



The

# Criterion

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Joyful  
Witness

God works through you during the holidays to comfort the grieving, page 12.

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## Daughter's rare disorder leads Connersville family on faith journey with 'divine connections'

By Natalie Hoefer

CONNERSVILLE—Joshua (Josh) and Laura Marszalek rejoiced in February 2011 at the birth of their second child, a daughter. They named her Kathryn Faith.

"She really should have been Kathryn Ann after some grandmothers, but we went with Kathryn Faith," says Laura.

That middle name proved to be meaningful, perhaps even providential.

Around the age of 1, Kathryn was diagnosed with Alternating Hemiplegia of Childhood (AHC), "a very complex [neurological] disorder" with a "rare, one-in-a-million occurrence," notes the AHC Foundation (AHCf) website.

"It causes episodes of temporary paralysis on half the body, the right or left side," Josh explains. "While she's in an episode, she's unable to walk. And when it's a right-side episode, she has trouble eating and speaking."

See **DAUGHTER**, page 8

Joshua, left, Kathryn, Laura and Levi Marszalek, members of St. Gabriel Parish in Connersville, pose in front of the parish's Marian grotto on Nov. 24. The family's faith has been enhanced through Kathryn's early diagnosis of Alternating Hemiplegia of Children, or AHC, an extremely rare neurological disorder.

(Photo by Natalie Hoefer)



## Catholic lawmaker aims to outlaw state death penalty

By Nicole Hahn

Today's Catholic

Indiana State Rep. Bob Morris (R-Fort Wayne) filed legislation on Dec. 5 to repeal the state law regarding the imposition and execution of death sentences.



Rep. Bob Morris

He wants the law to change to state specifically that if a person is sentenced to death and is awaiting the carrying out of that death sentence, that person's death sentence will be commuted to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole. Ultimately, Morris wants it to be state law that there is no possibility to sentence a person to death.

Morris also wrote a letter to Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb asking to delay the execution of any inmate on death row at least until January, when state lawmakers return to session and the General Assembly can consider his proposed legislation. Though the proposed legislation isn't specific to any particular case, the timing is important because Indiana is set on Dec. 18 to execute its first inmate on death row in 15 years.

Joseph Corcoran, now 49, was convicted in 1997 of the murders of his brother, his sister's fiancé and two of their friends at his home in Fort Wayne. He was sentenced to death in 1999 and has been on death row since that time. Lawyers have continued to fight for a stay of execution. On Dec. 6, according to public records on [mycase.in.gov](http://mycase.in.gov), the Indiana Supreme Court denied a motion to stay Corcoran's execution. Records also indicate that a second motion was filed with the court the same day of the denial.

See **DEATH PENALTY**, page 9

Read Morris' letter to Gov. Holcomb at [bit.ly/MorrisLetter](http://bit.ly/MorrisLetter).

## Woman gives a thank-you to a priest who went the extra mile for her birth mother

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

By John Shaughnessy

There are times when someone's extra efforts make such a difference in a person's life—which explains why Ann Clute desperately wanted to thank the priest who went the extra mile for her and her birth mother.

In 2019, the then-51-year-old Clute began a search into her past, hoping to learn the circumstances around her adoption, hoping also to find her birth parents and start a relationship with them.

That's when she learned about the actions and influence of Father Michael Kettron, then a priest in the Diocese of Lafayette in Indiana, at a crucial time in her life.

"It was very early spring in 1967 when you were contacted by my grandparents and their 18-year-old daughter, Carol," Clute

wrote in a letter to the priest. "Carol was unmarried and pregnant with me.

"According to my adoption records, you arranged for Carol to go live with your parents in Cincinnati, Ohio, until she gave birth to me in December. I was born on December 2, 1967, at Bethesda Hospital. My records also indicate that you hand-delivered me to St. Elizabeth's Home in Beech Grove to await adoption very late at night on December 3. And you baptized me before you left the agency."

Clute wrote the letter to Father Kettron near Mother's Day of 2021, a time when the priest was in the waning months of his life at a nursing home in Beech Grove, a time when there were still restrictions on visits because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I have been told that you were a good friend of the family, and thus it explains the extra effort that you took to assist them in their crisis," Clute continued in her letter. "I would also enjoy hearing about your parents. They must have

See **ADOPTION**, page 9



Ann Clute



# U.S. bishops join pope and other groups in urging President Biden to commute 40 death sentences

WASHINGTON (OSV News)—The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) was among the groups that urged President Joe Biden on Dec. 9 to commute existing federal death sentences before President-elect Donald J. Trump, who has sought to expand the use of capital punishment, returns to the White House.

Opponents of capital punishment have argued that Biden, a Catholic and the first U.S. president to have campaigned on an openly anti-death penalty platform, should follow through with concrete action in the post-election lame-duck period.

Pope Francis also indicated support for that effort, writing in a Dec. 8 post on X, formerly Twitter, “Let us #PrayTogether for those on death row in the United States. Let us pray that their sentences may be commuted, changed. Let us think of these brothers and sisters of ours and ask the Lord for the grace to save them from death.”

An action alert from the USCCB stated, “As President Biden prepares to leave office, please urge him to commute all current federal death sentences to terms of imprisonment before his term ends.”

It stated, “President Biden has an extraordinary opportunity to advance the

cause of human dignity by commuting all federal death sentences to terms of imprisonment and sparing the lives of the 40 men currently on federal death row.” The message added the U.S. Catholic bishops “have long called for an end to the use of the death penalty,” citing a 1980 statement calling for its abolition, as well as the conference’s vote in 1974 to oppose the practice.

“They outlined concerns with the death penalty that remain relevant today, including that the death penalty extinguishes possibilities for reform and rehabilitation; the imposition of capital punishment involves the possibility of mistakes; the legal imposition of capital punishment in our society involves long and unavoidable delays; carrying out the death penalty brings with it great and avoidable anguish for everyone involved; and that capital punishment is carried out in an unfair and discriminatory manner,” the USCCB action alert said.


The Catholic Church’s official magisterium opposes the use of the death penalty as inconsistent with the inherent sanctity of human life, and advocates for the practice’s abolition worldwide. In his 2020 encyclical “*Fratelli Tutti*,” Pope Francis addressed the moral problem of capital punishment by citing St. John Paul II, writing that his predecessor “stated clearly and firmly that the death penalty is inadequate from a moral standpoint and no longer necessary from that of penal justice.”



President-elect Donald J. Trump



Pope Francis



Public Schedule of  
Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

December 17—December 24, 2024

December 17 – 10 a.m.  
Mass and Visitation at Madison Correctional Facility, Madison, Ind.

December 17 – 1:30 p.m.  
High School Mass and Visit at Father Michael Shawe Memorial High School, Madison

December 18 – 10 a.m.  
Department Heads meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center, Indianapolis

December 19 – 9:30 a.m.  
Mass and Visitation at Rockville Correctional Facility, Rockville

December 19 – 5:15 p.m.  
Serra Club Dinner for Seminarians and Guests at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center

December 24 – 10 p.m.  
Christmas Eve Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis

“‘There can be no stepping back from this position,” Pope Francis wrote (#263). Echoing the teaching he clarified in his 2018 revision of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the pontiff said, “Today we state clearly that ‘the death penalty is inadmissible’ and the Church is firmly committed to calling for its abolition worldwide.”

In a separate message, a bipartisan coalition including Catholic Mobilizing Network (CMN), former prison officials, family members of homicide victims, civil rights advocates and pro-life advocates circulated a joint letter urging Biden to commute existing death sentences.

“As Catholics, we understand that every person is made in the image of God and that our heavenly Father does not shut the door on anyone,” Krisanne Vaillancourt Murphy, executive director of CMN, and Sister Rita Ann Teichman, a member of the Sisters of St. Joseph and chair of the group’s board of directors, wrote in the letter. “By commuting these sentences, you could use your constitutional authority in a way that would mirror the

spirit of reconciliation during this special Jubilee 2025 year.” “The death penalty has for generations been a veiled extension of our national legacy of racial terror and lynchings,” said Jamila Hodge, CEO of Equal Justice USA, another group involved in the effort, in that group’s message. “President Biden, like me a person of deep faith in God, has a historic opportunity to demonstrate mercy and the belief that we are all redeemable, by preventing an execution spree that will not make us safer, while moving us closer to reckoning with a system that unfairly targets Black people.”

Joia Thornton, founder and national director of the Faith Leaders of Color Coalition (flocc), said in the group’s letter that Biden “has a deep-rooted relationship with Black faith communities, and flocc represents more than 500 Black faith leaders, conventions, congregations and convocations in America.”

She said, “Commuting the federal death row [sentences] would be an incredible milestone for those who believe life has value, mercy is encompassing and grace covers a multitude of sin.” †

SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral and Saint Meinrad Archabbey announce Christmas liturgies

The Christmas liturgical schedules for SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, 1347 N. Meridian St., in Indianapolis, and the Archabbey Church of Our Lady of Einsiedeln of Saint Meinrad Archabbey, 101 Hill Drive, in St. Meinrad, are as follows:

**SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral**  
Dec. 24—10 p.m. Mass with Archbishop Charles C. Thompson as the principal celebrant. Parking will be available from 9 p.m.-midnight behind the cathedral and at the Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center, 1400 N. Meridian St., across from the cathedral. Fox 59 will broadcast this Mass beginning at midnight, and it will be livestreamed at: [www.ssppc.org/streaming](http://www.ssppc.org/streaming).  
Dec. 25—10 a.m. Mass.

**Saint Meinrad Archabbey Church**  
Seating in the Archabbey Church is limited; however, the Christmas services will be livestreamed at [www.saintmeinrad.org/live](http://www.saintmeinrad.org/live).  
Dec. 24—Vespers (Liturgy of the Hours) 5 p.m. CT, Mass 10 p.m. CT  
Dec. 25—Mass 10:30 a.m. CT, Vespers 5 p.m. CT  
For the Christmas liturgical schedules of other religious communities or parishes in the archdiocese, contact their offices. †

Interim director appointed at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House

Criterion staff report

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis has appointed Timothy Rathz as interim director of the Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, located at 5353 East 56th St., in Indianapolis. Rathz will begin his new duties at Fatima effective on Dec. 21. He will replace Georgene Beiriger, who is retiring as director of Fatima on Dec. 20. In recent years, Rathz has served as Fatima’s guest services manager. “We’re grateful to Tim for stepping up and expanding his role at our archdiocesan retreat house,” says Ken Ogorek, executive director of the archdiocesan Secretariat for Evangelizing

Catechesis. “His presence will ensure uninterrupted delivery of the programs and opportunities we’ve all come to rely on from the retreat house.”

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House opened its doors in 1950 and has steadily provided retreat and renewal experiences for the people of central and southern Indiana and beyond. The search for a retreat house director will commence in January of 2025. †



our lady of fatima retreat house

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# Participants from all Indiana dioceses, plus four of the state’s bishops, will join in Indiana March for Life on Jan. 22

By Natalie Hoefer

The annual Indiana March for Life and associated events will take place on Jan. 22, in Indianapolis.

Youths and pro-life advocates from all five of Indiana’s dioceses will participate in the event, which solemnly commemorates the date in 1973 when the U.S. Supreme Court’s *Roe v. Wade* decision legalized abortion across the country.

The Supreme Court’s June 2022 decision on *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* returned the legal issue of abortion back to individual states. On Aug. 1, 2023, a law abolishing most abortions went into effect in Indiana.

So why the need to continue the Indiana March for Life? To create “a common voice and witness to the Church’s long-standing, Christ-centered teaching on the dignity of the person from the moment of conception to natural death,” said Archbishop Charles C. Thompson in an interview with *The Criterion* about the 2024 event.

Sister Mary Grace of the Sisters of Life noted the importance of the Indiana March for Life at the 2024 post-March rally.

“You’re like a lighthouse for the nation,” she told the enthusiastic crowd. “Why? Because you hold out hope to the entire country that a culture of life is still possible. ... No evil, no dark storm, no trial can destroy the walls of a unified state. So, we thank you, Indiana, for showing every state how it’s done.”

The Indiana March for Life serves as a witness to the sanctity of life from conception to natural death in a country where, according to a Guttmacher



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson



Participants process in Indianapolis during the Indiana March for Life earlier this year on Jan. 22. (File photo by Natalie Hoefer)

Institute report released in March, 1,026,700 abortions occurred in 2023.

### Schedule of events

The event schedule is the same as last year’s schedule, starting with a morning youth rally followed by a Mass for Life.

“The main coordinating body is the Archdiocese of Indianapolis,” says Brie Anne Varick, director of the archdiocesan Office of Human Life and Dignity, who helped coordinate the event.

“But for the youth rally, there is involvement from all five Indiana dioceses, and financially all of the dioceses have contributed, so they are the main sponsors.”

The day starts with a youth rally from 9-11 a.m. in the Indiana Convention Center, 100 S. Capitol Ave. Youths in grades eight-12 from throughout the state will be “inspired, equipped, and empowered to be missionary disciples of the Gospel of Life,” says Varick.

Catholic radio host, author and speaker Katie Prejean McGrady will address the youths during the rally, with music by the Sarah Kroger Band. The sacrament of reconciliation will also be available.

The youth rally is free, but registration is required at [archindyym.com/youth-rally-for-life](http://archindyym.com/youth-rally-for-life).

Following the rally, all are invited to

worship at a Mass for Life at 11:30 a.m. in the convention center, concelebrated by four of Indiana’s five bishops, (Bishop Robert J. McClory of the Gary Diocese is unable to attend.) No registration is required to worship at the Mass.

Right to Life of Indianapolis is coordinating the remaining events of the day—a pre-march rally, the Indiana March for Life and a post-march rally.

The pre-march rally with pro-life speakers will take place at 1 p.m. at the corner of Georgia Street and Capitol Avenue.

The Indiana March for Life will begin at 1:45 p.m. at the corner of Georgia and Illinois streets. It will conclude with a rally on the south steps of the Statehouse from 2:30-3 p.m.

St. John the Evangelist Parish, 126 W. Georgia St. across from the convention center, is offering pre-ordered \$10 box lunches, which can be picked up between noon-1 p.m. on the day of the event. Lunches can be ordered at [cutt.ly/INMFLlunch2025](http://cutt.ly/INMFLlunch2025). The deadline to order is Jan. 15.

For more information, including about parking, go to [cutt.ly/INMFL2025](http://cutt.ly/INMFL2025). †



Brie Anne Varick

## Cardinal Ritter hosts celebration for Kenny Moore as Colts’ nominee for Walter Payton Man of the Year

### Criterion staff report

Students and staff of Cardinal Ritter Jr./Sr. High School in Indianapolis surprised and welcomed Kenny Moore II of the Indianapolis Colts on Dec. 5, the day when it was announced that he was the team’s nominee for the 2024 Walter Payton Man of the Year Award.

A statement from the Colts noted, “This year, Moore began a partnership with Cardinal Ritter High School. A fixture on the school’s campus over the last few months, Moore provides continual support to keep the children at the grades 7-12 school locked in on their education. Moore also hosted a

back-to-school event this summer and was an honorary captain for a Cardinal Ritter football game on Oct. 11.”

Cardinal Ritter’s president Jo Hoy shared this tribute about Moore: “Kenny is an exceptional young man. The messages that he delivers to our students about their education is priceless. He has been on the sidelines at many of our games. His foundation has provided us with opportunities that all of our students have benefited from.”

To see a video of the surprise welcome that Moore received in the school’s gymnasium, go to [bit.ly/CardinalRitterColts](http://bit.ly/CardinalRitterColts). †



Kenny Moore II addresses Cardinal Ritter Jr./Sr. High School students on Dec. 5. (Submitted photo)

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Editorial



An image of the Immaculate Conception depicting a crowned Mary is seen in the Chapel of the Choir in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican on May 30, 2023. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

Advent is a Marian season of hope-filled expectation

On Dec. 12, we celebrated the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, one of several Marian feasts that occur in the month of December and the season of Advent.

The image of Mary is particularly vivid during this liturgical season—from our observance of her Immaculate Conception, to the colorful native dress she wears in her appearance as Our Lady of Guadalupe, to the multi-colored lights of the Christmas story, to the witness she gives as the heart of the Holy Family.

As Archbishop of Mexico City, Servant of God Luis María Martínez (1881-1956), preached at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe:

“The love of the Holy Virgin was not fleeting. It is not like the affections of our fickle heart, which change, fade and suffer eclipses. No, the love of the Virgin is like the love of God. What Mary loved she continues to love ...”

Mary’s love is constant and unconditional. She is present always. Especially as we wait in hope for her Son’s coming again, our Mother stands with us. She helps us to be patient, and she teaches us how to express our eager expectation in ways that are positive and serve others.

We tend to think of Marian devotion as a uniquely Catholic phenomenon, but Mary’s appeal is broader than we often realize. Newark, N.J., Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, former shepherd of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, offered the following reflection in a recent newsletter shared with the people of his archdiocese:

*Mary’s influence is powerful. Wherever she is honored as a woman of strength and compassion, people gather around her seeking her protection and care.*

*My Redemptorist community has seen firsthand Mary’s influence as an instrument for evangelization throughout Asia. In Manila, for example, more than 120,000 people gather every Wednesday to participate in our novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help. Most parishes in the Philippines have this novena to Our Lady, and her image can be seen on taxicabs, buses, and other places.*

*In my travels for the Redemptorist community, I saw similar crowds (50,000 people in Mumbai and similar crowds in other cities), but the most intriguing experience I had was in Singapore. There “only” 30,000 people*

*came on Saturday to Our Lady’s shrine, but half of them were not Christians. When I asked some of these people from many different faiths, “Why are you here?” they looked at me incredulously and said, “We have to speak with the Merciful Lady.”*

*The Archbishop of Singapore once told me that in his experience every adult catechumen in his archdiocese, without exception, began his or her journey to the Christian faith through this novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help—illustrating the truth of the old spiritual adage that as missionary disciples we find our way to Jesus through Mary.*

Mary’s outreach is an inspiration to all who seek her divine Son. Mary never draws attention to herself. Her song, the *Magnificat*, makes it clear that it is God alone who does wondrous things—lifting up the lowly, feeding the hungry, and dismissing those who believe themselves to be self-sufficient or who refuse to use their wealth and power for the benefit of their more vulnerable brothers and sisters. Mary is a beneficiary of God’s abundant grace, and she encourages us to share these gifts with others, especially those who are poor or vulnerable.

While we wait for the Lord’s coming, we look to Mary. She helps us to seek and find him. She strengthens us when our enthusiasm fades and our hopes dim because of the darkness and despair all around us. Advent is a Marian season because the mother of God helps us strive to be vigilant. She accompanies us as we move through the four weeks of this holy season.

In his column for the First Sunday of Advent, Archbishop Charles C. Thompson wrote:

“The glory of God that is our Advent hope can be seen in the Blessed Virgin Mary. She is what we hope to become by the power of God’s grace. She is patient, humble, pure and wholly obedient to God’s will. She ponders in her heart the mysteries of life, sacrifice and unconditional love. She serves others without counting the cost to herself. And above all, she follows in the footsteps of her beloved Son.”

As we wait with Mary for her Son’s coming again, let’s follow her example. Let’s share the hope and joy that we know will come this Christmas.

—Daniel Conway

Be Our Guest/Effie Caldarola

May the unrest of Christ be with you

My first job out of college was teaching at a Catholic school in a small town.

I was at that point in life—barely 22—when I was questioning my faith. But something about the music and joy of the weekly Masses in the school gym called to me. And the young priest who offered Mass challenged me.

“The peace of Christ be with you,” he would say, adding, “And may the unrest of Christ be with you.”

What did that mean? It took me a while to realize that the missing nugget of my faith quest was encapsulated in those words.

That unrest of Christ surfaced in me recently when I stumbled upon an amazing story in an issue of *Esquire* magazine.

“My Life as a Homeless Man in America, A Firsthand Account of What Homelessness in America is Really Like,” is the compelling story of Patrick Fealey’s struggle.

From the first paragraph, in which you meet Fealey in a portable potty on a brutally cold and windy night, his impressive writing skills have you hooked.

Why is a man with such skills homeless? He is open about the mental breakdown he experienced several years ago. He persisted, for a while, in successful freelance work for publications like the *Boston Globe* and Reuters, but eventually illness and the effects of the menu of drugs necessary to keep him alive caught up with him.

Today, he lives out of his car, subsists on Social Security disability, and continues writing on his “desk,” an overturned guitar. Pictures accompany the piece: a rugged face covered in stubble, rumpled hair, clothing that gets laundered infrequently. Let’s be honest. If we saw him on the street, we’d probably avoid him.



And therein lies the problem: People without housing are invisible to most, and often judged unfairly when noticed. A dentist seems to suspect Fealey of seeking opioids, even though he presents terrible pain and a grossly swollen jaw.

Unsmiling staff in agencies place him on housing waiting lists he might be on for years. He feels threatened in a homeless shelter where he goes for a shower.

“The despair in the shelter is contagious,” Fealey writes.

One day, a woman offers him half of her meatball sub, a glorious departure from the peanut butter and jelly sandwich eaten daily from his trunk.

But she was, said Fealey, “the only person in six months to offer help.”

Two positives: Fealey has a dog, and an emotionally supportive girlfriend. But despite her full-time position as a clerk at a hotel, she couldn’t afford her rent and moved in with her parents.

This is the America in which we live: the homeless population expands, and affordable housing shrinks.

I know many folks whose children went to Catholic schools. One of them, a kid who went to a Jesuit university, loved the social justice advocacy at his institution. But when he got out, he couldn’t find the same enthusiasm for action in parishes.

There are many reasons young people have left the Church. But for many, the Church as an institution has not, since the days of civil rights advocacy, answered Christ’s call to be proactive in addressing many major social issues of our time.

I’m not talking about charity. We’re good at that. I’m talking about change.

Christ was consistently with those on the margins. As a Church, as parishes, as individuals, if we are not on those margins, we’re not being faithful. We need to start feeling some unrest.

(Effie Caldarola is a wife, mom and grandmother.) †

Be Our Guest/Sally Meyer

Use Advent as a time to receive, not achieve as you await the Christ Child

As I stopped at the red light, I read the license plate on the car in front of me. It simply said, “ACHIEVE.” Continuing along my way, I reflected more about that word.

For some people, *achieve* might mean the anticipated success of a business. To others, it could mean how smart someone proves to be or how successful a person is in one’s job.

Setting goals serves a purpose. We make them to improve a skill, to be a team player or to make plans. Achieving goals helps us learn to follow through on what we say we will do. I am often tempted to base my own sense of achievement on how productive I have been on any given day or how active I’ve been according to my Apple watch.

But as I sat at another stoplight, the word *achieve* did not seem to fit with the season of Advent.

In the midst of a busy time of year when I could easily become consumed with conquering my to-do lists, I realized I needed to stop and honestly ask myself, “Are my actions really reflecting how I am preparing for Jesus? Am I somehow losing sight of what is most important? What is God asking of me in this time of preparing for Jesus’ birth?”

Instead of focusing on *achieve*, I felt more drawn to reflect on the word *receive*.

Graciously receiving something from another in the form of gifts, words or

time is invaluable. These types of gifts are heartfelt, and they are remembered. On the other hand, achieving feels more like a tightly clenched fist, pumped in the air, driven toward an “important” end or some sort of victory. The thrill and excitement do not last.

Advent is receiving what God offers us in preparation for Christmas. This means intentionally opening our hands and hearts, eager to accept something special given out of love. During this holy season, I believe God is drawing me to himself.

Rather than increasing my activities and ultimately finding ways to ignore him, I am called to do less and be more attentive to his voice. Although difficult, I believe I should slow down and notice how God is moving in my life and in the lives of those I love the most.

Instead of worrying about measuring up to a certain standard, I believe I am called to receive the embrace of a God who has always loved me—just as I am. God is the ultimate giver of gifts, and he longs for all of us to be the receivers of his unending love and mercy.

Advent *receiving* will become my compass that redirects my busyness toward a brighter, longer lasting light—the light that leads me to the Christ Child.

(Sally Meyer is a member of St. Mark the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis.) †



ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO CHARLES C. THOMPSON



# Christ the Cornerstone

## We can begin again as Jesus comes again

The Gospel reading for the Third Sunday of Advent (Lk 3:10-18) shows us how St. John the Baptist helped prepare for the coming of the Messiah.

As the last of the Old Testament prophets, John urged the people of Israel to be honest, to share their food and possessions with the poor, and to wait in joyful hope for the Lord’s coming.

When the crowds who came to the desert to see him asked if he was the one they had been waiting for, his answer was clear:

*“I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire”* (Lk 3:16-17).

John was a humble man who spoke the plain truth. His baptism of repentance anticipated, but did not replace, the sacramental baptism of Jesus which makes it possible for us to be born again “with the Holy Spirit and fire.” John points to Jesus. That’s why he is the perfect saint for the season

of Advent. He responds to our eager expectation with words and gestures of hope.

In his *Angelus* message for the Second Sunday of Advent two years ago, Pope Francis called attention to the powerful figure of St. John the Baptist. He observed that John stands out as a herald and precursor of the long-awaited Messiah, the One that God promised would save us from our bondage to sin and death. As Pope Francis said:

*“John preached the nearness of the Kingdom. In short, he was an austere and radical man, who at first sight might appear somewhat harsh and could instill a certain fear. But then again, we can ask ourselves why does the Church propose him each year as our primary traveling companion during this Season of Advent? What is hidden behind his severity, behind his apparent harshness? What is John’s secret? What is the message the Church gives us today with John?”*

*“In reality, the Baptist, more than being a harsh man, was a man who was allergic to duplicity. Listen well to this: allergic to duplicity.”*

Hypocrisy (duplicity) was

something that John could not tolerate. In this, he anticipated the stance that Jesus would take in dealing with the religious and political leaders of his day. John refused to stay silent or to acquiesce in the hypocrisy of King Herod. John spoke the plain truth, and it cost him his life.

Our secular culture often presents us with an image of Jesus that is tolerant of everything. After all, he scandalized the people around him by associating with prostitutes, tax collectors and sinners. And it’s true that the divine physician himself said that he came to heal sinners, not the righteous.

This image of Jesus as a kind and gentle healer is true, but it is incomplete. Jesus’ first words when he began his public ministry were a call to repentance. Yes, he associated with sinners, but in doing so, he challenged them to repent.

“Go and sin no more” was his admonition to those (all of us) whose lives were less than perfect. Like his cousin John, Jesus did not tolerate hypocrisy. He was “allergic to duplicity” and while he opened his Sacred Heart to everyone, he also challenged everyone to accept a new and much better way of

living in and through him.

Advent is a time of joyful expectation. It is also a time for honest self-examination, confession and the resolve to “sin no more” with the help of God’s grace. John the Baptist shows us the way.

“The crowds asked John the Baptist, ‘What should we do?’ He said to them in reply, ‘Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise’ (Lk 3:11).

“Even tax collectors came to be baptized and they said to him, ‘Teacher, what should we do?’ He answered them, ‘Stop collecting more than what is prescribed.’ Soldiers also asked him, ‘And what is it that we should do?’ He told them, ‘Do not practice extortion, do not falsely accuse anyone, and be satisfied with your wages’ ” (Lk 3:12-14).

No matter who we are, no matter how we have lived until now, the coming again of Jesus is an opportunity to begin again.

If we let him, Jesus will come into our hearts and clear away everything that holds us back and prevents us from loving God and our neighbor with generous hearts. Come, Lord Jesus! †



# Cristo, la piedra angular

## Podemos volver a empezar cuando Jesús retorne

La lectura del Evangelio del tercer domingo de Adviento (Lc 3:10-18) nos muestra cómo San Juan Bautista ayudó a preparar la venida del Mesías.

Como el último de los profetas del Antiguo Testamento, Juan instó al pueblo de Israel a ser honrado, a compartir sus alimentos y posesiones con los pobres y a esperar con gozosa esperanza la venida del Señor.

Cuando las multitudes que acudieron al desierto a verlo le preguntaron si era él a quien habían estado esperando, su respuesta fue clara:

*“Yo, en verdad, los bautizo con agua; pero viene uno que los bautizará con el Espíritu Santo y con fuego. Él es más poderoso que yo, que ni siquiera merezco desatarle la correa de sus sandalias. Trae su aventador en la mano, para limpiar el trigo y separarlo de la paja. Guardará el trigo en su granero, pero quemará la paja en un fuego que nunca se apagará”* (Lc 3, 16-17).

Juan era un hombre humilde que decía la verdad en términos llanos. Su bautismo de arrepentimiento anticipaba pero no sustituía el bautismo sacramental de Jesús que hace posible que nazcamos de nuevo “con el Espíritu Santo y con fuego.” Juan señala a Jesús y por eso es el santo perfecto para pregonar el tiempo

de Adviento ya que responde a nuestra ansiosa espera con palabras y gestos de esperanza.

En su mensaje del *Angelus* para el segundo domingo de Adviento de hace dos años, el Papa Francisco destacó la poderosa figura de San Juan Bautista como heraldo y precursor del Mesías largamente esperado, Aquel que Dios prometió que nos salvaría de la esclavitud del pecado y la muerte. El Papa Francisco señaló que:

*“[Juan] Predicaba la cercanía del Reino. En suma, un hombre austero y radical, que a primera vista puede parecernos un poco duro y que infunde cierto temor. Pero entonces nos preguntamos: ¿Por qué la Iglesia lo propone cada año como el principal compañero de viaje durante este tiempo de Adviento? ¿Qué se esconde detrás de su severidad, detrás de su aparente dureza? ¿Cuál es el secreto de Juan? ¿Cuál es el mensaje que la Iglesia nos da hoy con Juan?”*

*“En realidad, el Bautista, más que un hombre duro es un hombre alérgico a la falsedad.”*

La hipocresía (falsedad) era algo que Juan no podía tolerar y con ello anticipaba la postura que adoptaría Jesús frente a los dirigentes religiosos y políticos de su tiempo.

Juan se negó a permanecer en silencio o a consentir la hipocresía del rey Herodes; dijo la pura verdad, y eso le costó la vida.

Nuestra cultura secular nos presenta a menudo una imagen de Jesús tolerante con todo. Al fin y al cabo, escandalizaba a la gente que le rodeaba al tratar con prostitutas, recaudadores de impuestos y pecadores. Y es cierto que el propio médico divino dijo que había venido a curar a los pecadores, no a los justos.

Esta imagen de Jesús como sanador amable y gentil es cierta, pero está incompleta. Las primeras palabras de Jesús al comenzar su ministerio público fueron un llamado al arrepentimiento. Sí, se relacionó con pecadores, pero al hacerlo, les retó a arrepentirse.

“Vete y no peques más” fue su admonición a aquellos (todos nosotros) cuyas vidas no eran perfectas. Al igual que su primo Juan, Jesús no toleraba la hipocresía. Era «alérgico a la falsedad» y, al tiempo que abría su Sagrado Corazón a todos, también nos desafiaba a aceptar una forma nueva y mucho mejor de vivir en Él y por Él.

El Adviento es una época de alegría expectante y un momento para hacer un examen de conciencia

sincero, para confesarnos y para adoptar la determinación de “no pecar más” con la ayuda de la gracia de Dios. Juan el Bautista nos muestra el camino.

La gente le preguntaba: “¿Qué debemos hacer?” y él les respondía: “El que tenga dos trajes, dele uno al que no tiene ninguno; y el que tenga comida, compártala con el que no la tiene” (Lc 3:11).

Hasta los recaudadores de impuestos vinieron a bautizarse y le dijeron: “—Maestro, ¿qué debemos hacer nosotros?”

Juan les dijo:

—“No cobren más de lo que deben cobrar. También algunos soldados le preguntaron:

—“Y nosotros, ¿qué debemos hacer? Les contestó:

—“No le quiten nada a nadie, ni con amenazas ni acusándolo de algo que no haya hecho; y confórmense con su sueldo” (Lc 3:12-14).

Independientemente de quiénes seamos y de cómo hayamos vivido hasta ahora, la venida de Jesús es una oportunidad para volver a empezar.

Si se lo permitimos, Jesús entrará en nuestros corazones y limpiará todo lo que nos frena y nos impide amar a Dios y al prójimo con corazón generoso. ¡Ven, Señor Jesús! †







# Oldenburg Franciscan sisters celebrate anniversaries in religious life

Criterion staff report

The Sisters of St. Francis in Oldenburg celebrated significant anniversaries of time in religious life in 2024 of 13 of its members.

The anniversaries are marked by the year in which the sisters entered religious life with the Franciscans. Some who entered in February are considered members of the class of those who entered the community the previous fall.

## 75-year jubilarian

**Sister Mary Kuhl** (formerly Sister Mary Anthony) is a native of Cincinnati. She entered the community on Sept. 11, 1949, and professed final vows on Aug. 12, 1955. She earned a bachelor’s degree at Marian University in Indianapolis and a master’s degree at Ball State University in Muncie, Ind.

In the archdiocese, she served in Indianapolis at Our Lady of Lourdes School from 1951-58 and at St. Lawrence School from 1964-68, at St. Mary School in Greensburg from 1959-60, at Holy Family School in Richmond (now Seton Catholic School) from 1968-69, at the former Holy Family School in Oldenburg from 1969-71 and at the former St. Mary School in Aurora from 1971-72.

Sister Mary also ministered at schools in Ohio. She retired to the motherhouse in 2009.

## 70-year jubilarians

**Sister Kate Holohan** (formerly Sister Annata) is a native of Streator, Ill. She entered the community on Sept. 6, 1954, and professed final vows on Aug. 12, 1960. She earned a bachelor’s degree at Marian University and received an honorary doctorate from the East Asian Pastoral Institute in Manilla in the Philippines.

In the archdiocese, Sister Kate served at the motherhouse in its infirmary from 1955-60 and as congregational minister from 1982-94. She was one of the first Oldenburg Franciscans to serve in Papua New Guinea as a missionary, ministering there from 1960-82.

Sister Kate also served in parishes in West Virginia and retired to the motherhouse in 2009.

**Sister André Burkhardt** is a native of Brookville. She entered the community on Sept. 8, 1954, and professed final vows on Aug. 12, 1960. She earned a bachelor’s degree at Marian University and a master’s degree at Cardinal Stritch University in Milwaukee.

In the archdiocese, Sister André served at the former St. Bernadette School in Indianapolis from 1956-57, at the former St. Mary School in New Albany from 1962-63, at St. Andrew School in Richmond (now Seton Catholic School) from 1963-64 and at St. Michael Parish in Brookville from 2006-07.

She also ministered in schools and parishes in Arizona and Ohio and as a missionary in Kenya.

Sister André retired to the motherhouse in 2011 and now coordinates the Adopt-a-Sis program at the Oldenburg Academy of the Immaculate Conception in Oldenburg.

**Sister Cleopha Werner** is a native of Oldenburg, where she grew up in Holy Family Parish. She joined the community on Feb. 2, 1955, and professed final vows on Aug. 12, 1960. She earned a bachelor’s degree at Marian University.

In the archdiocese, Sister Cleopha served at St. Mary School in North Vernon from 1956-58, at St. Mary School in Greensburg from 1958-60, as a nanny in Columbus from 1997-2004 and in Indianapolis at St. Mark the Evangelist Parish from 1976-79 and St. Pius X Parish from 1980-81.

Sister Cleopha served in Indianapolis on the domestic staff at the archbishop’s home from 1964-70 and at the former Ritter Faculty House from 1973-76.

She also ministered in the Diocese of Evansville, Ind., in Ohio and in West Virginia.

At the motherhouse, she served as a cook from 1970-73 and retired there in 2005.

**Sister Amy Kistner** is a native of Cincinnati. She entered the community on Feb. 2, 1955, and professed final vows on Aug. 12, 1960. She earned a bachelor’s degree at Marian University and a master’s degree at Xavier University in Cincinnati.

In the archdiocese, Sister Amy served at St. Louis School in Batesville from 1956-60 and St. Monica School in Indianapolis from 1963-67. At the motherhouse, she ministered as novice director from 1978-84 and as congregational minister from 1994-2000.

She also served in schools and parishes in Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri and Ohio.

Sister Amy retired to the motherhouse in 2014 and currently serves as co-director of the community’s Little Portion missionary fund program.

**Sister Mary Fliehman** (formerly Sister Lauren) is a native of Cincinnati. She entered the community on Feb. 2, 1955, and professed final vows on Aug. 12, 1960. She earned a bachelor’s degree at Marian University and



a master’s degree at Xavier University.

In the archdiocese, Sister Mary served at the former Holy Trinity School in Indianapolis from 1956-57, Our Lady of Perpetual Help School in New Albany from 1957-58 and at Holy Family School in Richmond (now Seton Catholic School) from 1958-64 and 1968-72.

At the motherhouse, she served as an assistant treasurer from 1988-91, in pastoral care from 1991-2006 and as driver from 2007-20.

Sister Mary also ministered in schools, parishes and hospitals in Ohio.

She retired at the motherhouse in 2020.

## 60-year jubilarians

**Sister Miriam Kaeser** (formerly Sister Mary Willard) is a native of Cincinnati. She entered the community on Sept. 8, 1964, and professed final vows on Aug. 12, 1972. Sister Miriam earned a bachelor’s degree at Marian University, a master’s degree at Ball State University and a doctorate at the University of San Diego in San Diego, Calif.

In the archdiocese, she served as president of the Oldenburg Academy from 1987-1990 and on the faculty of Marian University from 2012-14.

Sister Miriam also ministered in schools, diocesan leadership and health care in California, Kentucky, Missouri and Ohio. Since 2021, she has served in pastoral ministry among the Navajo people in New Mexico.

**Sister Alacoque Burger** is a native of Indianapolis, where she grew up as a member of Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish. She entered the community on Sept. 8, 1964, and professed final vows on Aug. 12, 1972. Sister Alacoque earned a bachelor’s degree at Mount St. Joseph University in Cincinnati.

In the archdiocese, she served at the motherhouse in its infirmary from 1970-72 and from 1973-83, on the formation team from 1998-2000 and on the leadership team from 2000-06.

Sister Alacoque also ministered in parishes and in charity agencies in the Diocese of Gary, Ind., and in Illinois, Michigan and Ohio. While living in retirement at the motherhouse since 2022, she has continued to serve as a volunteer chaplain at Margaret Mary Hospital in Batesville.

**Sister Donna Graham** (formerly Sister Irene Mary) is a native of Cincinnati. She entered the community on Sept. 8, 1964, and professed final vows on Aug. 12, 1972. Sister Donna earned a bachelor’s degree at Marian University and master’s degrees at the University of Notre Dame in northern Indiana and the University of Kentucky in Lexington, Ky.

In the archdiocese, she served in Indianapolis at St. Michael the Archangel School (now St. Michael-St. Gabriel Archangels School) from 1966-67, at St. Monica School from 1968-71 and the former Holy Trinity School from 1972-73. Sister Donna ministered as a therapist at Reid Memorial Hospital in Richmond from 1988-90 and at Community Mental Health Services in Batesville from

1998-2000. At the motherhouse, she served as interim director of Michaela Farm from 1997-99.

Sister Donnaa also ministered in Ohio at schools, at a hospital in campus ministry and in the provincial office of the Order of Friars Minor.

She currently lives in retirement at the motherhouse.

**Sister Bridget Arnold** is a native of Evansville, Ind. She entered the community on Feb. 2, 1965, and professed final vows on Aug. 12, 1972. Sister Bridget earned a bachelor’s degree at Marian University and a master’s degree at Clarke University in Dubuque, Iowa.

In the archdiocese, she served at St. Michael School in Brookville from 1967-68. Sister Bridget also ministered in schools in the Evansville Diocese, Missouri and Ohio.

She continues to serve at St. Joseph School in Evansville, where she has ministered since 1987.

**Sister Noella Poinsette** is a native of Indianapolis where she was baptized at St. Anthony Parish and was a student at St. Michael the Archangel School (now St. Michael-St. Gabriel Archangels School).

She entered the community on Feb. 2, 1965, and professed final vows on Sept. 12, 1972. Sister Noella earned a bachelor’s degree at Marian University and master’s degrees at Appalachian State University in Boone, N.C., and at Northern Kentucky University in Highland Heights, Ky.

In the archdiocese, she served at the former Holy Trinity School in Indianapolis from 1968-69, at the Oldenburg Academy from 1972-79 and 1986-88, and at the motherhouse from 1985-86.

Sister Noella has also ministered in schools, parishes, at a university and in social justice and campus music ministry in Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, New York, Ohio and South Dakota.

Since 2019, she has served as director of justice and peace at the motherhouse.

**Sister Maggie Rahe** (formerly Sister M. Richard) is a native of Batesville, where she grew up as a member of St. Louis Parish.

She entered the community on Feb. 2, 1965, and professed final vows on Aug. 12, 1972. Sister Maggie earned a bachelor’s degree at Marian University and a master’s degree at the University of Dayton in Dayton, Ohio.

In the archdiocese, she served at St. Andrew School in Richmond (now Seton Catholic School) from 1967-68.

Sister Maggie has also ministered in schools, in health care and in elder care in Illinois and Ohio. She currently serves on the leadership team at the motherhouse.

**Sister Julann Butz** is a native of Cincinnati. She entered the community on Feb. 2, 1965, and professed final vows on Sept. 12, 1972. Sister Julann earned a bachelor’s degree at Marian University and a master’s degree at the University of Notre Dame.

In the archdiocese, she served in Indianapolis at St. Mark the Evangelist School from 1966-67 and at Cardinal Ritter Jr./Sr. High School from 1969-2001.

Sister Julann currently ministers in human resources at the motherhouse, a ministry which she began in 2001. †



# DAUGHTER

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The impact on the lives of Josh, Laura and their 16-year-old son Levi has been tremendous—but not just in terms of caregiving.

“Our faith has always been there,” says Laura. “But it’s definitely grown and deepened” as a result of Kathryn’s condition.

Along the way, the couple has witnessed how God has used Kathryn’s AHC to make a difference in others’ lives.

Like the call of her former school aide to embrace Catholicism.

Or inspiring Elizabeth Hauger and Carrie Pfeiffer—the family’s fellow parishioners at St. Gabriel in Connersville—to create a fundraising event that in turn calls more people to action.

And the Marszaleks have marveled at God’s providential care in their own lives, seeing in retrospect what Laura calls “divine connections.”

They first noticed the pattern through one pivotal person at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital.

## A life-defining intersection

Starting at 6 weeks old, says Laura, Kathryn had spells with various symptoms—stiffening of one side of her body, tremors, unusual eye movements.

Her first major episode struck at 9 months. The Marszaleks were referred to Riley Children’s Health hospital in Indianapolis, where she stayed for five days undergoing multiple tests.

“AHC is hard to diagnose because it looks like other things—epilepsy, cerebral palsy,” Josh explains.

Unable to identify a cause for Kathryn’s symptoms, the doctors told the Marszaleks to follow up in two years.

Just two months later, at 11 months, Kathryn had another major episode.

“We thought she was dying,” says Josh. He and Laura prayed about what to do.

“We started heading back to Riley,” says Josh.

Then, at a life-defining intersection, he asked Laura to check the rankings of the nation’s children’s hospitals dealing with neurology. Cincinnati Children’s Hospital ranked #3 nationally, while Riley ranked further down the list.

“So, instead of taking a right-hand turn, we took a left-hand turn” toward Cincinnati, says Josh.

For reasons the couple now credit to divine providence, they did not meet with a doctor at the hospital.

Instead, says Laura, “A neurology resident walked in—not a fellow, not even an attending physician, but a resident. And she says, ‘You know, we had somebody six months ago that looked just like this. This is a one-in-a-million diagnosis, but this really could be AHC.’

“Because of her, we were able to get an official diagnosis a few months later. It was *years* earlier than most people.”

In 2018, Kathryn started having seizures, a condition in addition to AHC. Josh and Laura took her to Cincinnati Children’s Hospital for a brain scan after a 2-hour seizure.

“We’re in the room, and in walks the same resident, only she was an attending physician by then,” says Laura.

“I remember hugging her and saying, ‘We have tried to find you,’ because we wanted to thank her and tell her what a difference she made.

“And then she’s the face that is there when we have kind of a new catastrophe and are in a very low spot. And it’s clearly a face we would trust.

“Those are the divine connections that we started seeing,” Laura says. “There’s been a lot of the Holy Spirit moving things around.”

## Holy Spirit working ‘all the time’

The Marszaleks now see the Holy Spirit in action “all the time, in so many ways,” says Laura.

“Like, one of my favorite Scripture passages is Jesus’ explanation that a man’s blindness was ... ‘so that God’s works might be revealed,’” she says of John 9:1-3.

“Then one day, the next verse jumped out at me: ‘We must do the work of him who sent me while it is day’ [Jn 9:4]. It made me see we can’t just rest in the fact that God is working. We have to do the work, too.”

The Holy Spirit also reshaped Laura’s focus on Hebrews 12:1. It’s encouragement to “run with perseverance the race that is set before us” resonated with her—until the day her eyes were drawn to the preceding

words: “Since we’re surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses.”

“I realized [coping with Kathryn’s condition] isn’t really about me running this race,” she says. “It’s about the witnesses that are around us.”

The couple also see the Holy Spirit at work through Levi’s calm disposition.

Josh recalls a chaotic moment when medics were working on Kathryn during a seizure, and he saw his son “sitting quietly, praying the rosary.”

Another time, Josh was frantically driving Kathryn to the emergency room.

“Levi is sitting in the front seat holding his sister, who’s turning blue and having a seizure,” he says. “But he’s calm. I’m freaking out, and Levi—who was maybe 12 or 13—is holding his sister and praying.”

The Marszaleks also recognize the Holy Spirit through those who help them carry their cross—people like Hauger and Pfeiffer.

## ‘God has his hands all over this event’

Josh and Laura are strong supporters of the AHCF’s mission to fund research for a cure. For more than 11 years, Josh served as vice-president then president on the foundation’s board of directors.

In 2016, the Marszaleks helped the organization host a conference in Indianapolis. When the couple reached out for volunteers from St. Gabriel, Hauger responded.

The experience left her with a desire to do more to help the family.

She and Pfeiffer had volunteered together as charity event organizers before. Now, the friends felt called to team up again, this time to help the Marszaleks raise money for AHCF.

They developed a fundraiser called Warriors for Kathryn, with 100% of the donations going to the foundation.

The benefit also created a means for more people to help “do the work” while building an even greater “cloud of witnesses.”

The Connersville community event launched in February 2017 primarily as a poker tournament. It now also includes wine bingo, basket raffles, food and more.

In eight years, Warriors for Kathryn has raised nearly \$175,300.

“This is a very poor area of the state, but the people are amazingly generous,” says Laura. “I thought \$10,000 sounded like a good goal for the first year. We ended up raising \$17,000.”

But the Marszaleks, Hauger and Pfeiffer also recognize the greater force behind the success.

“God has his hands all over this event,” says Laura. “People who don’t even know us seem to feel called to give in the most amazing ways.”

Like the man who wanted to help but had only \$1 to give. He bought a basket raffle ticket and won.

Or the woman in a store who overheard the conversation of a volunteer picking up supplies for the event—and handed the volunteer \$20 for the cause.

God also works through the generosity of those who contribute to the benefit in other ways.

“It’s not a parish event,” says Hauger. “But the parish supports it, whether it’s people volunteering, making soup and sandwiches or donating items for a basket.”

Plenty of non-Catholics are involved in Warriors for Kathryn as well. The organizers have seen God at work in that regard, too, especially in Hauger’s family: Partly from their exposure to Catholics and the faith through the event, her mom, sister, niece and nephew have been received into the full communion of the Church.

There is another woman God called to embrace Catholicism in essence through Kathryn’s condition.

That story starts a bit rocky.

## ‘They ended up being best friends’

Kathryn, who is now home-schooled, originally attended St. Gabriel School until her AHC episodes



Elizabeth Hauger, left, Kathryn Marszalek and Carrie Pfeiffer give the peace sign during the Warriors for Kathryn event on Feb. 3, 2023. (Submitted photo)

became too frequent in the fourth grade.

“But when Kathryn first started having seizures, the public school system determined she needed a full-time aide to have eyes on her,” says Laura.

The person the public school administrators chose was Mildred “Midge” Rose, a woman well into her 70s.

“She was about to retire, and she did *not* want to leave the public school,” Laura recalls. “She was pretty salty about moving to St. Gabriel.”

The Marszaleks weren’t thrilled, either.

“She was about Kathryn’s size, and she was elderly,” says Laura. “We were like, ‘Is this really the aide we need? Because if Kathryn goes into an episode, is she going to be able to pick her up?’

“But they ended up being best friends.”

The family stayed in touch with Rose after Kathryn left the school, and she helped at a few Warriors for Kathryn events.

Rose also stayed on at St. Gabriel School.

“She only had one son, and he was in West Virginia, so all the teachers adopted Midge as their mom,” says Laura.

When Rose was diagnosed with cancer, it was a St. Gabriel teacher who drove her to her oncology appointments.

Rose died on June 4 at the age of 81—but not before being received into the full communion of the Church.

“Her coming into the Church was more about the St. Gabriel community,” says Laura.

Still, she acknowledges that God used Kathryn’s condition to bring Rose to the faith community—even if she came unwillingly.

## ‘No other explanation except divine intervention’

Rose’s conversion is just one of many ways the Marszaleks have seen God at work since they first recognized “divine connections” at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital.

“I look back on some of the decisions we made and realize we weren’t really the ones making them,” says Laura. “When you look back, you can see where things have just kind of shuffled together in preparation for the next thing, and there’s no other explanation except divine intervention.”

As for Levi, he says his little sister’s condition has “taught me to pray and turn to God. ... It calms me down.”

Now the high school sophomore prays before swim meets, school tests and Mass, even “at night when I’m tired and in the morning when I don’t want to get up.”

Josh has found comfort in God’s presence, too.

“There have been times that Kathryn has been in the hospital on a ventilator or had prolonged seizures,” he says. “And almost every time I thought something was just impossible, there was always, like, this feeling that I wasn’t alone.”

The cross of his daughter’s condition is still heavy.

“I can’t say I’m not angry,” Josh admits. “But it’s not going to make me walk away from my faith. If anything, it makes me want to lean into it more.”

(For more information on AHC, go to [ahckids.org](http://ahckids.org). The next Warriors for Kathryn event will take place in the Expo Hall at the Fayette County Fairgrounds on Feb. 14. It typically begins at 5 p.m. Check [www.facebook.com/W4Kathryn](http://www.facebook.com/W4Kathryn) for updates.) †

# Pope Francis, Central American Catholics pray for Nicaragua

BUENOS AIRES (OSV News)—Pope Francis and the country’s bishops in exile prayed for Nicaragua as the Central American country observed the Immaculate Conception of Mary amid persecution.

“I invite you to join me in prayer for the Church and people of Nicaragua, who celebrate the *Purísima*”—as the Nicaraguan celebration of the Immaculate Conception is known—“as Mother and Patroness,” and lift to her “a cry of faith

and hope,” Pope Francis said during his *Angelus* prayer on Dec. 8.

“May the heavenly mother be a consolation in difficulties and uncertainties, and open everyone’s hearts, so that the way of respectful and constructive dialogue may be sought, in order to promote peace, fraternity and harmony in the country,” Pope Francis said.

The pope’s comments marked the second time in December that he offered prayers and expressed support for the

Nicaraguan people. “This makes us happy,” an exiled priest said in a brief message. “Perhaps it’s never too late.”

On Dec. 2, in a special letter to the people of Nicaragua, the pope wrote: “I am with you, especially in these days when you are celebrating the Novena of the Immaculate Conception.”

Nicaraguans celebrate the *Purísima* with a novena. They traditionally build altars and gather at parishes for “*la gritería*,” or “the shouting.” In *la gritería*,

the people shout, “Who is it that brings this joy?” to which the response is given, “The conception of Mary!”

The *Purísima* came amid persecution for Nicaraguan Catholics in 2024, however, as the ruling Sandinista regime cracked down on religious activities such as processions and large public gatherings. Social media photos from the *Purísima* celebration inside the Managua Cathedral showed Cardinal Leopoldo Brenes overseeing *la gritería*. †



# DEATH PENALTY

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On Dec. 9, records show the Indiana Supreme Court issued its response, concluding the court should deny the second motion to stay the execution. As *The Criterion* went to press on Dec. 10, the execution of Corcoran stood to take place on Dec.18.

Morris, a Catholic, admitted he has had a change of heart about the death penalty throughout the past few years. “I think it’s who I am,” Morris told *Today’s Catholic*. “Christ made me, and being a God-fearing person and the way my parents raised me, it’s something that being a legislator ... and how Christ created me, and feeling very compelled. ... I’ve been trying to educate my fellow colleagues on where I’m at with ending capital punishment.”

Morris reached out to Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend for his counsel about the letter and about his change of heart.

“He and I have a good relationship,” Morris said. “So, I heard from Bishop Rhoades and the Catholic Conference of Bishops, and they are 100% behind me in the message and the mission.”

Morris added that, in addition to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, he also has the backing of the Indiana

Catholic Conference, the public policy voice of the Church in Indiana.

He told *Today’s Catholic* of the Fort Wayne-South Bend Diocese a story about one incident that affected him in this journey.

“It’s a Holy Spirit moment,” Morris said. “A good friend of the family, they lost a son, and Bishop Rhoades did the funeral and said during the petitions to pray for government leaders as they stand for life. So that, and hearing the word, hearing the homily, hearing the message, hearing the bishop’s words at the funeral ... at that time really affected me. So, I’m carrying forward, pressing on. So that was maybe six, seven weeks ago.”

Morris also talked about how executions don’t just affect the person being executed.

“You know, it’s not just one life,” Morris said. “There are a number of other lives that are being affected at our prisons as well. Think of the employees and the fact that they have to be a part of this act of execution and how it affects them. So, they can all appear like they’re good until you look at it and step back. That’s someone’s dad, someone’s brother, someone’s sister. So, the people on the execution team are struggling in their own way.”

At the heart of it, Morris said, “I am living my faith, and I am standing for



The execution chamber in the U.S. Penitentiary in Terre Haute, Ind., is shown in this undated file photo. Indiana death-row inmate Joseph Corcoran is scheduled to be put to death by lethal injection in Michigan City, Ind., on Dec. 18. (OSV News photo/Reuters file photo)

people and doing what I feel is the right thing to do.”

Morris still has hope that Gov. Holcomb will stay executions until the legislation can be taken up in session in January.

Morris gave *Today’s Catholic* a copy of the letter he wrote to the governor detailing his former stance on capital

punishment and his change of heart based on his faith, saying, “I believe only one position honors our Lord and Savior, our Creator: to protect all human life.”

(Nicole Hahn is director of communications for the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend.) †

# ADOPTION

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been especially wonderful people to have taken in a young girl for six months while she was pregnant.”

Near the end of her letter, Clute wrote, “In the event that we never meet and that this is my one and only communication with you, I would like you to know that I am eternally grateful for all that you did for my mother and my grandparents.

“I believe that you went above and beyond your normal duties to assist my family to protect their reputation. I greatly appreciate your gentle care in safely returning me to St. Elizabeth’s and for making sure that I was baptized before you departed.”

## A special Christmas present

Clute didn’t receive a response from Father Kettron, who died at the age of 91 on June 14, 2022. She also didn’t get to reunite with her birth mother who died in 2011.



Father Michael Kettron

“I loved her more than she could have ever understood,” Clute said. “And I have never once chastised her for her decision.”

There are also many blessings that continue to make Clute thankful.

She entered into the lives of her adoptive parents, Rex and Carol Myers, on December 20, 1967.

“Mom always talked about what a special Christmas present I was for them that year,” noted Clute, who grew up in Our Lady of the

Greenwood Parish in Greenwood and attended school there. “I have always known I was adopted, and my parents made that a very special thing. They were always grateful to have been able to raise children.”

Clute’s life has also been blessed by her two now-grown daughters, Sydney and Lauren. Plus, there’s the anticipation of her first grandchild, due in the spring.

Clute has also connected with her birth father and his sons, plus relatives from her birth mother’s side of the family.

“All in all, my search ended well, and I am thrilled to have found a very large, extended family,” she said. “Both families have welcomed me with open arms.”

Yet, perhaps, the greatest blessing of all is this: Clute has turned all the love she has known in her life into sharing that gift with young women who have chosen to open their hearts to having children.

## Making a connection with compassion

For 37 years, Clute has been a registered nurse for Franciscan Health Indianapolis, many of those years working in the maternity unit. She now coordinates the hospital’s Childbirth Education program, teaching expectant parents and helping to prepare them for the life-changing experience of parenthood.

Clute has always felt a special connection to certain patients.

“As a maternity nurse, I have always gravitated to our young moms who are considering adoption, and I go out of my way to care for them with a little extra effort,” Clute noted. “I’ve always wanted to care for them with the extra understanding and compassion that I hoped was shown to my mom when I was born.

“I have been able to speak honestly with girls who were torn about what to do, and I can paint a very pleasant picture of adoption. I always tell them how grateful I am that my mom made that unselfish decision. I tell them that I would not be standing in front of them had it not been for that choice. I express my respect for them.”

She also shares that she understands the difficulty of their choice.

“I tell them that adoption will likely be the hardest decision of their life, but also possibly the most beautiful one ever. I have cried buckets of tears with these moms as I wheel them out the hospital doors empty-handed and heart-breaking. Mine breaks every time for my own mom.

“I always encourage them to write a letter to their baby—explaining the circumstances, explaining how they feel, telling their story, giving their baby a glimpse of themselves and how much they were loved. A letter of explanation is the one thing that I have always wanted and desperately hoped would be in my file.”

Just as she has seen the heartbreak of a mother placing a child for adoption, Clute has also witnessed the joy of that choice.

“I have had the thrill of taking a new baby and placing it in the arms of the excited adoptive parents just hours later,” Clute said. “Nothing compares to that joy. In those moments, I saw what it must have been like for my adoptive parents. I congratulate them and know that the circle is complete.”

All her life experiences led Clute to serve on the advisory council of the St. Elizabeth/Coleman Adoption Agency for many years.

“I was thrilled to be able to give back to the place that gave me so much,” she said. “They have such wonderful staff working there and, of course, I felt very much at home. They had all heard my story countless times, and it was very exciting for all of us when I was able to share my search results with them.”

The results included the extra efforts of a priest who went the extra mile for her and her birth mother. She ended her thank-you letter to him with this thought:

“We rarely fully know the impacts that acts of kindness make on those around us. But in this case, it has left a lasting impact on me.

“Thank you from the bottom of my heart.” †

# Advent penance services are scheduled at archdiocesan parishes

Advent begins this year on Dec. 1. Parishes throughout the archdiocese have scheduled communal penance services for Advent. The following is a list of services that have been reported to *The Criterion*.

## Batesville Deanery

Dec. 17, 6:30 p.m. at St. John the Evangelist Church of St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Decatur County  
Dec. 17, 6:30-7:30 p.m. at St. Michael, Brookville  
Dec. 18, 6-8 p.m. at St. John the Baptist, Osgood  
Dec. 18, 6:30-7:30 p.m. at St. Peter, Franklin County  
Dec. 19, 7 p.m. at St. Louis, Batesville  
*Additional opportunities for reconciliation on:*  
Dec. 20, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. at St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Aurora  
Dec. 20, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. at St. Joseph, Shelbyville

## Bloomington Deanery

Dec. 17, 7-8:30 p.m. at St. Vincent de Paul, Bedford  
Dec. 18, 6:30-7:30 p.m. at St. Jude the Apostle, Spencer

Dec. 19, 6:30-8:30 p.m. at St. Agnes, Nashville  
Dec. 19, 6-7 p.m. for St. Martin of Tours, Martinsville, and St. Mary, Mitchell, at St. Martin of Tours

## Connersville Deanery

Dec. 13, 5:30-6:30 p.m. at Holy Family Church of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Richmond

## Indianapolis East Deanery

Dec. 19, 7 p.m. at Holy Spirit

## Indianapolis North Deanery

Dec. 15, 2 p.m. at Immaculate Heart of Mary  
Dec. 16, 7 p.m. at St. Lawrence  
Dec. 17, 7 p.m. at St. Luke the Evangelist

## Indianapolis South Deanery

Dec. 21, 8:30 a.m. at SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi, Greenwood

## New Albany Deanery

Dec. 16, 7 p.m. at St. Mary, Navilleton  
Dec. 17, 7 p.m. at St. Mary, Lanesville  
Dec. 18, 7 p.m. at St. Mary-of-the-Knobs, Floyd County  
Dec. 18, 7 p.m. at St. Michael, Charlestown  
Dec. 19, 6:30 p.m. at St. Francis Xavier, Henryville

## Seymour Deanery

Dec. 18, 7 p.m. at Holy Trinity, Edinburgh

## Tell City Deanery

Dec. 15, 2 p.m. CT at St. Paul, Tell City  
Dec. 18, 6:30 p.m. CT at St. Boniface, Fulda

## Terre Haute Deanery

Dec. 18, 6 p.m. at Sacred Heart, Clinton  
*Recurring opportunities for reconciliation in the Terre Haute Deanery are as follows:*  
Saturdays 4-5:30 p.m. at St. Benedict  
Thursdays 6:30-8:30 p.m. and Saturdays 3:30-5 p.m. at St. Joseph University Church. †



# With inaugural Mass, Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris reveals ‘the Lord does not abandon his own’

PARIS (OSV News)—Chilling rain and the “City of Lights” completely locked down due to high profile guests did not stop the crowds from arriving as close to Notre Dame Cathedral as possible for its inaugural Mass celebrated on Dec. 8. The beloved Paris icon also opened its doors to the public for the first time after the devastating fire in 2019, with the second Mass that Sunday for Parisians and tourists.

The first solemn Mass witnessed the consecration by Archbishop Laurent Ulrich of Paris of the cathedral’s new bronze altar with France’s president and his wife watching in the first row.

After a spectacular evening reopening ceremony on Dec. 7, the cathedral was illuminated by daylight this time, when the procession of 170 bishops entered Notre Dame on Sunday morning, followed by more than 100 banner bearers representing all of Paris’ parishes, and seven priest representatives of various Eastern Catholic Churches.

The bishops wore vestments adorned with golden crosses, created by star French designer Jean-Charles de Castelbajac, who was inspired by the large golden cross at the back of the cathedral over its Pieta statue. Castelbajac is known for his friendship with the late Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger, a longtime archbishop of Paris.

The celebrants took their places in the carved oak stalls of the cathedral’s canons’ choir, whose 18th-century upper panels depict scenes from the life of Virgin Mary. They were placed on either side of the group of children of the Maîtrise Notre Dame de Paris choir, dressed in blue robes.

The cathedral was packed when Archbishop Ulrich sprinkled the crowd with holy water before blessing the altar, ambo and the lectern from which the texts of the Scripture were read.

As President Emmanuel Macron with his wife, first lady of France Brigitte Macron, sat in the first row with Grand Duke Henri and Grand Duchess Maria Teresa of Luxembourg, the cathedral was filled with invited guests, including presidents of French fashion companies and top politicians.

Outside, on the quayside behind the Seine River, hundreds of worshippers gathered near picturesque second-hand bookshops, closed at the time, to follow the Mass on a big screen, despite the rain.

“Whether you are in this building or in front of a screen, or outside in the rain, you are recipients of God’s benevolence,”

the archbishop said at the beginning of Mass. He also paid tribute to those “who face the rigors of war” and prayed for France, “which scans its future with concern,” referring to the political crisis the French are experiencing these days.

The French government was officially forced to resign on Dec. 5, after parliament ousted the prime minister in a no-confidence vote over his fiscal plans.

Given the large presence of political representatives, the archbishop of Paris addressed everyone in his homily, believers and non-believers alike.

“Do not be content to simply enjoy the pleasure of being here on such a special day when the cathedral of Paris regains its splendor, such as no one has ever known it before,” he told those gathered. “Whether you are believers or not, you are welcome to participate in the joy of the believers here who give glory to God for having found their mother Church.

“Do not only remain dazzled by the beauty of the stones found, but let yourselves be led to the greatest joys, to the most beautiful gift that God gives you and gives us of his loving presence, of his closeness to the poorest, of his transforming power in the sacraments,” Archbishop Ulrich said.

“This morning, the pain of April 15, 2019, is erased,” he said of the fire, which caused the cathedral’s spire to collapse, leaving Parisians in tears on the streets, praying for firefighters who went to battle the flames. The firefighters were applauded by a standing crowd for five minutes straight, as they walked through Notre Dame between dozens of heads of state, including President-elect Donald J. Trump and Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, at the reopening ceremonies on Dec. 7.

“Even if the shock caused by the fire may have been lasting, the pain was already overcome when prayer rose from the banks of the Seine and from hundreds of millions of hearts around the world,” Archbishop Ulrich emphasized.

What happened with Notre Dame—a speedy 5-year resurrection from the ashes—is not the only example of God’s grace through the centuries, Archbishop Ulrich stressed.

“Generation after generation—believers experience it—the Lord does not abandon his own,” he said. Even if “distress and violence do not cease throughout the history of men,” it is God and his disciples “who feed on his strength to show the way to the victory of life.”



People attend a Mass open to the public at Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris on Dec. 8, five-and-a-half years after a fire ravaged the Gothic masterpiece. (OSV News photo/Christian Hartmann, Reuters)

The consecration of the new main altar was a central part of the inaugural Mass. The bronze modern structure designed by French artist Guillaume Bardet stunned anyone entering the renewed cathedral as an example of contemporary architecture gently completing the centuries-old design.

First, the archbishop placed the relics of five holy men and women inside the altar, three women and two men, whose history is linked to the Church in Paris, including those of St. Marie Eugénie Milleret, St. Madeleine Sophie Barat, St. Charles de Foucauld and Blessed Vladimir Ghika. Among the relics were also those of St. Catherine Labouré, who was especially connected to the day of the altar’s consecration.

St. Catherine is known to the world for having received apparitions from the Virgin Mary in 1830 in her convent on rue du Bac, in Paris, after which the religious sister asked, following Mary’s request, that the Miraculous Medal, also known as the Medal of the Immaculate Conception, be struck. The feast of the Immaculate Conception ordinarily is celebrated on Dec. 8 in the Roman calendar; this year, however, as it fell on the Second Sunday of Advent, it was moved to Dec. 9.

After a long prayer of dedication, Archbishop Ulrich anointed the altar with the blessed oil of the holy chrism, spreading it at length over the entire surface with his bare hands. Then, incense candles were lit at five points on the altar, on the five crosses engraved in bronze. Finally, the priests covered the altar with a white cloth and lit the candles to continue

with Mass, accompanied by the choir’s singing.

In a message sent to the archbishop of Paris on Dec. 7, the night of the reopening ceremony, Pope Francis said that soon Notre Dame will “be visited and admired once again” by huge crowds of people from all walks of life.

“I know, Your Excellency, that your doors will be wide open to them, and that you will be committed to welcoming them generously and freely, as brothers and sisters,” he wrote, making waves of comments in France that the pope himself spoke up against the cathedral’s entrance fee proposed by France’s Ministry of Culture.

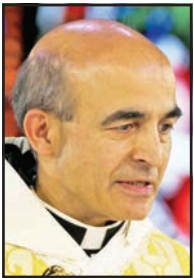
“May they, lifting their eyes to these vaults that have regained their light, share his invincible hope,” the pope said of 15 million people expected to visit Notre Dame every year from now on.

Notre Dame’s inaugural Sunday wrapped in Paris with a second cathedral Mass, this time open to the public, and celebrated by Notre Dame’s rector-archpriest, Father Olivier Ribadeau Dumas. To attend, it was necessary to have reserved a place in a new digital application set up for Notre Dame de Paris.

On Dec. 3, the day the application went live, the 1,500 places on offer for this first Mass had all been reserved within 25 minutes, The Associated Press confirmed. Father Ribadeau Dumas had long been looking forward to returning to the cathedral to celebrate such a simple Mass, once the “pomp” of the reopening ceremonies had been replaced by “humble normality,” he told OSV News. †

## World must aid Syria at this ‘new chapter in its rich history,’ says Bishop Zaidan

(OSV News)—The head of the U.S. Catholic bishops’ international justice committee is calling on nations to help Syria after the Dec. 8 fall of the



Bishop A. Elias Zaidan

Assad dictatorship in a lightning rebel offensive after 13 years of civil war.

“In yet another dramatic development in the Middle East, after enduring more than a decade of bloody civil war, Syria is undergoing a national political transition that will surely impact the entire region,” said Bishop A. Elias Zaidan of the Maronite Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon based in Los Angeles, chair of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ (USCCB) Committee on International Justice and Peace.

In a Dec. 10 statement, Bishop Zaidan said that the U.S. and the global community should support Syria as it “starts a new chapter in its rich history.”

He noted that Cardinal Mario Zenari, papal ambassador to Syria, had “expressed his profound relief that the

transition was relatively peaceful, while also noting the arduous task ahead for the Syrian people.”

Cardinal Zenari spoke with Vatican News hours after rebels entered Syria’s capital, Damascus, which Assad was reported to have fled sometime on Dec. 8, after being absent from the public eye during most of the rebels’ two-week campaign. Assad and his family are now in Moscow and have been granted asylum there, according to state media in Russia, a key backer of the Assad regime.

Cardinal Zenari told Vatican News he had been unable to sleep amid the “constant gunfire” in Damascus, but noted the “shooting in the streets” was “celebratory” amid a stunning transition of power that happened without a bloody contest for the capital.

In his statement, Bishop Zaidan quoted the cardinal, who told Vatican News, “Thank God, this transition happened without bloodshed, without the carnage that was feared. Now the path ahead is steep—those who have taken power have promised to respect everyone and to build a new Syria. We hope they will keep these promises, but of course, the road ahead remains very difficult.

“I echo Cardinal Zenari’s sentiments on the transition, and the aspirations of the Syrian people are clear: the people of Syria want a government in Damascus that will respect and defend human rights, especially the religious freedom of minorities, uphold the rule of law, and promote economic and civil society development throughout the country,” said Bishop Zaidan. “As Syria starts a new chapter in its rich history, I urge the United States and the international community to keep the people of Syria in prayer and to closely monitor the situation so that all aid organizations are able to reach those most in need.”

The rebel offensive ended the five-decade rule of the Assad family, which has been marked by violent repression and brutal crackdowns on dissent. During his three decades in power, Assad’s father Hafez established a Soviet-style economy and quashed opposition. Initial hopes that Bashar Assad—who assumed power in 2000 after his father’s death—would prove more moderate were extinguished when Assad turned to longtime family allies to exert an increasingly authoritarian rule.

When pro-democratic protests sparked civil war in 2011, Assad responded with brutal force that ultimately saw more than 500,000 killed and countless atrocities marked by detention, torture and executions, prompting the United Nations to convene an independent international commission of inquiry on Syria.

As of 2024, 16.7 million Syrians are in need of humanitarian aid. More than half of Syria’s 23 million pre-war population is displaced, with 5.2 million refugees and 6.8 million internally displaced persons, according to UNHCR, the U.N. refugee agency.

As rebel forces have liberated the Assad regime’s notorious detention centers, evidence of systematic torture has also increasingly come to light, with some 40 bodies at one hospital morgue reported to have shown signs of what one rebel fighter described to Agence France Presse as “gruesome torture.”

Assad’s fall has not concluded the state of conflict in Syria. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported on Dec. 10 that Israel has launched more than 300 air strikes on Syrian territory since Assad fled, and Israeli ground forces have moved into southern Syria. †



# SIMPLY CATHOLIC

## Advent offers ways to prepare spiritually for the coming of Christ

By Woodeene Koenig-Bricker

(OSV News)—“When we let the world know that there is more to the holiday than presents and decorations, we fulfill our mission as Christians to evangelize the world.”

Imagine expecting a new baby. For months, you prepare to welcome this addition, but in the last month, the preparations really step up. You make sure that the crib is clean, the diapers are in place, the car seat is installed, and family and friends are ready to meet the new baby.

That sense of joyful preparation combined with anticipation is the attitude we bring to Advent as we await the arrival of Christ the Lord. Christmas is the high point, but using the days leading up to Dec. 25 to prepare both spiritually and materially is what Advent is all about!

What sets Advent apart from the usual secular preparations for Christmas is the spiritual dimension: Advent is a time of prayer and penance. As Catholics, we are called to exercise a more disciplined approach to our spiritual lives during the four weeks of Advent and to pay special attention to our words and deeds as we wait patiently for the coming of Christ.

Waiting is a challenge, but instead of just counting down the days, we are called to use Advent as a time to deepen our relationship with God. Keep things simple. Read a Psalm as a bedtime prayer, go to confession, pray the rosary, spend some time in eucharistic adoration or go to daily Mass.

If you have children, make a “good deed” crèche: Put a slip of paper, acting as a piece of straw, in the manger each time you do a good deed so that the bed will be filled with “holy softness” for the Christ Child.

Some of the major signs of the season are decorations and lights, especially those on the outside of the house. As you decorate your house, think about how lights are more than just pretty objects. Lights, especially candles, have been used for centuries at Christmas time as a symbol of the star that showed the shepherds and wise men where to find the Christ Child. Your lights can serve as a witness to the “light of the world” that is both coming and has already arrived.

Each household develops their own traditions about when to put up a tree, stockings and other decorations. Some people like to do a little bit over the weeks; others prefer to make decorating a major part of Christmas Eve. (And in case you feel as if putting up decorations early is somehow improper, the Vatican puts up its Christmas scene, consisting of trees and a crèche, in very early December!)



A person decorates homemade Christmas cookies. Advent offers many opportunities in everyday life to prepare spiritually for the coming of Christ. (OSV News photo/Jill Wellington, Pixabay)

St. Francis of Assisi is credited with creating the first Nativity scene. Invest in having a crèche of your own. Some people put theirs under the tree, others make a special scene on a table. Some families make the crèche into an ongoing tradition by adding a new figure each year.

Many families have special foods that they serve only at Christmas. As you prepare these treats, use the time to recall—and pray for—all those family members who have gone before us in death.

You might want to begin building some new and flavorful traditions. One idea from the Anglican tradition is to begin your holiday baking on the last Sunday before Advent. This Sunday is called “Stir-up Sunday” because traditional fruit cakes were mixed on this day and left to “mellow” until Christmas. The name comes

from the collect prayer from the day’s liturgy: “Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people.” Put a new twist on the tradition by making and freezing batches of cookie dough to be baked later in the month.

Advent is a time of hope and light. It is a time when we reaffirm that nothing is impossible with God, not even a virgin bringing forth a child. This Advent, find hope as you recommit yourself to spiritual renewal. This Advent, look for the light of Christ in everything you do, from shopping for presents, to mailing cards, to making special food, to decorating your house.

This Advent, prepare your home and your heart for the coming of Emmanuel, God-with-Us, Jesus Christ.

(Woodeene Koenig-Bricker writes from Oregon.) †

## Holiday season can be a time to express your faith financially

By Phil Lenahan

(OSV News)—When it comes to our responsibility as a steward of God’s providence during this special holiday season, two important themes come to mind: preparing well for the coming of our Savior at Christmas and setting the stage for a financially successful year to come.

Our society is especially good at

focusing on the externals of Christmas. Many stores have their Christmas aisles ready to go after Labor Day. You can hear Christmas music non-stop while carving the Thanksgiving turkey. While no doubt these contribute to a festive atmosphere, it’s important for us to remember that the Advent season is a gift from the Church to help us prepare our interior for Christ’s coming.

As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says, “When the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Savior’s first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming” (#524). If we use this time well to recommit ourselves in our relationship with the Lord, we will also be prepared to better appreciate the externals of the Christmas season.

Christmas spending is a major issue for many families. In some cultures, it is customary

that gifts will be given throughout the family, down to second cousins. Many families succumb to this pressure and find their credit card balances ballooning because of it.

Don’t get me wrong. It’s important to share in a spirit of generosity during the Christmas season. It’s just that we need to re-examine what it means to be truly generous.

I encourage you to sit down in advance and think through your gift plan for Christmas. First, you’ll want to develop your overall budget, and then you can determine how that spending can best be allocated. It’s also a time you can think about creative ways you can show your love in ways that won’t break the bank.

Consider making homemade cards and baked goods or jam for your family and friends. Each fall, we make an annual outing to go pick apples. Some of the apples are for eating, but most go toward making apple butter, which is given to family and friends as Christmas gifts. Many couples in the midst of raising families find it difficult to go on a “date” due to the lack of a babysitter. Coupons for periodic babysitting help from a trusted source would be a much appreciated gift!

What better way to celebrate the real meaning of Christmas than by helping those who have fallen on hard times? You

can participate directly by volunteering for one of the local outreaches in your area, whether it is a soup kitchen or other type of ministry. Many communities offer programs where you can “adopt” a needy family for Christmas by providing food and gifts. Allow your children to participate financially by sharing some of their allowance for this purpose. What a marvelous way for your children to learn about the joy of giving!

For those who have operated on a budget and tracked their activity over the past year, it’s a time to put that information to good use as you look ahead to the next. Use this year’s information as a starting point for next year’s budget, and then tweak it for changes you can see on the horizon. If you don’t yet have a budget, the new year presents a great opportunity to get off to a good start. Unless you tell your money where you want it to go, you can count on the fact that it will control you!

As you prepare for Christmas and the new year, emphasize preparing your interior spirit to welcome Christ each day. If you do that well, you’ll be a faithful steward of providence and be in a position to set solid priorities for the new year.

(Phil Lenahan is chief financial officer and treasurer of Catholic Answers in El Cajon, Calif.) †



Children place wrapped Christmas gifts into a bag at St. Patrick Parish’s Gingerbread House Christmas shop in Menasha, Wis. For Catholic families, Advent and Christmas can be a time for parents to teach their children how to express their faith through their use of money to show care for those in need. (CNS photo/Sam Lucero, The Compass)



Joyful Witness/
Kimberly Pohovey

God works through you during the holidays to comfort the grieving

When we think of Christmas, we envision being surrounded by family and friends, enjoying yummy food and drinks, and basking in the warmth of a good fire and good will.



But not everyone has this idyllic experience. While Christmas can be a joyous time of year, there are individuals who struggle through the holidays because they are missing a loved one.

My father-in-law passed away the night before Thanksgiving. While we still celebrated the holiday, there was a pall over our festivities. I saw a quote

that said grief at Thanksgiving is like having gratitude with a grain of salt.

I know a couple of friends who have lost loved ones close to Christmas, leaving them lonely on a holiday meant to be jolly. Many years ago, both my father and son died on the days surrounding Easter. It made me wonder why so many people pass away on or near holidays.

According to an article on CNN Health titled “Why do more people die at Christmas, New Year’s?” there is a greater chance of dying on Christmas, the day after Christmas or on New Year’s Day. Quoted in the article, David P. Phillips, a professor of sociology at the university of California-San Diego, says there is a spike in deaths for all age groups on those days, except for children.

While scientists cannot explain the phenomenon, there are several theories, including lack of access to care during the holidays and increased stress, which exacerbates underlying health issues such as circulatory and respiratory diseases. Routines are disrupted, and we tend to eat and drink more and exercise less.

What does this mean for the family left behind to cope with their loss and grief during what normally would be a joyous time of year? Grief counselors first suggest a grieving person practice self-care. Staying active, eating healthy, exercising and getting enough sleep can help with a grieving person’s mental outlook. And even though there may be a place setting missing at this year’s table, there are ways to cope.

Discuss and cherish family traditions involving the deceased or decide on a new tradition in light of the changing circumstances. Light a memorial candle. Place an ornament in their memory on the Christmas tree. Give your time or financial support to charity—helping others often helps those who are grieving to stay busy and keep their circumstances in perspective.

Pour through old photos and appreciate the shared memories with your loved one. Most important, ask for help from those who love you, seek out a grief counselor or join a support group.

I can tell you from personal experience that the grieving person needs to talk about their loved one who passed. I think human nature makes us hesitant to discuss

the deceased, but the truth of the matter is that talking about their loved one is paramount to their grief process. If you want to help someone who is grieving, do not shy away from asking about the person they miss so dearly.

If you are supporting a grieving person, be sure to let them take the lead on what they can and cannot do. Everyone grieves differently. Respect the grief process and accept the feelings the grieving person is experiencing. Listen instead of trying to fix the situation. Avoid judgments. Don’t just offer to help, actually *do* something to make the person’s life just a bit easier—bring over dinner, pitch in to clean the house, do laundry or run errands.

While a grieving person is likely to feel lonely even when in a room full of people, you have the power to lift their spirits, enter into their grief with them, and provide hope that one day the grief will lighten.

This holiday season, reach out to family and friends you know have lost a loved one. While you may feel you’re too busy during the holiday hustle and bustle, even the slightest kind gesture on your part will mean so much. Remember the Gospel of Matthew tells us, “Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted” (Mt 5:4).

Don’t forget that God works through *you* to comfort the grieving.

(Kimberly Pohovey is a member of St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis. She is the director of major and planned gifts for the archdiocese.) †

Our Works of Charity/
David Bethuram

Spending Christmas alone: How to make it more meaningful for you, others

Spending Christmas alone can happen for various reasons, such as losing a loved one, living far from family, or experiencing social isolation. For those with anxiety or without close relationships, loneliness during the holiday season can feel especially overwhelming.



However, there are ways to cope and make the day more meaningful. Here are three steps to consider:

—Address your mental state

Reflect on how your thoughts may be contributing to your loneliness.

—Engage in activities that help you feel connected

Seek out ways to stay active or involved on Christmas Day.

—Plan for the future

If you don’t want to be alone next year, start building connections or making plans now.

Accept that it’s OK to spend Christmas alone

It’s normal to feel like you’re missing out on the festivities, but remember, many people choose to spend Christmas differently. It’s an opportunity to embrace solitude and focus on yourself.

Practice gratitude

Use Christmas to appreciate what you have, whether it’s good health, a home or food on the table. Gratitude can reduce anxiety and help you stay present. A simple exercise is to write down three things you’re thankful for.

If negative thoughts still linger—perhaps due to grief or lack of social connections—ask yourself, “What would I do if I knew how to cope?” This small mental shift can help you realize your inner strength and control over your feelings.

Stay active and engaged

Rather than staying home, consider doing something productive that aligns with your mood:

—If you’re energetic, take a long walk to enjoy nature.

—If you feel social, attend a community event or a church service to be around others.

Volunteer and give back

Helping others can shift your focus from loneliness to purpose. Volunteering during the holidays can connect you with others and brighten your mood. Here are some ideas:

—Serve meals at a soup kitchen.

—Bring gifts to children in hospitals.

—Visit nursing home residents.

—Help a neighbor or friend in need, such as delivering groceries.

Remember to follow any necessary precautions if helping someone who is ill or vulnerable.

Connect virtually

If you have online friends or relatives far away, organize a virtual Christmas gathering. Set up a Zoom or Google Meet call where everyone can join from their own space. Plan ahead by exchanging gifts through the mail to open together online.

Treat yourself

If being alone is unavoidable, turn the day into one of self-care. Treat yourself to something special, cook your favorite meal or have a movie marathon. You could also use the time to start a new hobby, learn a language, or begin to journal, expressing your goals and how you want to achieve them.

Embrace what makes you happy

Whether it’s expressing gratitude, helping others, staying productive, socializing or enjoying your own company, Christmas can still be a fulfilling day. Focus on what brings you joy and peace, and make the holiday your own.

(David Bethuram is executive director of the archdiocesan Secretariat for Catholic Charities. You can contact him at [dbethuram@archindy.org](mailto:dbethuram@archindy.org).) †

It Is Good/
Elizabeth Scalia

Adam and Eve remind us we are naked before the strange humility of God

“After the man, Adam, had eaten of the tree, the Lord God called to the man and asked him, ‘Where are you?’ He answered, ‘I heard you in the garden; but I was afraid, because



I was naked, so I hid myself.’ Then he asked, ‘Who told you that you were naked?’” (Gn 3:8-11)

In these days of Advent, when we are immersing ourselves in biblical narratives, we can easily forget that nothing we read in Scripture is there by accident—that even a seemingly inconsequential detail (like the fact that the Prodigal Son was still “a long way off” when the Father ran out to meet

him) is an invitation to ponder God’s greatness, as well as his strange humility.

Indeed, humility. What kind of God runs out to meet the trudging, imperfectly penitent prodigal? What sort of Maker, choosing to Incarnate, first seeks out the consent of the creature whose grace and flesh he requires? A humble one.

And, what sort of Creator (who, being omnipresent, never needs to ask us a thing) nevertheless inquires of the man, Adam, “Who told you that you were naked?” (Gn 3:11)

Clearly, when God sends an angel to ask for a virgin’s *fiat*, he is seeking a real agreement of cooperation with his most beloved of creatures. But his question to Adam is different, and we linger on it, wondering, “What is God doing, here? Is he shaming Adam and Eve for being naked?”

No, he is not. “Who told you that you were naked” is not a trick or a test. As with all of God’s questions, it is a summons for his creatures to behold, consider and better understand ourselves and why we do the stupid things we do.

Animals do not perceive nakedness; they don’t feel afraid and hide because of it. But, whether through evolution or fruit, suddenly Adam and Eve were feeling vulnerable and scared.

They were hiding, but why?

Maybe it was because they felt exposed in a way that had nothing to do with nakedness. Perhaps what really frightened them was their first, very shallow experience of self-awareness, the understanding that they possessed not only instinct but reason and free will. And uh-oh! They came by that understanding because they’d discussed and reasoned themselves into disobedience.

And, uh-oh! Now they were answerable, and to someone beyond themselves, for their action.

And what an action it was, full of pride and willful illusion—in this case, of being God’s equal. And, wouldn’t you know it—pride, self-satisfaction and the lies that serve both are still our abiding sins. We self-aggrandize. We lord ideas, which are mostly illusion (and often idols), over each other.

And we lie to ourselves and everyone else about it, and have since Eden.

Still, are we supposed to believe that a humble and understanding God was so insecure he couldn’t deal with

his stupid creatures wanting to be like their Father, and that’s why he threw them out of Paradise?

Again, I don’t think so. God made humanity in his own image; he understands curiosity; he understands the vastness of the human mind and the way the human (non-God) elements of reason and will can challenge and warp even the best of us.

I wonder if Adam and Eve lost Eden not because they disobeyed but because afterward they hid themselves. Unable to believe that they could trust God in their new understanding of vulnerability, they went into the shadows and willfully separated themselves from God’s company.

Perhaps the inability to seek out and trust in God’s merciful goodness when we feel vulnerable is the true taint and effect of original sin: God has been trying to get us to trust him, to reveal ourselves to him ever since.

In Advent, as we plead for Emmanuel to come to us, I like to remember the plea God makes to us—to return to him, like the Prodigal. To consent to him, like Mary. To be aware and thus vulnerable: “Ephphatha! Be opened” (Mk 7:34).

In season, we sing, “O come, O come, Emmanuel.” Forever, God sings, “Come. ... Let me see your face, let me hear your voice ... .”

More than a call-and-response, it is the sweetest song in the world.

(Elizabeth Scalia is editor at large for OSV. Follow her on X [formerly known as Twitter] @the anchoress.) †



Third Sunday of Advent/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

# The Sunday Readings

Sunday, December 15, 2024

- Zephaniah 3:14-18a
- Philippians 4:4-7
- Luke 3:10-18

An atmosphere of delighted expectation overtakes this weekend’s liturgy. It is “*Gaudete* Sunday,” a name taken from the Latin rendition of the first word of the entrance antiphon for Mass this weekend, “rejoice.” The Lord is nearby! The Book of Zephaniah furnishes the first reading. It is a short book, only three brief chapters.

This much is known about Zephaniah. He was the son of Chusi and traced his ancestry to Hezekiah, presumably King Hezekiah of Judah.

The book seems to have been written between 640 BC and 609 BC, which was during the reign of King Josiah of Judah, a reformer. His reforms were religious in intent and impact. He was a good king. The kings saw themselves as representatives and agents of God. Aside from all else, their duty was to draw the people more closely to God.

Zephaniah believed that when the people were faithful to God, they brought peace and prosperity upon themselves.

This weekend’s reading is a very convinced exclamation that righteousness and devotion to God invariably produce joy and order.

St. Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians provides the second reading. Philippi was a city in today’s Greece founded centuries before Christ and named in honor of King Philip, the father of Alexander the Great.

By the first century, it was an important center in the Roman Empire and a major military base.

Immigration, to find opportunity or better circumstances, is nothing new. At the time of Christ and the Apostles, people moved across the empire to great cities, coincidentally bringing their ideas and values, such as Christianity.

As was the reading from Zephaniah, this reading is filled with excitement. It predicts the coming of the Lord and that he will come soon. Such was the assumption of many of the early Christians.

They thought that when Jesus came, all wrongs would be righted, justice

will prevail, the poor will find relief and immoral economic, political and legal systems will collapse.

To prepare, devout Christians sought with the help of God’s grace to conform themselves as much as possible to the Lord. This required penance.

Paul told the Christians in Philippi that genuine spiritual transformation requires unselfishness and commitment.

St. Luke’s Gospel is the source of the last reading. John the Baptist appears, urging people with two coats to give one to the poor. The point is that addressing the bad effects of poverty is the duty of every Christian.

John also tells a tax collector to assess only the fixed amount. Roman taxation legalized extortion. A collector sent a prescribed amount to Rome. The rest went into his pocket, but the law required taxpayers to pay whatever the collector arbitrarily demanded.

Tax collectors were despised, seen correctly as thieves, and, worst of all, as turncoats who willingly functioned as tools of a brutal oppressor, surrendering all personal honor and all loyalty to their own people for monetary profit.

### Reflection

Dawn is beautiful. The darkness of night gives way first, not to a burst of golden sunshine, but to rose-colored skies that gloriously forecast the coming of day with its warmth and light.

On *Gaudete* Sunday, the somberness of Advent pauses. The Church calls us to reinforce our wills with the help of God’s grace. Waiting for the Lord is worth the effort. So are Advent reflection, prayer and penance.

Priests may wear rose-colored vestments to symbolize that the brightness of the Lord’s coming already is creeping across the horizon. Night is ending.

This new day especially is commemorated on Christmas, remembering when Jesus literally came into this world, the Son of God and Son of Mary.

Christ brings God’s mercy and justice. He is the light of the world. With Jesus in our hearts, sunbeams of hope and peace pierce even the darkest of moments. †

## Daily Readings

**Monday, December 16**  
*Numbers 24:2-7, 15-17a*  
*Psalms 24:4-5ab, 6, 7bc, 8-9*  
*Matthew 21:23-27*

**Tuesday, December 17**  
*Genesis 49:2, 8-10*  
*Psalms 72:1-4b, 7-8, 17*  
*Matthew 1:1-17*

**Wednesday, December 18**  
*Jeremiah 23:5-8*  
*Psalms 72:1-2, 12-13, 18-19*  
*Matthew 1:18-25*

**Thursday, December 19**  
*Judges 13:2-7, 24-25a*  
*Psalms 71:3-4a, 5-6b, 16-17*  
*Luke 1:5-25*

**Friday, December 20**  
*Isaiah 7:10-14*  
*Psalms 24:1-6*  
*Luke 1:26-38*

**Saturday, December 21**  
St. Peter Canisius, priest and doctor of the Church  
*Song of Songs 2:8-14*  
or *Zephaniah 3:14-18a*  
*Psalms 33:2-3, 11-12, 20-21*  
*Luke 1:39-45*

**Sunday, December 22**  
Fourth Sunday of Advent  
*Micah 5:1-4a*  
*Psalms 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19*  
*Hebrews 10:5-10*  
*Luke 1:39-45*

Question Corner/Jenna Marie Cooper

## Canon law states basic requirements for baptism of children under age 7

**Q**I’m a new mother in the middle of a messy divorce. I admit that I have never been a very good Catholic, but I still want my baby baptized in the



hope that he will have a better relationship with God than I’ve had. My ex-husband and I share custody. He is a good parent in many ways, but he was raised in a very secular household and is basically an atheist. Can my son still be baptized? Or will the

priest take one look at my situation and decide we don’t qualify?

**A**First of all, I’m sorry that you are going through such difficult life circumstances. But the good news is that there is nothing in the Church’s law which would prevent your child from being baptized.

The *Code of Canon Law* clearly states the requirements for infant baptism—and know that in the Church’s law, an “infant” is any child under 7 years of age, so all this could apply even to a child who is older than what we would colloquially consider a baby.

Canon 868, 1 of the code states that, for an infant to be baptized lawfully it is required “that the parents, or at least one of them, or the person who lawfully holds

their place [such as the permanent legal guardian of an orphan] give their consent” and that “there must be a founded hope that the infant will be brought up in the Catholic religion.”

Regarding the first requirement, while in a perfect world both parents of an infant would enthusiastically request the baptism of their child, at the end of the day all that is needed is for one parent to merely consent to their child’s baptism.

If you, as your child’s mother, are actively requesting baptism, you have already fulfilled this prerequisite. You do not need the permission or involvement of your child’s father. But it is still theoretically possible that an infant could be licitly baptized Catholic even if neither parent particularly cared about this one way or the other. For example, a baby could be baptized at his or her grandparent’s request as long as at least one parent gave their permission for this.

By the same token, although it is to be hoped that the child’s parents will be fervently practicing the Catholic faith, this goes beyond the stated minimum requirement of one parent providing simple consent.

Looking at the second requirement, having a “founded hope” that the child will be raised Catholic is also a fairly low bar to clear. That is, the baptizing priest or deacon does not need proof, moral certainty or even rock-solid assurances that the child will have a Catholic upbringing. There only has to be a reasonable hope that this will happen.

And such a hope would seem to be present in cases where a parent is making the effort to seek out baptism for their child. Even in instances where this hope is judged to be, as the canon puts it, “altogether lacking,” the law speaks of delaying rather than denying baptism.

It’s also good to keep in mind that if a child is in danger of death, “all bets are off” so to speak. That is, canon law stipulates that an infant child in immediate danger of dying should be baptized immediately, with or without the permission of the parents (see canon 868, 2). And in danger of death, “any person who has the requisite intention” can validly and licitly baptize, regardless of whether they are ordained priest clergy or even Catholic (#861, 2).

Sometimes Catholics are surprised that the requirements for infant baptism are so minimal and seemingly easy. But in a beautiful way, the Church’s law in this area echoes the words of Jesus himself: “Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Mt 19:14).

(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

# This Advent-tide

By Natalie Hoefer

Strip away the secular call  
To buy and consume to excess.  
Strip away the immoderation of gifts  
That feeds the passion to possess.  
Strip away the stress of perfection—  
Perfect meal, perfect house and décor.  
Strip away the hectic schedule—  
Cook, clean, wrap and shop for more.  
Strip away, for now, the songs  
Of sleighs and reindeer flight,  
Of jingle bells and Santa’s elves,  
Of frost and cold snowy nights.

But keep the Advent wreath  
With its flames of anticipation.  
And keep the holy Advent hymns  
That ring with hope and adulation.  
And keep the acts of charity  
To God’s children most in need—  
Feed the hungry, clothe the poor  
Through gifts and merciful deeds.  
And keep the crèche with figurines—  
Save for that of our dear Savior—  
And there you have the Advent-tide  
Your yearning heart can savor.



(Natalie Hoefer is a member of St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis and is a reporter for The Criterion. Photo: An Advent wreath is the focal point on a dining room table, lit to mark the second week of Advent.)

(Photo by Sean Gallagher.)



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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.

**BIELSKI, Nina C.**, infant, Christ the King, Indianapolis, Nov. 25. Daughter of Ben and Elizabeth Bielski.

**BUCKLEY, Kathryn L.**, 94, St. Jude, Indianapolis, Nov. 1. Mother of Sharon Armstrong, Dennis, Jeff and Steve Buckley. Grandmother of 10. Great-grandmother of 16. Great-great-grandmother of one.

**COLE, Bruce**, 66, SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi, Greenwood, Nov. 17. Husband of Stephanie Cole. Father of Jennifer Bishop and Meredith Cole. Brother of Baye, Bryan and Wesley Cole.

Discalced Carmelite Sister Teresa Marie Boersig served in education, contemplative life

Discalced Carmelite Sister Teresa Marie Boersig, a member of the Carmelite Monastery of the Resurrection in residence at the motherhouse of the Third Order of St. Francis in Oldenburg, died on Nov. 25 at the motherhouse. She was 93.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Dec. 5 at the Motherhouse Chapel in Oldenburg. Burial followed at the motherhouse cemetery.

Sister Teresa was born on Oct. 31, 1931, in Indianapolis where she grew up as a member of St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) Parish. After graduating from the former St. Mary Academy in Indianapolis, she joined

the Sisters of St. Francis in Oldenburg in 1950. She professed final vows in that community on Aug. 12, 1956.

Sister Teresa earned a bachelor's degree at Marian University in Indianapolis, a master's degree in mathematics at the University of Notre Dame in northern Indiana and a doctorate in mathematics at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Ind. During the time of her graduate studies, she served for three years at Father Thomas Seccina Memorial High School in Indianapolis.

After serving on the faculty of Marian University from 1973-80, Sister Teresa discerned a call to contemplative life and transferred her vows to the Monastery of the Resurrection, which, at the time, was located a mile south of Marian's campus.

In life in her Carmelite community, she authored the *People's Companion to the Breviary* and served as the monastery's liturgist.

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

**HERBERTZ, Mary J.**, 96, St. Barnabas, Indianapolis, Nov. 27. Mother of Eileen Horan, Andy, Chris, Daniel and John Herbertz. Grandmother of 16. Great-grandmother of 11.

**JERRELL, Elaine M.**, 76, St. Jude, Indianapolis, Nov. 23. Wife of Patrick Jerrell. Mother of Anna Kazmierski and Chris Jerrell. Sister of Dianna Deputy, Beverly Moore and Steven Veerkamp. Grandmother of six.

**LEWIS, Dorothy**, 96, St. Joan of Arc, Indianapolis, Nov. 24. Mother of Peggy Crawford, Sharon Messer, Rebecca Rainey, Joseph, Michael and Richard Lewis. Sister of Elinor Phillips and Lincoln Wright. Grandmother and great-grandmother of several.

**MCGOUGH, Nevelyn F.**, 95, St. Jude, Indianapolis, Oct. 31. Mother of Lana Bell. Grandmother of eight. Great-grandmother of 10. Great-great-grandmother of two.

**O'HARA, Anne**, 77, St. Joan of Arc, Indianapolis, Nov. 21. Mother of Casey Williams, Colleen and Danny O'Hara. Sister of Sheila China and Pat Scanlon. Grandmother of 10.

**PAGE, Paul J.**, 60, St. Luke the Evangelist, Indianapolis, Nov. 22. Husband of Holly Page. Father of Isabella Hannon, Dominique and Michael Page. Son of

Vatican Christmas tree



A Christmas tree is lit on Dec. 7 in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican. The tree was a gift from the town of Ledro in the province of Trento in Italy. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

Rosemary Page. Brother of Rosemarie Bayt, Annette Page and Mary Ann Sullivan.

**PANK, Emilie N.**, 45, St. Mary, Greensburg, Nov. 27. Daughter of Paul Pank. Stepdaughter of Rojeanna Pank. Sister of Meredith Patchett. Stepsister of James and Dr. Michael Shuck.

**STAMPER, Katrina**, 33, St. Jude, Indianapolis, Nov. 9. Daughter of Bernadette Kern-Reilly. Sister of Elizabeth Riley.

**STORMS, Judy A.**, 83, St. Joseph University Parish, Terre Haute,

Nov. 24. Wife of David Storms. Mother of Laura Barbour, Susan Morris and Beth Roberts West. Sister of Kathleen Klein and Jerry Ellingsworth. Grandmother of five. Great-grandmother of six. †

Franciscan Sister Barbara Hileman served in Catholic schools, parishes and hospitals

Franciscan Sister Barbara Hileman (formerly Sister Concetta), a member of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis in Oldenburg, died on Nov. 22 at her community's motherhouse. She was 90.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Nov. 25 at the Motherhouse Chapel in Oldenburg. Burial followed at the sisters' cemetery.

Sister Barbara was born on Dec. 25, 1933, in Anna, Ill. She joined the Sisters of St. Francis on Sept. 8, 1951, and professed final vows on Aug. 12, 1957. She earned a bachelor's degree in education at Marian University in Indianapolis, a master's degree at the University of Dayton in Dayton, Ohio, and a master's degree in pastoral counseling at Loyola University Maryland in Baltimore.

During 73 years as a member of the Sisters of St. Francis, Sister Barbara ministered in Catholic education for 24 years, in parish ministry for 12 years, for six years in missionary

ministry among Native Americans in New Mexico and for 18 years as a hospital chaplain before retiring to the motherhouse in 2014.

In the archdiocese, Sister Barbara served at St. Louis School in Batesville from 1969-72, at the former St. Mary School in Aurora in 1972, at St. Gabriel School in Connersville from 1978-81, at the former St. Joseph Parish in St. Leon (now a campus of All Saints Parish in Dearborn County) from 1987-90, and in Indianapolis at the former St. Bernadette School from 1974-76 and St. Christopher Parish from 1981-84. She ministered as a chaplain at Ascension St. Vincent Hospital in Indianapolis and Ascension Seton St. Vincent Hospital in Carmel, Ind., in the Lafayette Diocese from 1999-2014.

She is survived by her sister, Therese Swinford.

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

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

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Feb 14-16, 2025

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

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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)

Pope calls for global ceasefire in several conflicts, clemency for U.S. death-row inmates

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Praying for peace throughout the world, Pope Francis made an urgent appeal to world leaders to help bring about a global ceasefire in time for Christmas.

“We are continuing to pray for peace in battered Ukraine, in the Middle East, Palestine, Israel, Lebanon, now Syria, in Myanmar, Sudan and everywhere people are suffering from war and violence,” he said after praying the *Angelus* with visitors gathered in St. Peter's Square on Dec. 8.

“I am appealing to leaders and the international community that we may get to the Christmas holiday with a ceasefire on all war fronts,” he said.

Another issue close to his heart, the pope said, was granting clemency to or commuting the death sentence of inmates awaiting execution in the United States. In Indiana, Joseph Corcoran—a Fort Wayne, Ind., man convicted in 1997 of murdering four people, including his brother—is set to be executed on Dec. 18 at the Indiana State Prison in Michigan City.

Another man is scheduled for execution in Oklahoma

this month, while seven men are scheduled to be put to death in Texas and Ohio next year.

The pope asked everyone “to pray for the detainees in the United States who are on death row.

“Let us pray for their sentence to be commuted, changed. Let us think of these brothers and sisters of ours and ask the Lord for the grace to save them from death,” Pope Francis said.

Twenty-three prisoners have been executed in eight states in the U.S. so far in 2024.

While federal executions are much rarer than state executions, there are 40 federal death-row prisoners, according to the information center.

U.S. President Joe Biden, whose term ends in January, had promised in 2020 to end the federal death penalty during his administration. About 60 members of Congress and others have urged him to grant clemency to the men on federal death row, especially as President-elect Donald J. Trump has vowed to use and expand the federal death penalty when he takes office. †



# Special pre-game ritual sets tone for Providence’s state champs

By John Shaughnessy

Head coach Daniel McDonald had a defining choice to make for the football team of Our Lady of Providence High School in Clarksville on the morning of Nov. 30.

In less than four hours, the team would be playing in Indiana’s Class 1A state championship game—an opportunity for Providence to win the first state championship in that sport in the school’s history.

Shortly after 7 on that morning, McDonald knew the team still needed to eat breakfast, still needed to travel to Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis after spending the night in a Greenwood hotel, still needed to settle into the locker room and get into their pads and uniforms, and still needed to do a walk-through practice and get last-minute instructions before the game at 11 a.m.

Yet instead of heading straight to the stadium, McDonald had his team stop at Roncalli High School in Indianapolis where the administration had graciously opened its doors to the Providence team for the one pre-game ritual that their head coach wasn’t about to skip.

Mass.  
“We put our Catholic faith at the forefront of our program,” McDonald would say later.

“I have a phrase for our program—‘For God, for country, for Providence.’ It’s important for me to remind our players that God gave us this ability to play football, and it’s our job to honor him by making the most of our talents and playing in a manner that befits our Catholic faith and glorifies God. So, starting off our pre-game ritual with Mass is really important to me. It centers our guys and reminds them why we are here.”

Hours later, in the early afternoon of that November day, Providence’s football team did make school history. With a 35-20 win over the team from North Judson High School, Providence completed its state championship season with 14 wins and no losses. And it did so in front of a huge, joyous crowd of friends, family members, teachers and fans who consistently live their school’s “Blue Pride” bond as a community badge of honor.

In the midst of that celebration, McDonald rushed to rejoice with his wife, Courtney, their 10-year-old son Landon, their 8-year-old son Cruz, and McDonald’s parents, Dennis and Nancy.

“That was emotional for me,” says McDonald, a member of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in New Albany. “Soon as the game was over, I ran over and gave my family a hug. My wife and my kids sacrifice so much so that I can have the time to commit to Providence football, and that really meant a lot to me that I was able to celebrate that win with them.”



Members of the football team of Our Lady of Providence High School in Clarksville raise Indiana’s Class 1A state championship trophy in joy.  
(Photo courtesy of Jeff McKinley)

In his celebration with his assistant coaches and players, McDonald flashed back to two memorable moments in the journey to the state championship.

The first one took him back to five years ago—when he was named the head coach, and he had his first meeting with the then-returning members of the team.

“When I took the job here, we had 14 players come to our first meeting. I met them right before COVID shut everything down,” McDonald recalls. “They probably thought I was crazy at the time, but I told them, ‘This program is on a collision course with the state championship, and the only variable is time.’”

“So, for it to be five years later—and here we are, we won the whole thing—that was a full-circle moment. I reminded our guys of that and told them how proud I was of them.”

The second flashback returned him to a moment in January of this year.

“A lot of our seniors had to work in the afternoons, and they wanted me to come in at six o’clock in the morning to open up the weight room so they could lift,” McDonald recalls. “Those guys didn’t have to come in and lift, they wanted to. And they did that from January all the way until the end of school. My seniors never missed. I was very happy for my seniors that their hard work paid off.”

Their head coach also shared what he

considers the defining qualities of the team’s eight seniors: Preston Kempf, Nick Stoner, Wyatt Small, Hudson Abel, Cooper Ross, Lucas Thomas, Griffin Tucker and Lukas Allgood.

“They’re relentless,” he says. “They’re hard workers. They’re gritty. All year long, they made plays when we needed them the most. They’re high-character individuals.”

“They’re the kind of kids you know they’re going to be successful in life no matter what they do. They’re going to be great husbands. They’re going to be great fathers. And that’s really what I want our kids to take away from our program.”

McDonald has similar high praise for the Providence community.

“I learned from the get-go that Providence is a very tight-knit community. Very strong Catholic identity. And full of really good, hardworking, high-character people,” says McDonald, who also teaches physical education at the school. “This is a

proud community that supports its students and supports the school. Our student section was packed at the game. I think we had over 2,000 people there. They made the two-hour trip to Indianapolis to support our football team.”

The support continued later that afternoon in Clarksville as the police and fire departments greeted the 47 teammates and their coaches at the edge of town and gave them an escort to the school for another celebration.

“A lot of the parents and fans filled up the gym, and we presented the state trophy to them,” McDonald says.

The head coach took a deep breath before continuing, “I’m extremely blessed and honored to be the head football coach at Providence. To establish ourselves as state champions, it’s amazing for the program and the community.”

“They made history as the greatest team in Providence football.” †

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### 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.

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# Sheen’s beatification ‘inevitable’ amid growing devotion, says foundation head

(OSV News)—Despite a few high-profile delays in recent years, the beatification of Venerable Fulton J. Sheen—the popular, scholarly archbishop and 20th-century pioneer of Catholic broadcasting—is “inevitable,” said the head of the foundation supporting his cause.

“The desire to see Sheen beatified is increasing, and there is a growing devotion to him,” Msgr. Jason Gray, executive director of the Archbishop Fulton John Sheen Foundation, told OSV News.

In an article for the foundation’s 2024 year-end newsletter, Msgr. Gray—who also serves as the judicial vicar and episcopal vicar for consecrated life for the Diocese of Peoria, Ill., as well as pastor of St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Peoria Heights—pointed to several indicators of Archbishop Sheen’s expanding reputation for holiness, or “*fama sanctitatis*” in canonical terms.

“He didn’t just know about Jesus Christ,” Msgr. Gray told OSV News. “He knew Jesus Christ personally.”

That relationship enabled Archbishop Sheen to put his considerable intellect and communications skills at the service of the Church, with international impact, said Msgr. Gray.

Born in 1895, Fulton John Sheen sensed an early call to priesthood, and was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Peoria in 1919. He then obtained a doctorate in philosophy and taught both that subject and theology at The Catholic University of America in Washington from 1927 to 1950.

But rather than confine himself to academia, then-Father Sheen also leveraged modern social communications platforms to spread the Gospel. He launched a weekly radio show while still a fairly young priest, drawing some 4 million regular listeners during a two-decade run. After being appointed as an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of New York, he transformed the show into a television program, “Life is Worth Living,” which peaked at 30 million weekly viewers.

His ministry continued to expand, with then-Bishop Sheen serving as national director of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith from 1950-1966. He was then appointed bishop of Rochester, N.Y., in 1966, where he launched a second television show. He resigned three years later as his 75th birthday approached; canon law requires bishops to submit their resignation to the pope at 75. He was appointed a titular archbishop by

Pope St. Paul VI, which afforded him time to continue preaching. Archbishop Sheen, who had suffered from heart disease in later years, died in 1979 before the Blessed Sacrament in the chapel of his Manhattan residence.

His cause for canonization, opened in 2002, has been stalled by two controversies—a public battle to relocate his remains from St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York to its current location, a side chapel of the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception in Peoria; and concerns that as bishop of Rochester from 1966-1969, the prelate might have overlooked sexual abuse by at least one former diocesan priest there.

The latter concern was magnified after the state of New York adopted lookback laws that allowed hundreds of abuse claims to be considered, with the Diocese of Rochester ultimately filing for bankruptcy.

However, Msgr. Gray told OSV News, “Sheen is clean. ... Not one accusation has been raised that impugned Sheen.”

He said the foundation has examined “all of the pleadings” relevant to claims against the Rochester Diocese, and “there hasn’t been anything that was brought up there” implicating Archbishop Sheen.

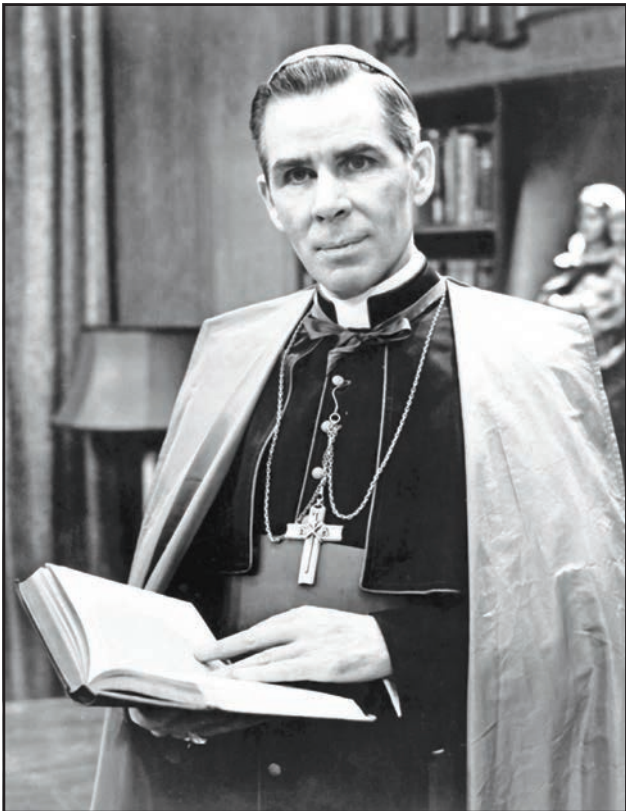
The monsignor said the only thing remaining is a “dormant” investigation by New York State Attorney General Letitia Jones, who opened several such inquiries into other dioceses that have now been settled.

Msgr. Gray told OSV News there are “three reasons” for renewed interest in Archbishop Sheen’s canonization, which has been evidenced by a surge in visits to his tomb, requests for both relics and for his more than 50 books, and reports of favors and graces received through Archbishop Sheen’s intercession.

“The first is maybe the most obvious, and it’s just that he was someone who used the modern means of communication,” said Msgr. Gray, adding “if he [Archbishop Sheen] were around today, [imagine] what he’d be doing with the Internet.”

Even more important, Archbishop Sheen “was very devoted to the Eucharist” and serves as “a model for devotion to the Blessed Sacrament”—a role that has taken on deeper significance amid the National Eucharistic Revival, said Msgr. Gray.

And, he added, Archbishop Sheen was “someone who was just so insightful on so many issues,” including the most contentious ones “facing modern man today.



Despite a few high-profile delays in recent years, the beatification of Venerable Fulton J. Sheen—the popular, scholarly archbishop and 20th-century pioneer of Catholic broadcasting—is “inevitable,” said the head of the foundation supporting his cause. Archbishop Sheen is pictured in an undated photo. (OSV News file photo)

“He would talk about psychology, politics, sociology,” said Msgr. Gray. “And I think maybe more than ever, we need someone ... [like] Sheen to speak with so much clarity, and so much passion and so much charity about the issues that are just roiling our societies today.”

Because of his personal relationship with Christ, Archbishop Sheen “could speak from a personal perspective, and with personal passion,” said the monsignor. “He wasn’t just quoting a book. ... He brought his knowledge of the faith and his knowledge of Jesus Christ into the personal trials that we face in the world today.” †

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