," notes Clark, a member of St. Bartholomew Parish in Columbus. "It was always a treat to see his smiling face. He had a gift for lifting our spirits with his humor and kindness."

Her friendship with Young—a member of St. Louis de Montfort Parish in Fishers, Ind., in the Lafayette Diocese—has continued after their retirements.

"He has kept in touch, and he has shared his family with me by texts, photos and funny stories," Clark says. "I have never seen a man so dedicated to his wife, children and grandchildren. But most of all, he loves God and the Catholic Church. He has had such an impact on my life because he inspires me to a better Catholic. I am grateful to God for his friendship."

**A list—and a lesson—of gratitude**

At 81, Stephenie Paquette has a long list of people she's thankful for, and she uses perfect penmanship on four pages of loose-leaf, blue-lined, white paper to pay tribute to them.

She starts with her mother "Frances, a single mother in the 1940s who gave me every advantage she could—sent me to Catholic school and made sure the two of us attended Mass every Sunday, holy day and major feast day, as well as receiving the sacrament of penance regularly."

She praises the Sisters of St. Francis of Oldenburg for the way they guided her Catholic education, developed her spiritual life and fueled her desire to be an elementary school teacher.

She fondly recalls the encouragement of a college professor "who informed me I have 'a great capacity for love,' which I have recounted many times over the years when I needed that reminder during times when I didn't feel so loving."

She salutes the many friends who "have shown me how to love the Lord and his word in ways I was not familiar with before."

She remembers the international students she has invited to stay in her family's home and the people of different countries and cultures she has met through her travels, thanking them for "showing me how we are different and the same simultaneously," leading to friendships that she treasures.



The offer of friendship from Mary Olges, left, to Kathie Ponder has created a strong bond between the two members of St. Joseph Parish in Corydon. (Submitted photo)



The longtime friendship between Luretta Clark and Dave Young has brought joy to both their lives. (Submitted photo)

"Nowadays, I am particularly grateful to those who minister to me in my old age—my husband, medical personnel and my children and grandchildren," notes Paquette, a member of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Indianapolis.

Her note also includes a lesson in gratitude—and the way to live it.

"Of course, so many of these people are no longer on this Earth, but that does not diminish my gratitude for their part and influence in my life. I did try, when I was able, to tell them in person how they were a positive part in my life."

"I have much to be grateful for every day. God has placed so many in my path, and I am glad that I could learn from each of them." †

## 3 dead, including teen suspect, in mass shooting at Wisconsin Christian school

(OSV News)—Police in Madison, Wis., said they are investigating a mass shooting at that city's Abundant Life Christian School on Dec. 16 that left at least two killed and six injured, authorities said. The gunman is also dead, they said.

Madison Police Chief Shon Barnes said at a press conference there is no ongoing threat to the school or local community.

Police identified the suspected shooter as Natalie Rupnow, a 15-year-old student, who also went by the name Samantha. She is believed to have died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound after killing a teacher and a fellow student.

Barnes said the Madison Police Department responded to a report of a shooting at Abundant Life Christian School, a community Christian school with students from kindergarten through 12th grade. The school's website states it was founded in 1978 as "a community

Christian school with the vision of providing academic excellence in a Christ-centered environment for families in the greater Dane County area."

"This is something that we all prepare for, but we hope we never have to do," Barnes said of the law enforcement response.

In a statement, President Joe Biden called the shooting "shocking and unconscionable."

"We need Congress to act. Now," Biden said. "From Newtown to Uvalde, Parkland to Madison, to so many other shootings that don't receive attention—it is unacceptable that we are unable to protect our children from this scourge of gun violence. We cannot continue to accept it as normal. Every child deserves to feel safe in their classroom. Students across our country should be learning how to read and write—not having to learn how to duck and cover."

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has called in the past for a total ban on assault weapons, a term that refers commonly to semi-automatic rifles, shotguns, and pistols fed by ammunition magazines of various capacities. The bishops support an assault weapons' ban similar to the one they supported in the 1994 crime bill, which Congress allowed to expire in 2004. They also support limitations on civilian access to high-capacity ammunition magazines.

Other gun regulation measures the bishops support include universal background checks for all gun purchases.

The incident took place near the 12th anniversary of the mass killing at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., on Dec. 14, 2012, where a gunman with a semiautomatic rifle took the lives of 20 children and 6 adults. It is among the deadliest school shootings in U.S. history.

Theologians and Church leaders previously told OSV News that preventing gun violence is a social justice issue, and that a public policy response to gun violence representing a Catholic perspective should start by prioritizing the common good.

"We are deeply saddened by the shooting that occurred at Abundant Life Christian School in Madison and mourn for the victims of this horrible act of violence," Bishop Donald J. Hying of the Madison Diocese said in a statement shared with OSV News.

"We stand united with the Abundant Life family and pray for healing for those who are injured and comfort for the families who are facing the heartbreaking loss of a loved one," he said. "In these days leading up to Christmas, may the peace, love, and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ be an anchor for all those affected." †



# National Eucharistic Congress monstrance on permanent display in cathedral, available for loan

By Natalie Hoefer

Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis was dimly lit on July 17, the first evening of the National Eucharistic Congress. Suddenly, spotlights high overhead swept across the crowd of some 50,000 people to converge on one point: Jesus Christ borne in a massive, golden monstrance, seeming to glow and radiate in the focused light as Crookston, Minn.,



This depiction of St. Luke is one of four figurines representing the Gospel writers that adorn the base of the monstrance used during the National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis in July, now on display SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

Bishop Andrew H. Cozzens processed with it into the stadium. Bearing the Lord’s presence, the monstrance—blessed by Pope Francis—drew attention and awe throughout the five-day congress. It was present at each evening session. It was carried via an elaborate float through downtown Indianapolis in a spirited eucharistic procession of some 60,000 people. And it was used to bless the same hushed adorers in an outdoor Benediction. SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis is now the permanent home of that historic monstrance, a gift to the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. “When the National Eucharistic Congress leadership was studying the history of the nine previous congresses in the United States, they found that the monstrance used in each of them stayed in the host diocese,” explains Father James Brockmeier, archdiocesan director of worship. “Following that history and custom, the [current] National Eucharistic Congress leadership decided to leave the monstrance with us in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.” The monstrance was made in Guadalajara, Mexico, and honors Our Lady of Guadalupe, patroness of the National Eucharistic Revival. It stands 4 feet, 5 inches tall and weighs more than 20 pounds. Figurines of the four Gospel writers adorn the base of the monstrance. It is on permanent display in a case in the nave of SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis—except when it’s on loan. “As it has become a recognizable sign of the National Eucharistic Revival, different groups, including many dioceses who are hosting their own eucharistic revival events, have asked to use the

monstrance,” says Father Brockmeier. The monstrance can also be borrowed by parishes, schools and agencies of the archdiocese for the same purpose. When the monstrance is on loan, a note will be placed in the case stating “who is using it, so that we can pray for them as they use it,” he says. When the monstrance is not on loan, it will be used for a holy hour after the cathedral’s 10 a.m. Mass on the second Sunday of each month. Father Brockmeier says he was “very excited” when he heard the monstrance would stay in the archdiocese and be displayed in the cathedral.

“The National Eucharistic Congress was such a blessing for the archdiocese,” says Father Brockmeier. “... It’s beautiful to see people’s excitement in seeing the monstrance and remembering the moments of grace in adoration and the procession at the congress.” Archbishop Charles C. Thompson agrees. “The archdiocese was greatly blessed and honored” to host the nation’s 10th eucharistic congress, he says. “To be gifted with the monstrance blessed by Pope Francis for the congress was unexpected but deeply appreciated. ... By having it displayed in SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, we can be reminded of continued blessings flowing from



The monstrance from the National Eucharistic Congress held in Indianapolis in July was gifted to the Archdiocese of Indianapolis and, except for when on loan, is on display in SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis. Blessed by Pope Francis, the monstrance, made in Guadalajara, Mexico, stands 4 feet, 5 inches tall and weighs more than 20 pounds. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

the National Eucharist Congress while praying for our brothers and sisters of other dioceses that may borrow it from time to time. “In essence, may the monstrance inspire us to remain Christ-centered in both receiving and sharing blessings of the real presence of Jesus Christ in the most holy Eucharist.” (To request the use of the monstrance or to inquire if it is present in SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, call the cathedral office at 317-634-4519.) †

## Marriage ANNOUNCEMENTS

Be a part of our Spring Marriage Edition  
Feb. 14 issue of The Criterion

Couples who are planning to be married between Feb. 14 and July 11, 2025, in a marriage that is recognized as a valid sacramental or valid natural marriage, or couples who were wed between Aug. 1, 2024, and Feb. 1, 2025, in such a recognized marriage and did not have their engagement announcement in *The Criterion* are invited to submit the information for the upcoming Feb. 14 Spring Marriage Edition. Announcements can be submitted by mail using the form below or electronically at [www.archindy.org/engagements](http://www.archindy.org/engagements). **E-mailed photos** Photos should be saved in jpg format and be at least 500 kb. Color photos are preferred. We recommend sending a photo where the couple’s faces are close to each other. Please send the photo as an attachment to the e-mail: [alewis@archindy.org](mailto:alewis@archindy.org). Subject line: Spring Marriage (Last name). In the e-mail, please include the information in the form located below. If it is not possible to e-mail a photo, a photo can be mailed with the bottom form. Please no photocopies or laser prints. To have the photo returned, please include a return addressed envelope with a postage stamp on it.

**Deadline**  
All announcements and photos must be received by 5 p.m. on Feb. 5.

— Use this form to furnish information by mail —

Clip and mail to: BRIDES, The Criterion, ATTN: Ann Lewis, 1400 N. Meridian Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367. To submit information online go to: [www.archindy.org/engagements](http://www.archindy.org/engagements). **Deadline with photos:** Wednesday, Feb. 5 at 5 p.m.  
Please print or type:

Name of Bride (first, middle, last)		Daytime Phone	
Mailing Address	City	State	Zip Code
Name of Bride's Parents (first, last)			
City		State	
Name of Bridegroom (first, middle, last)			
Name of Bridegroom's Parents (first, last)			
City		State	
Wedding Date	Church	City	State
<input type="checkbox"/> Photo Enclosed	Signature of person furnishing information		
<input type="checkbox"/> Return photo	Relationship		
<input type="checkbox"/> No Picture	Daytime Phone		



On July 17 during the opening session of the National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis, Crookston, Minn., Bishop Andrew H. Cozzens processes in Lucas Oil Stadium with a large monstrance blessed by Pope Francis. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)



In the library of the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican in this photo from June 19, 2023, Pope Francis blesses the monstrance that was used during National Eucharistic Congress held in Indianapolis in July. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)



# SIMPLY CATHOLIC

## Why we go a caroling: A history of the development of Christmas carols

By Eddie O'Neill

(OSV News)—What would the Christmas season be without carols? These seasonal songs seem to greet us everywhere this time of year with their familiar melodies and lyrics.

Though we may know the first verse and the refrain of a number of Christmas carols, do we know the origin of these songs we sing each December?

The singing of psalms and songs of praise in worship dates back to earliest days of the Church, of course, a tradition with roots in Jewish religious custom. Hymns written especially in honor of Christ's birth first appeared in the early centuries, such as "Of the Father's Love Begotten," composed by the Latin poet Aurelius Clemens Prudentius (348-413).

Through the years, the repertoire of Latin chant that developed for use in the Mass came to include propers (such as entrance and Communion antiphons) written especially for the Nativity and nearby celebrations on the Church calendar, such as Advent and Epiphany. Their words were based on Scripture and other sacred texts.

The kind of popular song we would typically call a Christmas carol today, however, had different origins. The word "carol" probably comes from the French word "carole," a circle dance accompanied by singing, often with a verse and refrain pattern.

Up through the later Middle Ages, "caroles" were thus typically dance music for communal celebrations. But eventually they were used also as processional songs during religious festivals and as accompaniment for religious mystery plays.

Only later did they come to be sung in churches and associated with Christmas in particular.

The singing of popular Christmas tunes received a boost from St. Francis of Assisi. In 1223, he formed a living Nativity scene on the outskirts of town, inviting the children of his village to come see the crèche while he taught them simple songs to honor the coming of the Lord.

This new December custom grew larger and more ornate each year, spreading throughout Europe, with each culture adding its own local customs to the celebrations. Carols were composed and learned by the common folk wherever the crèche and seasonal plays were performed.

To the chagrin of some local parish priests, many of these new Christmas carols borrowed melodies from well-known drinking songs. Clergy in some places opposed their being sung.

But the joy of singing carols was infectious and unstoppable. Bands of traveling singers and musicians, or carolers, as they would come to be known, performed on street corners, in taverns and in homes in village after village.

After the Protestant Reformation, which began in the 16th century, Lutherans followed the lead of their founder, the German Martin Luther (1483-1546), who



Choir members sing carols in front of a figure of Christ during Christmas Eve Mass at a Catholic church in Shenyang, China. Christmas carols developed through many centuries as a popular way around the world to give thanks and praise to God for Christ's birth. (CNS photo/Sheng Li, Reuters)

encouraged his congregations to sing the popular songs of the Christmas season. But the 17th-century English Puritans outlawed the singing of Christmas carols, viewing them as "popish" holdovers.

Nevertheless, English Catholics (and no doubt some less strict Anglicans as well) continued to sing carols privately, such as "The First Noel" and "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen."

After the passing of the Puritans from power in England, several 18th-century Anglican composers produced joyous hymns for the season. For example, Isaac Watts (1674-1748) wrote "Joy to the World"; John Francis Wade (c. 1711-1786), "O Come, All Ye Faithful"; and Charles Wesley (1707-1788), "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing."

During this time, the distinction between Christmas carols (popular songs for informal singing) and Christmas hymns (composed by skilled churchmen for formal use in worship) began to be blurred. Carols came to be sung in church, and hymns outside of liturgical settings.

Christmas carols of all types experienced a renaissance in England, America and elsewhere during the 19th century.

Some of the most familiar carols we sing today were composed at that time, such as "Silent Night," "Away in a Manger," "O Little Town of Bethlehem," "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear," "Sleep, Holy Babe," "We Three Kings

of Orient Are" and "What Child Is This" (using an old English melody, "Greensleeves").

When the English Queen Victoria married the German Prince Albert in 1840, it became known that the royal couple was quite fond of Christmas carols. In an attempt to gain royal favor, numerous families and church groups came to the royal palace to sing for them.

Like the enthusiastic troubadours of past centuries, these English carolers of the Victorian age took to the streets of London with their songs.

In the United States, it was Lutheran and Methodist congregations, especially, who made carols popular both in worship and in the culture at large. By the end of the Civil War, caroling had become a way for many denominations to evangelize beyond their four church walls. Caroling groups brought joy to the sick and the homebound with their musical visits.

These days, caroling groups have been replaced in many ways by recorded Christmas music. Yet the sight of a group of carolers at shopping malls or neighborhoods still brings the season to life and is a reminder of the true meaning of the celebration.

(Eddie O'Neill is a writer and audio/video producer in Michigan.) †

## Popular carol 'Silent Night' was composed by a priest in 1818 in Austria



By Eddie O'Neill

(OSV News)—Father Josef Mohr (1792-1848) was the pastor of St. Nicholas Church in Obendorf, Austria. In 1816, he composed the six verse lyrics to "Silent Night," which would become one of the most popular Christmas carols of all time.

Exactly why he wrote the song is unclear. However, we do know that on Christmas Eve 1818, he presented the poem to the parish organist, Franz Xavier Gruber, with the request for Gruber to compose an appropriate melody for two solo voices with choir and guitar accompaniment. The carol was first performed during Mass that Christmas Eve.

Gruber sang bass as the church choir sang the refrains of each verse. Father Mohr, a talented musician himself, played the guitar accompaniment. The tune was warmly received by those who heard it that first night.

Father Mohr died in 1848. Before his death, the composer of "Silent Night" is reported to have said that his composing of the Christmas carol was one of the "most treasured moments" of his life.

Today a memorial chapel (the Silent Night Chapel) stands at the place where this famous song was composed. It is the site of an annual remembrance of the two men who composed the song.

(Eddie O'Neill is a writer and audio/video producer in Michigan.) †

Left, the Silent Night Chapel, which is in the town of Oberndorf in the Austrian state of Salzburg, is a monument to the Christmas carol "Silent Night." The chapel stands on the site of the former St. Nicholas Church, where on Christmas Eve in 1818, the carol was performed for the first time. (OSV News photo/courtesy www.stillenacht.com)



Journey of the Heart/Jennifer Burger

Welcome the great love of the Christ Child at Christmas

One of my favorite Scripture passages is John 3:16—“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone



who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.” Although typically not a reading we come across in Advent, it is a truth etched on my own heart as a result of a turning point in my life early in my adult years, and I return to it often.

Many know this passage by heart, yet how often do we really take it to heart? Let us take this opportunity to reflect on this passage through the lens of this Advent season.

For God so loved the world ...

God is love. He created the world out of love just as he created each of us out of love. What does God’s love look/feel like at this time of year?

It is in welcoming our children back home with a big hug or wrapping up in a blanket nestled in a cozy chair that I feel God’s loving embrace and comfort. ...

It is in the good that we do for others and see in others through our parish giving trees, food pantries that provide for those in need—or even a simple spreading of good cheer as we go about our day. ... God’s love is generous and is in full

display this time of the year: let us keep our eyes, ears and hearts open to receive and share his love as often as we can!

... that he gave his only Son ...

God’s love gives life ... and came to life through the birth of Christ—the moment when his love came down to Bethlehem—God’s gift of his Son for us!

In contemplating the coming of Jesus’ birth, I cannot help but contemplate his life—who is Jesus to me? The readings throughout Advent, especially from the prophets, give us a beautiful vision of the hope, peace, joy and love of our Savior and how he enters our life. How are we welcoming Christ into our life and how are we nurturing this relationship during Advent?

... so that everyone who believes in him ...

What does it mean to believe? Is it faith? Is it trust? What does this look like?

As I reflect on the blessings of this past year, so much has come from prayer: the prayers that have been prayed for us and that we have prayed for others. I am grateful for the gift of prayer that unites us to Jesus and unites us with each other. Our shared prayer not only gives witness to our faith and trust in him but to the way of love that Christ brings to the world.

... might not perish ...

It is easy to get caught up in the

“things of this season”—decorations, planning for the perfect Christmas, shopping for the perfect gifts. These do not last; they eventually perish.

What lasts or remains? It is essence—the essence of anything is that which does not change.

There may be some elements of our Christmas this year that are different or missing—including loved ones—yet we can invite and embrace the Holy Spirit shared as God’s love in the infant Christ and in our loved ones into our homes.

Let these be the essence of your Christmas, and may these be held close to you throughout the new year.

... but might have eternal life.

For this we rejoice! It is the joy of anticipation of the coming of Christ—the love of God made humble in the birth and life of Christ, selfless in his death on the cross and glorious in his resurrection and return. Our eternal salvation is made secure in him!

May we welcome this great love in the manger of our hearts this Christmas and rejoice always!

(Jennifer Burger is program manager at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House in Indianapolis and a member of St. Simon the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis. She is also a spiritual director.) †

Faith and Family/Sean Gallagher

The birth of the Christ Child shows greatness in humility

Through the years, I have loved reading at bedtime to my five boys. It’s been a way for me to build my relationship with them.



I get to explore with them in those moments, in age-appropriate ways, important truths of what it means to be human and a follower of Jesus.

I’m coming now to read for the first time with Colin, my youngest son, who

is 11, the three novels of J.R.R. Tolkien’s trilogy, *The Lord of the Rings*, written by the British author between 1937 and 1949.

One of the major themes of these books, as well as its prequel *The Hobbit*, is humility. More specifically, they show with great beauty and insight that the most crucial things that happen in the world are done by the meek and lowly. They are the people whom the rest of the world—focused instead on power and might—ignore and devalue.

I’m glad to start exploring Tolkien’s Middle Earth with Colin at Christmas because this theme is at the heart of the feast of the Christ Child’s birth.

He whom we acknowledge as the Messiah was born in a cave in a small town in what the powerful in Rome would have seen as a total backwater.

And while Christ may have been born to an ancient Hebrew royal family, it was a line that had been stripped of all power or prestige centuries before.

In the face of all of this, the words of the angel of the Lord to the shepherds on the night of Christ’s birth are audacious at best: “Today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord” (Lk 2:11).

At the time that Christ was born, the only person who could claim the title “Lord” (“*Kyrios*”) in the original Greek of the Gospels) was the emperor, Augustus Caesar, who gained that title through force of arms alone.

For the followers of Christ to tell the story of his birth in such a way that they give him the title “*Kyrios*” was not just daring. It was also subversive of the social and political order imposed by Rome through military power.

The early Christians’ very different understanding of who was Lord and the resulting different understanding of society is a major reason why they suffered such grievous persecution.

While there is relevance in this for Catholic families today as our society becomes more secularized, I think there’s something more immediately applicable in the birth of our Lord for their daily lives. Stories like *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* can help us appreciate it more.

By virtue of their baptism, Catholic parents and children alike are both conformed to the Christ who, though identified by the angel as Lord, was nonetheless born in utter humility.

And while Christ gained local notoriety as a wonder worker, the ending of his life in crucifixion showed complete impotence and disgrace—at least in the eyes of those who held worldly power in the Roman empire.

We, in our daily lives, are nonetheless empowered by grace to embody the true world-changing greatness Christ achieved through being meek and lowly.

The embrace in faith by Catholic families, from the youngest of children to the oldest of grandparents, of God’s will from day to day in countless small ways will go unnoticed by the powerful of this world.

But God will see greatness in us in them all. He’ll see in them the true lordship his Son embraced in being born in a stable in Bethlehem. †

That All May Be One/Fr. Rick Ginther

May ‘festival of lights’ strengthen bonds with our Jewish brethren

(The following is a column written by Dr. Alan Bercovitz, who is Jewish. He is married to Janine, who is Catholic and a member of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Indianapolis.



Together, they regularly attend a Jewish Saturday service and Sunday Mass. Alan previously has been a guest writer for this column. This year, our Christmas season and Hannukah season begin on the same day. Both have a “festival of lights” aspect. Below is what Alan shares.)

Jewish people worldwide celebrate Hanukkah each year by sharing the story and traditions of this holiday.

Hanukkah is an eight-day holiday that begins on the 25th day of the month of Kislev and ends on the second day of the month of Tevet (on the Hebrew calendar, which is now in the year 5785). This corresponds to our calendar year of 2024, with Hanukkah beginning at sundown on Dec. 25 and ending at sundown on Jan. 2.



Dr. Alan Bercovitz

The story of Hanukkah dates back more than 2,000 years, when Jewish people lived in a land called Judea (now modern-day Israel). The center of their worship was the Great Temple in the city of Jerusalem, and in that Temple was the great menorah.

The light of the menorah burned day and night and was a brilliant symbol of holiness.

King Antiochus (Epiphanes), who was Greek, ruled the land of Judea from 175-164 B.C. He demanded the Jewish people abandon their religion and worship his god, Zeus. When the Jewish people refused, Antiochus sent his soldiers into the Temple. They destroyed the holy books and desecrated holy objects, including the precious menorah.

Placing all their trust in God, and with great courage, a

small band of Jewish people, led by Judah Maccabee, began to fight against the thousands of soldiers and horsemen of the king’s army. They defeated this much larger army, driving them out of Jerusalem.

This unbelievable military victory is the first of two miracles of Hanukkah.

Although now free of oppression, the Jewish people had before them the great task of repairing the damage to the Holy Temple.

The Temple was cleaned thoroughly, the altar was rebuilt, and a new menorah was placed. It was time to re-dedicate the Temple to God. (Hanukkah means “dedication.”)

When it came time to re-light the great menorah, only one small jar of oil was found, enough for just one night. It would take eight days of travel to obtain more.

It was decided to light the menorah anyway, and the next day, to everyone’s amazement, the menorah was miraculously still lit.

For eight days, the oil burned until a new supply of oil arrived. This is the second miracle of Hanukkah.

Seeing this as a sign of God, Judah Maccabee declared, “Let these events be celebrated with mirth and gladness for all time to come.”

And that is exactly what Jewish people do every year all around the world. With prayers of thanksgiving, we celebrate the victory God gave to those who believed in him.

We light Hanukkah candles at sundown on each of the eight days from a special candle called the *shamash* (“assistant”). A candle is added each day, so that a full menorah of nine candles (eight plus the *shamash*) burn brightly on the last day.

May the lights of this season shine brightly on us all.

This year, let us keep in mind that God’s light belongs to all humanity. May our Jewish brothers and sisters revel in that light. May we Christians revel in that light whom we honor as Christ!

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

Evangelization Outreach/Brie Anne Varick

Youth Rally, Mass for Life offer a chance to unite for life

Jan. 22, 2025, will mark the eighth annual Indiana gathering to pray and march for life. This event has grown



during the past seven years, and we can no longer fit in the original venue, St. John the Evangelist Church in downtown Indianapolis.

This past January, we took a leap of faith to move the Mass for Life into the Indiana

Convention Center in Indianapolis to allow more people to gather and pray.

With the move to a new space and the collaboration of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis and the four dioceses in Indiana, a new event, the Youth Rally for Life, was created.

The Indiana Youth Rally and Mass for Life is the largest pro-life gathering in the state, with participants coming from all four corners of Indiana.

The Youth Rally for Life was created to inspire, equip and empower the youths of Indiana to be missionary disciples of the Gospel of life. This event includes dynamic speakers, inspiring musicians, an opportunity to participate in the sacrament of reconciliation, and exposure to pro-life

ministries and Catholic vendors from across the state. At the inaugural Youth Rally for Life on Jan. 22 earlier this year, more than 1,000 youths participated.

The Mass for Life follows the youth rally. It allows people of all ages to gather to pray as the greater Church of Indiana as we celebrate Mass with the bishops of Indiana and priests from across the state. This past January, more than 1,800 people of all ages attend!

There is great power in prayer when the faithful gather together united in the Eucharist to offer prayers of thanksgiving and petition. “Where two or three are

See VARICK, page 14



Fourth Sunday of Advent/Msg. Owen F. Campion

# The Sunday Readings

Sunday, December 22, 2024

- Micah 5:1-4a
- Hebrews 10:5-10
- Luke 1:39-45

This weekend, the Church observes the Fourth Sunday of Advent. The first reading is from the Book of Micah, who is regarded as one of the minor prophets, in large part, because of his book's brevity.

It contains only seven chapters. (By contrast, the Book of Isaiah has 66 chapters.)

Very few biographical facts about the author of Micah are known. The author was a contemporary of the author of the first section of the Book of Isaiah. He came from a small village some 25 miles southwest of Jerusalem, but nothing else is known of his background.

This is clear. As were all the other prophets of ancient Israel, Micah was determined to call his people, the chosen people, back to God. He argued for piety and for loyalty to the covenant with God, warning that indifference to God only leads to disaster, personal as well as national.

In his day, piety was in short supply. Greed and exploitation, which were rampant, overwhelmed the economy. Religious practices were sparse, often insincere and poorly presented when they did occur.

Amid all this, Micah promised that a savior would come to lead the people away from sin and back to God. The savior would come from Bethlehem.

Here, Micah obliquely refers to David, who was born in Bethlehem, without mentioning his name. David was important as king of Israel. His royal role was not primarily political, but rather was religious. His task was to see that the people obeyed God.

Micah forecasted that when the anticipated savior arrived, he would be king and all would be well.

For its second reading, the Church this weekend gives us a lesson from the Letter to the Hebrews. Heavy with its Hebrew symbolism, this epistle is renowned for

brilliantly extolling Jesus as Lord and as the Lamb of God.

Jesus appears as the perfect victim and priest. His sacrifice on Calvary was sublime, perfect and utterly unique. It was also eternal. Its effects of reconciling humanity with God never cease. Thus, no other sacrifices are necessary. All has been accomplished.

St. Luke's Gospel furnishes the last reading. It is the story of the visitation. Mary travelled from her own home to a place in the hills of Judah. Traditionally, it has been thought that this place is the site now called Ein Karem. Once a few miles from Jerusalem, it has been absorbed by the growth of the city and for all practical purposes is today a part of Jerusalem.

Mary went to meet her cousin, Elizabeth, the wife of Zachariah. Like Mary, Elizabeth also was pregnant. Since Elizabeth was past the childbearing age for a woman, her conception was regarded as miraculous. Her child, John the Baptist, had a special destiny. He was holy.

Elizabeth realized that Mary was expecting a child, and Mary's child was to be the Messiah. Elizabeth's unborn child understood the profound character of all that was transpiring. He sensed God in Mary's unborn child. Elizabeth and her unborn son testify to the Messiah.

### Reflection

It is the last weekend of Advent. Christmas is just a few days away. For almost everyone, it will be a busy, hurried day, even if also a day of excitement, anticipation and joy.

Nevertheless, there is time to make Christmas a personal spiritual event. So, in these readings during Advent's last weekend, the Church calls us to Jesus. He is everything, the Church emphatically and joyfully declares. In the words of Hebrews, in the words of Luke, Jesus is the answer to every human need.

The writings of Micah remind us that when we allow Jesus to come to us, all peace and happiness abide with us, whatever else besets us. †

## Daily Readings

### Monday, December 23

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

### Tuesday, December 24

2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16  
Psalm 89:2-5, 27, 29  
Luke 1:67-69

### Vigil of the Nativity of the Lord

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

### Wednesday, December 25

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

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

Day  
Isaiah 52:7-10  
Psalm 98:1-6

Hebrews 1:1-6  
John 1:1-18  
or John 1:1-5, 9-14

### Thursday, December 26

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

### Friday, December 27

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

### Saturday, December 28

The Holy Innocents, martyrs  
1 John 5:2-2  
Psalm 124:2-5, 7b-8  
Matthew 2:13-18

### Sunday, December 29

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph  
Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14  
or 1 Samuel 1:20-22, 24-28  
Psalm 128:1-5  
or Psalm 84:2-3, 5-6, 9-10  
Colossians 3:12-21  
or Colossians 3:12-17  
or 1 John 3:1-2, 21-24  
Luke 2:41-52

See READINGS, page 15

## Question Corner/Jenna Marie Cooper

# Christ was fully divine and fully human, yet he never sinned

Q Could Jesus sin? If not, was he truly human and free? (Iowa)

A This is a rather complex question that gets into some deep trinitarian theology. But I think we can still break this down into some accessible takeaway points.

For some background, we believe that Jesus is truly and fully God, the second person of the Trinity, the "Word" who was "in the beginning with

God" (Jn 1:1-2). We also believe that Jesus is, at the same time, truly and fully human. He is the Word which "became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (Jn 1:14). Jesus is one divine person with two inseparable natures. Incidentally, that is why we call Mary the mother of God—because in giving birth to Jesus in his human nature, she also gave birth to him in his divine nature.

If we consider sin as turning away from God or breaking God's commandments, then it would seem to be a logical impossibility for Jesus to sin. Jesus, as God, cannot turn away from or betray himself. And we know that Jesus never did sin in actual fact.

At the same time, we know from the Gospels that Jesus was subject to temptation. The most notable example of this is the story of Jesus' temptation in the desert, where he prayed and fasted for 40 days before beginning his public ministry.

Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13 give us a narrative where the devil appears to Jesus in the wilderness and tempts him to use his power frivolously by changing stones into bread; to insultingly test God's love by throwing himself from a great height; and to gain all worldly riches and power by worshipping Satan.

The Gospels do not tell us what exactly was going on in Jesus' mind and heart at the time of this trial, or to what extent he may or may not have found any of these possibilities genuinely desirable or attractive. Yet the mere fact that the

devil made an attempt at tempting Jesus implies that Jesus did indeed have the same free will with which all human beings are endowed.

Similarly, on the night of the Last Supper, immediately before his passion Jesus is recorded as having prayed: "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not as I will, but as you will" (Mt 26:39). This suggests that it was ultimately up to Jesus whether he would accept his death on a cross.

Perhaps it could be debated whether potentially "backing out" of the passion would have been the exact same thing as committing a sin *per se*. But this passage of Scripture gives us the valuable insight that: 1) Jesus was free to accept or not accept his passion according to the will of God the Father; 2) It was hard for him to do this; and 3) He did choose to endure his passion anyway, out of love for his Father and for us.

This also calls to mind the famous passage in the Letter to the Hebrews, where he reminds us that "We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin. So let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help" (Heb 4:15-16).

That is, Jesus' sinless humanity should not make him less approachable to us, but rather more so.

At the end of the day, my own thought is that pondering whether Jesus could hypothetically have sinned—even though we know he didn't—is for most people less fruitful than meditating on the great mystery of his humanity. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us: "Everything that Christ is and does in this [human] nature derives from one of the Trinity. ... In his soul as in his body, Christ thus expresses humanly the divine ways of the Trinity" (#470).

(Jenna Marie Cooper, who holds a licentiate in canon law, is a consecrated virgin and a canonist whose column appears weekly at OSV News. Send your questions to [CatholicQA@osv.com](mailto:CatholicQA@osv.com).) †

## My Journey to God

# Christmas Adoration

By Gina Langferman

Oh Jesus, Lord Divine,  
You became the Bread and Wine  
A sacrifice of love  
Sent from the Father above.

How can the Lord of all  
Become a baby so small?  
And you humbled yourself even more  
To become the Bread we adore.

A heavenly mystery  
But a wonderful one to see  
The Lord of heaven and Earth  
Incarnate through the Virgin's birth  
Became the Bread we receive  
All we need do is believe.



(Gina Langferman is a member of St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis. Photo: This manger scene is a small part of a large crèche displayed in the narthex of St. Joseph Church in Indianapolis for Christmas of 2023. It was designed and constructed by Thoi Keeley, a former member of the parish's Vietnamese community who now lives out of state but returns each Advent to design and build a new crèche for the church. (Submitted file photo)



+

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.

**BALL, Janet**, 75, St. Jude, Indianapolis, Dec. 5. Mother of Michael and Timothy Ball. Sister of Terri Gilstrap, Brad, Britt and Roger Young. Grandmother of seven.

**BERTSCH, Joseph**, 93, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Richmond, Dec. 8. Father of Monica Antrim, Joy Cocks, Elizabeth Green, Marilyn and Mary Rathbun, Carolyn Yelland, Bill and David Bertsch. Brother of Rita Wright. Grandfather of 16. Great-grandfather of five.

**BUCZEK, Marjorie R.**, 100, Good Shepherd, Indianapolis, Nov. 20. Mother of Nancy Avitia and Kathy Emata. Grandmother of five. Great-grandmother of two.

**DOLLAR, Virgil**, 94, Holy Name of Jesus, Beech Grove, Sept. 20. Husband of Norma Dollar. Father of Christopher, Craig, Eric and Matthew Dollar. Brother of Ruth Fuller. Grandfather of 10. Great-grandfather of three.

**DOUGHERTY, William**, 75, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, New Albany, Nov. 16. Husband of Chris Dougherty. Father of Alicia Frederick and Brittany Morton. Brother of Carol O’Bryan, Katherine Sears, David, Ed, John, Kevin and Mike Dougherty. Grandfather of five.

**JOHNSON, James T.**, 91, Immaculate Heart of Mary, Indianapolis, Nov. 24. Husband of Diane Johnson. Father of five.

**KILGARD, John**, 72, Christ the King, Indianapolis, Nov. 13. Husband of Pam Kilgard. Father of Lorri and JR Stum, and Christian Kilgard. Brother of Martha Sparks, Dale and Dean Kilgard. Grandfather of eight.

**KIRKMAN, Mary D.**, 52, St. Jude, Indianapolis, Nov. 25. Wife of Mike Jajuga. Mother of Austin and Thomas Kirkman. Sister of Ruth Niezgodski, Rachel, Paul and Tyler Lockhart.

**KOERS, Jr., Herman J.**, 86, Holy Name of Jesus, Beech Grove, Nov. 14. Husband of Ruth Koers. Father of Bill, James and Mark Koers. Brother of Angela Lapadat and Steven Koers.

**KOWALKE, Donald G.**, 80, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Richmond, Nov. 8. Husband of Kathryn Keller. Father of Jeffrey and Joseph Kowalke. Brother of Sharon Kowalke. Grandfather of two.

**MARTIN, Nancy M.**, 58, St. John Paul II, Sellersburg, Dec. 2. Wife of Terry Martin. Mother of Krista, Matthew and Michael Martin. Daughter of Betty Rohleder. Sister of Nick, Jr., and Tom Rohleder. Grandmother of three.

**MURPHY, Jr., John**, 83, St. Gabriel, Connerville, Nov. 13. Father of Jennifer Pentecost and Billie St. John. Grandfather of three.

**MUSSELMAN, Jane**, 96, St. Anthony of Padua, Clarksville, Dec. 6. Mother of Eric, Lynn and Mark Musselman. Grandmother of two. Great-grandmother of two.

**NOONE, Kathleen A.**, 81, Christ the King, Indianapolis, Nov. 22. Wife of Steve Noone. Mother of Lisa and Brendan Noone. Grandmother of two.

**PRICE, Bernadette M.**, 73, Good Shepherd, Indianapolis, Nov. 27. Sister of Jim, Mike, Ron, Steve, Tim and Tom Bewsey. Aunt, great-aunt, and great-great aunt of several.

According to statistics, 50% of marriages end in divorce.

DON'T BECOME A STATISTIC!

FIND HOPE!

Feb 14-16, 2025

For more information go to: [helpourmarriage.org](http://helpourmarriage.org), call 502-479-3329, or email: [3012@helpourmarriage.org](mailto:3012@helpourmarriage.org)

Online Lay Ministry Formation

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

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

For more information, please log on to [www.archindy.org/layministry](http://www.archindy.org/layministry)

REPORT SEXUAL MISCONDUCT NOW

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

1 Ethics Point

Confidential, Online Reporting

[www.archdioceseofindianapolis.ethicspoint.com](http://www.archdioceseofindianapolis.ethicspoint.com) or 888-393-6810

2 Victim Assistance Coordinator, Archdiocese of Indianapolis

P.O. Box 1410, Indianapolis, IN 46206-1410

**317-236-1548 or 800-382-9836, ext. 1548**

**[victimassistance@archindy.org](mailto:victimassistance@archindy.org)**

“Wreaths Across Ripley County”

Ella Meer, center, in gray, and Allie Peetz, in red, both eighth-grade students at St. Louis School in Batesville, work with other students on wreaths that were placed on veterans’ graves in Ripley County on Dec. 14. Seventh-and eighth-grade students at the school partnered with the Ripley County Community Foundation and students from Oldenburg Academy of the Immaculate Conception in Oldenburg to make a portion of the wreaths for the “Wreaths Across Ripley County” project as part of the national “Wreaths Across America” annual effort to honor veterans. (Submitted photo)

**REDD, Glenn**, 68, St. Gabriel, Connerville, Nov. 30. Father of Amber Lanham, Jennifer Neiford, Brandi and Mindi Redd, Jason, Jeremy and Jordan Helmsing. Brother of Herbert Redd. Grandfather of 10. Great-grandfather of one.

**REDMOND, Richard**, 81, St. Ambrose, Seymour, Dec. 5. Husband of Carolyn Redmond. Father of Debbie Berry, Carrie Green, Kathy Sunbury and David Redmond. Brother of Paul and Thomas Redmond. Grandfather of 11.

**REED, Barbara**, 61, St. Michael, Brookville, Dec. 2. Wife of David Reed. Mother of Emily and Megan Reed. Sister of Monica Bischoff, David, Joe, John, Ken, Maurice and Stephen Kaier.

**SABOL, John A.**, 78, St. Malachy, Brownsburg, Dec. 4. Husband of Susan Sabol. Father of Amy and John Sabol. Brother of Michael Sabol. Grandfather of two. Great-grandfather of two. Great-great-grandfather of one.

**SCHWAB, Otto J.**, 87, Good Shepherd, Indianapolis, Nov. 28. Husband of Jo Ann Schwab. Father of Kristie Conner, Kimberly Dunn, Kellie Hawkins and Kevin Schwab. Brother of Evelyn Halliburton. Grandfather of 10. Great-grandfather of nine.

**SMITH, Patricia J.**, 86, St. Bernard, Frenchtown,

Dec. 4. Mother of Debra Fessel, Amy and Jon Schotter, Gregory and Kevin Smith. Grandmother of 10. Great-grandmother of 21. Great-great-grandmother of two.

**THOMAN, Fredrick T.**, 68, St. Mary, Rushville, Nov. 27. Father of Janann Schutte and Ryan Thoman. Brother of Bob, Ed and Steve Thoman

and Doris, Ellen, Gail, Janet, Joannie, Pattie, Rita. Grandfather of seven.

**WERNER, Marilyn S.**, 90, St. Malachy, Brownsburg, Dec. 3. Mother of Mickie Burls-Jackey, Joanie Werner, Daniel and David Jackey. Grandmother of four. Great-grandmother and great-great-grandmother of several. †

## Franciscan Sister Monica Zore taught for 39 years at Marian University

Franciscan Sister Monica Zore (formerly Sister Christine), a member of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis in Oldenburg, died on Dec. 10 at her community’s motherhouse. She was 76.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Dec. 16 at the Motherhouse Chapel in Oldenburg. Burial followed at the sisters’ cemetery.

Sister Monica was born on Nov. 1, 1948, in Indianapolis where she grew up as a member of the former Holy Trinity Parish. A graduate of the former St. Mary Academy in Indianapolis, she joined the Sisters of St. Francis on July 9, 1970, and professed final vows on Aug. 10,

1975. Sister Monica earned a bachelor’s degree in mathematics at Marian University and a master’s degree in education at Butler University, both in Indianapolis.

After teaching for 11 years at Badin High School in Hamilton, Ohio, from 1972-83, Sister Monica began a 39-year career of serving on the faculty of Marian University, finally retiring to the motherhouse in 2022.

She is survived by two sisters, Melissa Hendricks and Nancy Holmes, and a brother, Gerald Zore.

Memorial gifts may be sent to the Sisters of St. Francis, P.O. Box 100, Oldenburg, IN 47036-0100. †

## VARICK

continued from page 12

gathered, there am I in their midst” (Mt 18:20).

We are still experiencing the graces of the National Eucharistic Congress that took place at Lucas Oil Stadium and the Indiana Convention Center in July. We gathered as a Catholic nation to give thanks for the gift of the Eucharist. We prayed in reparation on behalf of the Church and asked forgiveness for all the times the Church has failed to recognize the sanctity of the Eucharist. We asked forgiveness for the times we did not allow the Eucharist to transform us, and we offered prayers of petition asking God to renew us, to heal us and to bring the Church and his people into unity.

The Indiana Youth Rally and Mass for Life on Jan. 22 will offer a unique opportunity to gather again as the Church in Indiana united in the Eucharist. We will offer thanks for the gift of life, for the gift of our own lives and the unique calling and purpose God has for each of us that only we can fulfill.

As a community of faith, we will also pray in reparation, asking forgiveness for all our sins against life where we have failed to love God with all our heart,

mind and soul. We will ask for forgiveness for the times we have not loved God in ourselves and have not loved God in our neighbor. For to love God is to love what he loves: he loves you, he loves that challenging person in your life—he loves us all. We gather as the Church in Indiana to ask God for mercy, grace, conversion, unity and healing—not only in our nation and in our world, but in a particular way in our state.

I encourage everyone to join in this statewide gathering, to experience the larger Church of Indiana, to celebrate the gift of life, and to pray that we have an increase of wonder and awe in front of humanity, for every human person is made in the image and likeness of God.

Author C.S. Lewis said, “Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbor is the holiest object presented to your senses.”

What a world we would live in if we approached the human person with this reverence. I pray that our state, our nation, and our world is pierced by this truth.

*(Brie Anne Varick is the director of archdiocesan Office of Human Life and Dignity. She can be reached at [bvarick@archindy.org](mailto:bvarick@archindy.org). For more information on the upcoming Indiana Youth Rally, Mass for Life and March for Life on Jan. 22, go to [cutt.ly/INMFL2025](http://cutt.ly/INMFL2025).)* †



Investing with Faith/Jolinda Moore

Through generous gifts, CCF sends \$10 million annually in distributions to archdiocesan parishes, schools and ministries

Christmas is the time of year for us to take stock in our many blessings. While God provided the ultimate gift



to humanity in the form of his Son baby Jesus, we follow his example in generosity.

At the Catholic Community Foundation (CCF) of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, we experience great generosity every day, but especially at year’s end.

CCF has been in existence since 1987 and, as of the close of our last fiscal year, we manage 589 endowment and donor-advised funds with combined assets of more than \$247 million. The larger our assets, the more we are able to distribute to parishes, schools and ministries throughout the archdiocese.

In fiscal year 2024, we sent more

than \$10 million in distributions to our parishes, schools and ministries. Many of these funds provide for necessary operating expenses or capital projects, scholarships, as well as specific purposes designated by the donor.

With these distributions, our ministries are able to fund education, feed, clothe and shelter the needy, provide supplies to those suffering in third-world nations, maintain our cemeteries and much more. When you establish a new fund with CCF, or donate to an existing fund, you are contributing to the overall mission of the Catholic Church in our archdiocese and the tens of thousands of people we serve.

The Catholic Community Foundation exists to serve and help provide financial security for archdiocesan entities. We work with individual donors as well as parishes, schools and ministries to establish new funds that produce annual income as well as grow the fund principal designed to last into perpetuity.

Each fund within the CCF tells a unique story of faith, love and foresight. These endowment gifts are not only financial contributions but also meaningful ways to honor or memorialize loved ones. Our donors recognize that by ensuring long-term resources for the Church, they are helping to extend the compassion of Jesus to the world in enduring and impactful ways.

The Catholic Community Foundation is committed to upholding Catholic values in all our endeavors. Our investment policy follows the guidelines of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops for socially responsible investing, ensuring that our financial practices align with sound investment principles and our faith. Guided by an exemplary advisory board and committees, CCF is a visible and trusted resource for every parish, school and ministry within the archdiocese. Together, we work to sustain the mission of the Church and witness Christ’s love to all.

So this year when we count our

blessings, we especially count each donor, parish, school or ministry that has contributed to CCF funds. May the Lord bless you with abundance and inspire you to share your blessings with others.

Create the space you need for a happy and holy Christmas season. Avoid the rush and reach out to the Catholic Community Foundation now at 317-236-1482 or [ccf@archindy.org](mailto:ccf@archindy.org).

*(Jolinda Moore is executive director of the archdiocesan Office of Stewardship and Development and the Catholic Community Foundation [CCF]. Tax or legal information provided herein is not intended as tax or legal advice. Always consult with your legal, tax or financial advisors before implementing any gift plan. If you would like to learn more about including your parish in your estate plans, please contact us any time at 317-236-1482 or [ccf@archindy.org](mailto:ccf@archindy.org). We exist to exclusively serve you and your parish in planned giving.) †*

READINGS

continued from page 13

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

**Tuesday, December 31**  
Seventh day within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord  
St. Sylvester I, pope  
*1 John 2:18-21*  
*Psalms 96:1-2, 11-13*  
*John 1:1-18*

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

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

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

**Saturday, January 4**  
St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, religious  
*1 John 3:7-10*  
*Psalms 98:1, 7-9*  
*John 1:35-42*

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

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

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

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

**Thursday, January 9**  
*1 John 4:19-5:4*  
*Psalms 72:1-2, 14, 15bc, 17*

*Luke 4:14-22a*

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

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

**Sunday, January 12**  
The Baptism of the Lord  
*Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7*  
*or Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11*  
*Psalms 29:1a, 2, 3ac-4, 3b, 9b-10*  
*or Psalms 104:1b-4, 24-25, 27-30*  
*Acts 10:34-38 or Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7*  
*Luke 3:15-16, 21-22*

Employment

Director of Operations

SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral Parish, located in Indianapolis, Indiana, is seeking a full-time Director of Operations. The Director of Operations will serve to manage the business operations of the parish, including the oversight and administration of its financial resources, facilities, and personnel.

SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral is a small and growing parish in downtown Indianapolis dedicated to growing in faith and community, serving the Archdiocese of Indianapolis through hospitality and liturgical ministry, and serving the local community through our main charitable outreach, the Cathedral Kitchen.

Position responsibilities include:

- Oversight of the parish budget, accounting, and financial reporting
- Preparation and Coordination of parish activities
- Oversight of parish facilities and maintenance
- Supervision of parish staff members

A preferred applicant will have a bachelor’s degree and practical experience of 3+ years in a related field. An applicant must seek to foster the mission of the Catholic Church and its ministries.

This is a full-time position with comprehensive benefits package offered. Interested applicants should send a cover letter, resume, and references to Fr. James Brockmeier, Rector of the Cathedral of SS. Peter and Paul, at [jbrockmeier@archindy.org](mailto:jbrockmeier@archindy.org).

ASL Interpreters Needed!

The Disabilities Ministry of the archdiocesan Office of Catechesis is in urgent need of American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters for 7:30 a.m. Mass at St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis, and sacramental prep assistance for two children at St. Matthew the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis.

It is preferred that interpreters be Catholic, but those who have a strong familiarity with the Catholic Mass and other liturgical rites are encouraged to apply. It is also preferred that interpreters have an Indiana Interpreting Certificate, though allowances can be made depending on experience.

For more information, contact Jenny Bryans, Disabilities Ministry Coordinator, at [jbryans@archindy.org](mailto:jbryans@archindy.org) or 317-236-1448.

Classified Directory

Hauling and Tree Removal Services

**Fred & Sons'**  
Hauling & Tree Removal Service  
[FredAndSons.com](http://FredAndSons.com)  
**317-626-5973**  
Call today for prompt service!

- Tree Removal, Topping & Trimming
- Shrub Trimming & Removal
- Light Hauling
- Construction Clean-up
- Junk Removal
- Brush Pile Cleaning
- Garage/Basement/Attic Cleanout
- Gutter Cleaning
- Mini Barn / Shed / Fence / Deck Demolition & Removal
- Appliance / E-Waste Removal
- Stump Grinding

Call  
**317-236-1585**  
TO ADVERTISE IN  
*The Criterion*

Medicare Insurance

**Health Insurance Professionals**

Turning 65, retiring, SS disability, or Medicare supplement premiums continuing to increase? Confused with what type of plan fits your needs, or how to enroll into Medicare part B?

- ❖ Give us a call and allow us to review your needs, for your unique circumstances.
- ❖ With over 30 years experience we represent several companies for Medicare Supplements, Rx, & Advantage plans, as well as Life companies.
- ❖ Serving 126 Parishes in 39 Counties

**Gives us a call or send us an email, we will set up a visit today!**  
PH: 317-787-4638  
[danshearhu@gmail.com](mailto:danshearhu@gmail.com)

Dan Shea, RHU  
Long time Parishioner of St John the Evangelist Indianapolis.



# 'Ignite' retreat calls teens to set their hearts afire for God

By Mike Krokos

Megan Alexander viewed it as an opportunity to grow in her life of faith. The senior at Rushville Consolidated High School in Rushville was among the hundreds of teenagers who recently attended “Ignite” at Roncalli High School in Indianapolis.

The daylong high school retreat, co-sponsored on Nov. 24 by the Archdiocese of Indianapolis and Diocese of Lafayette, Ind., included keynote speakers, breakout sessions and Mass with Archbishop Charles C. Thompson. All told, more than 450 teenagers and adult volunteers attended the event.

“I wanted to be here with community from my Church and to learn more about God,” said Megan, a member of St. Mary (Immaculate Conception) Parish in Rushville.

A message shared by keynote speaker and author Chika Anyanwu resonated with the teen “about friendship and finding good friends that lead you toward God and not pull you away. I think that was really eye-opening,” Megan noted.

## A Church ‘beyond their parish’

Held every two years, Ignite takes place in November during years when

the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) is not hosted in Indianapolis.

“The goal of the day is to gather the young Church of Indiana and host them for a day that is powerful, personal and practical,” explained Megan Lauritsen, archdiocesan coordinator of youth ministry.

“Our hope with Ignite is that young people walk away feeling equipped and inspired to go back to their homes and parishes and share how Christ is working in their lives. It also provides an opportunity for teens to experience the greater Church that is alive and thriving, and to see that there is more to the Catholic Church beyond their parish—that it is a universal home.”

## ‘Called to be mission to other people’

Like others who attended the gathering, Lauritsen, too, appreciated how Anyanwu connected with the teens.

“Chika does a great job speaking to the inherent dignity and value of the human person and what it means to live our identity as a beloved child of God, which is a message that young people cannot hear enough,” Lauritsen noted.

Based in Anaheim, Calif., Anyanwu’s family is originally from Nigeria. A Catholic evangelist, former confirmation coordinator/youth and young adult minister, she is the author of *My Encounter: How I Met Jesus in Prayer*. Chica was among the speakers at this summer’s National Eucharistic Congress and has also been a keynote speaker at NCYC, Steubenville youth conferences, and at Fellowship of Catholic University Students’ SEEK conferences.

In her afternoon session, Anyanwu focused on how young people are challenged today to let their faith shape them in their call to live as saints.

“God equips us with everything we need to fight the good fight,” the author said.

“The word of God is powerful, and ... we need to make sure as people of God that



Father Jayaraju Bandari, parochial vicar at St. Luke the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis, gives Communion to an Ignite participant during the Nov. 24 Mass at Roncalli High School in Indianapolis. (Photos by Mike Krokos)

we’re reading the Bible,” she noted.

Turning to the beatitudes from Matthew’s Gospel (Mt 5:3-12), Anyanwu reflected on how they should impact our lives.

“When I started really praying about the beatitudes, I realized that truly this is the way that Jesus is calling us to live our lives,” said Anyanwu. “... That is how we are called to be mission to other people.”

## Lasting happiness in the kingdom of God

During his homily at Mass, Archbishop Thompson told the teens Jesus wanted to rule their hearts.

“While we may seem to be of little matter in the wider spectrum of the universe, each life, each heart, each soul matters to him. Each one of us matters,” the archbishop said. “The only true, lasting happiness for us is not to be



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson prays the eucharistic prayer on Nov. 24 during a Mass celebrated at an Ignite youth event. Pictured with him at the altar, from left, are Deacon James Wood, Father James Brockmeier, and transitional deacon Isaac Siefker.

reminded the young people they “belong to the community of believers, the family of God, the body of Christ.”

“There are many voices vying for your attention. Listen to the voice of the God who created you, who alone can save you, and who redeems you,” Archbishop Thompson said. “Take time to cultivate a personal encounter, a relationship with Jesus Christ through prayer, through the word of God, through the grace of sacraments, to serving others in his name. For he alone, is our way, our truth and our life.”

## ‘An encounter with Jesus’

As she reflected on the Ignite event, Lauritsen’s hope was that the teenagers “walked away from the day feeling like they have moved forward in their faith, that they hopefully learned something that they take to heart—whether that be within their prayer life or in how they communicate their faith with the people around them.

“Above all though, I hope and pray that they had an encounter with Jesus Christ. Big or small, I pray that it was a day where they were open to receiving the love that God so desperately wants us all to know. In ministry, frequently we are planting seeds. I hope and pray that seeds were planted that will grow into a desire to know and love Jesus.”

Teen Dominic Simmons, a member of St. John Vianney Parish in Fishers, Ind., in the Diocese of Lafayette, said he attended the gathering to “experience the faith” with all in attendance.

The most important message he was taking with him, he added, “was to love Jesus [today] more than yesterday.” †



Keynote speaker Chika Anyanwu reflects on the beatitudes during an Ignite youth event on Nov. 24 at Roncalli High School in Indianapolis.



Teenagers and adults stand at the beginning of Mass during an Ignite event on Nov. 24 at Roncalli High School in Indianapolis. More than 450 teens and adult volunteers attended the daylong high school retreat.