Pope creates new cardinals, telling them that authority means service

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Benedict XVI created 24 new cardinals, including two from the United States, and called them to be strong in spreading and defending the faith and promoting peace and tranquility within the Church. Cardinal Donald W. Wuerl of Washington and Cardinal Raymond L. Burke, prefect of the Vatican’s supreme canon law court, joined other new cardinals from 13 countries on Nov. 20 in formally professing their Catholic faith and fidelity to the pope. After the oath, all but one of the new cardinals knelt before the pope to receive a red biretta, a three-cornered hat, which the pope said, “signifies that you must be ready to act with strength, to the point of shedding blood, to increase the Christian faith, for the peace and tranquility of the people of God and for the freedom and growth of the holy Roman Church.”

Cardinal Antonios Naguib, the Catholic Coptic patriarch of Alexandria, Egypt, received a new patriarch’s hat with a thin red veil. Pope Benedict concelebrated Mass on Nov. 21 with the new cardinals, and gave each of them a cardinal’s ring, telling them it was a sign “of your nuptial pact with the Church.”

Rather than precious gems, the gold rings feature a crucifix, which, “for the same reason your clothes allude to blood, is a symbol of life and love” as demonstrated by Christ’s example, that of male prostitutes—use of a condom could be a step toward taking moral responsibility for one’s actions.

In new book, Pope Benedict XVI candidly addresses clerical sex abuse, condoms and possible resignation

ROME (CNS)—Pope Benedict XVI’s book-length interview is certain to spark global attention, and not only for his comments suggesting that condom use might be acceptable in some circumstances.

The wide-ranging interview was conducted by German writer Peter Seewald, who posed questions in six one-hour sessions last summer. The book was released on Nov. 23 at the Vatican, but ample excerpts were published three days earlier by the Vatican newspaper. The book reveals a less formal side of the pope as he responds simply and directly on topics as diverse as the joy of sex and the ban on burqas. Much of the conversation focuses on the pope’s call for a global “examination of conscience” in the face of economic disparity, environmental disasters and moral slippage.

The pope repeatedly emphasized that the Church’s role in a largely broken world is not to impose a “burden” of moral rules but to open the doors to God.

Even before the book’s release, media attention centered on the pope’s remarks on condoms in AIDS prevention. While repeating his view that condoms cannot be the only answer to the AIDS epidemic, the pope allowed that in some specific cases—for example, that of male prostitutes—use of a condom could be a step toward taking moral responsibility for one’s actions.

An entire chapter and parts of others were used to address the clerical sex abuse scandal. The pope called it “a great crisis” that left him “shocked” and “rattled.”

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Readers are invited to share favorite Christmas memories

The Criterion invites readers to submit a brief story about a special holiday memory for possible inclusion in our annual Christmas issue, which will be published on Dec. 17.

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

Submissions should include the writer’s name, address, parish and telephone number. Send your story to The Criterion, P.O. Box 1410, Indianapolis, IN 46206 or e-mail to criterion@archindy.org by the Dec. 10 deadline.

Correction

FATHER DONALD SCHNEIDER was appointed the director of Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House in Indianapolis on Sept. 29, 1976, and served in that ministry position until August of 1984. His name was omitted from a list of directors in a Nov. 5 story about the 60th anniversary of the retreat house.

Situations, emotions come to forefront during 10-day journey to Africa

By John Shaughnessy

During his recent 10-day journey to Africa, David Siler experienced a range of different situations and emotional reactions—from eating goat at meals to adjusting to not having access to e-mail and a cell phone.

Here, the executive director of Catholic Charities and Family Ministries for the archdiocese talks about those experiences during his time of touring projects in Africa that were implemented by Catholic Relief Services—the international humanitarian agency of the Catholic Church in the United States.

Culture shock in Africa: “There’s a culture shock going on there, and a culture shock coming back. In both Ethiopia and Tanzania, the people, for the most part, live very primitive lives, probably like they lived hundreds of years ago—scrambling to find an existence through subsistence farming. Their homes are made out of sticks and mud. In some ways, it’s hard to relate. The greatest poverty we saw over and over again had to do with the scarcity of water.”

Culture shock in returning to America: “I’d be in conversation with people, and they’d be explaining to me things that seemed so hollow in comparison to people trying to exist here. People are complaining about the weather and their luxury car. In the capital city of Ethiopia, the largest grocery store had four aisles. Here, our grocery store have four aisles of cereal. It just makes you realize how many choices we have for everything.”

The taste of goat: “We ate a fair amount of goat. It’s the tastiest animal in the world. It’s not too dissimilar from beef. And they use a lot of sauces.”

The pride that comes with a purpose: “With each water project that visited the mission clinic that Blessed Teresa established in Ethiopia’s capital city, Addis Ababa.

One clinic serves 800 people, and the other serves 1,400 people. Siler says, “Both places are for the truly neglected and forgotten members of the community. We met people with leprosy, with a lot with AIDS, the mentally ill, the physically handicapped, orphans, the dying.”

“The Missions of Charity sisters live right there with the people, serving them. And there were tons of volunteers from all over the world who came to help. One of the volunteers was this woman from Poland in her 20s. She was a recreational therapist who was working with a large group of mentally ill women. She was teaching them to exercise through dance. She had a boom box that was playing Lady Gaga’s ‘Poker Face.’ She was happy, and they were happy.”

Siler smiles at that memory. He has the same reaction every time that he hears that song now.

“Who would have thought that Polish woman’s skill would be one that is needed in Ethiopia? I made me realize we all have something to give. It shows the connections we can make if we’re creative.”

The young woman’s example fits with Siler’s belief that people must use their abilities to help others in need wherever God has placed them in the world.

“Whether you help people in Africa or at home, it’s really the same. Need is need.”

“Kids here are starving. People here are out of jobs. You don’t have to go to Africa to help people in need, it is important to help somewhere. We all have the same Father, we are all part of the same family, and we all have something to give. We have to be open to the Holy Spirit to tell us where our gifts are needed.”

Above, four Ethiopian women pose for a photo after donning the sunglasses of four American Catholics who were part of a mission trip arranged by Catholic Relief Services.

Left, interacting with the children of Ethiopia was one of the highlights of a recent trip to Africa for David Siler, executive director of Catholic Charities and Family Ministries for the archdiocese.
U.S. trafficking law has led to more awareness of slavery, say advocates

WASHINGTON (CNS)—Carmen Maquilon never expected she would be on the frontlines of fighting human trafficking.

Her specialty: human trafficking.

Her story, an advocate on behalf of trafficking victims who had helped their families in a battle to combat modern-day slavery—considered the fastest growing criminal industry in the world.

As director of immigrant services at Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Rockville Centre, N.Y., who is a native of Colombia, and her staff have worked with dozens of trafficking victims since 2001, the U.S. has now been cleared after a raid on a Long Island factory uncovered 60 Peruvians working under grueling conditions and brutal conditions.

“It turned into 125 because of the family members and others who came forward,” Maquilon told Catholic News Service during a break in a training program on the needs of crime victims in Washington on Oct. 21.

The law gave the staff the ability to provide a wide variety of services that previously had been limited because of a lack of funding.

The Rockville Centre program is one of 108 nonprofits across the United States and its territories that have been selected by Migration and Refugee Services of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to provide services to foreign-born trafficking victims.

Funding comes through a five-year contract with the Department of Health and Human Services that runs through April. MRS had spent $8.7 million under the contract by the end of September. 2,253 victims and their families had been helped, according to “Reflections: Human Trafficking Clinic at the University of Michigan Law School, praised the law around the world, netting trafficking victims $32 billion annually.

In addition to raising awareness, the law has led to new approaches by law enforcement officials and foreign trafficking victims such as the Peruvians, who previously would have been charged with being in the country illegally and subject to deportation for that reason.

The law established the T visa, which allows trafficking victims to become permanent U.S. residents once they have completed five years, and 5,000 trafficking victims annually can become permanent residents three years after receiving their T visa.

Training is another component of the law, which funds efforts to span the wide expanse of workers’ rights to deal with victims—law enforcement officers, federal prosecutors, social service providers, and advocates—to exchange ideas and build networks.

Detective Thomas Stack of the Montgomery County Police Dept. in Maryland, said he found such training programs helpful in understanding how to be more sensitive to the needs of distressed victims.

On the practical side, Stack said, the law is for stiffness that could be imposed upon traffickers because trafficking now is a recognized federal offense.

“A person [trafficker] arrested in Maryland and sent to jail is usually out in 2-3 months,” he said. “If you went to jail for 10 years in the federal system, you’re going to do 10 years,” he said.

“It’s much easier and faster to go to the state case. It’s more intensive in the federal system, but it’s worth it in the long run because you get a better result,” he said.


While passage is expected, trafficking advocates still plan to lobby Congress to maintain all funding provisions, especially for training and technology services. They also would like to see more intensive efforts to change several provisions to ease burdens on victims.

Judgeette Carr, director of the Human Trafficking Clinic at the University of Michigan Law School, praised the law for its victim-centered approach.

“Even so, Carr is lobbying for the removal of a provision that requires victims to cooperate with law enforcement officers in their investigations. In some cases, victims, who are traumatized and fear retribution if they are compelled to talk with an officer.

For every move advocates take, traffickers make a countermove, taking better advantage of technology to entrap and entice young victims—law enforcement officers, federal prosecutors, and immigration enforcement officials. For that reason, Parampil said, the task of ending trafficking is far from over.

“If it’s going to be a long time before I can say society is saturated and human trafficking becomes every-day language,” she said. “It takes a while to understand this very hidden crime.”

(Editor’s note: The U.S. bishops’ document issued on the 10th anniversary of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 is available online at trafficking-reflections-letter-2010-01024-KP.pdf. The U.S. Department of State’s 2010 “Trafficking in Persons Report” is available online at www.state.gov/documents/organization/142797.pdf )
We must return to God and be open to transcendence

“God is the origin of our being and the foundation and apex of our freedom, not its opponent... How can it be that there is public silence with regard to the first and essential reality of human life? How can we improve in this decisive in life be confined to the purely private sphere or banished to the shadows? We cannot live in darkness, without seeing the light of the sun... Is it then that God... Without God, we are the power of every will and the magnet of every heart, he denied the right to propose the light that dissipates all darkness?”

(Pope Benedict XVI)

In his recent visit to the shrine of Santiago de Compostela in Spain, Pope Benedict XVI challenged the people of Europe to return to God—"the origin of our being and the foundation and apex of our freedom.

The pope is convinced that Europe—its leaders and many of its people—has forgotten God and lost touch with their Christian roots.

"Tragically, above all in 19th century Europe, the conviction grew that God is someone’s antagonism and an enemy of his freedom," the Holy Father explained. "As a result, there was an attempt to obscure the true biblical faith in the God who sent into the world his Son Jesus Christ, so that no one should believe but that all might have eternal life."

For the nations of Europe to find their way, the pope says, there must be a renewed openness to transcendence and a willingness to rediscover the Christian faith that underlies so much of what has distinguished European culture for the past 1,500 years.

"One cannot worship God without taking care of his sons and daughters; and man cannot be served without asking who his Father is and answering the question about him," Pope Benedict says. "The Europe of science and technology, the Europe of civilization and culture, must be at the same time a Europe open to transcendence and fraternity with other continents, and open to the living and true God, starting with the living and true man."

"This is what the Church wishes to contribute to Europe: to be a faithful for God and for man, based on the understanding of both which is offered to us in Jesus Christ."

Many of us Americans can trace our ancestry back to Christian Europe. The waves of European immigrants who came to our country brought with them a vibrant faith. They were motivated by faith to build churches, schools, hospitals and social service agencies in every region of the New World.

Where the faith of Europe was old and divided by schism—Protestants vs. Catholics—Christians’ hope was to find freedom of worship and expression in the new lands that they sought out as pioneers and missionaries keenly aware that God was their foundation and their ultimate goal.

 Sadly, too much in our American culture mirrors the decline in faith of the Old World.

We, too, have come to regard science and technology as the source of our hope in the future. We, too, have forgotten that the foundation of our American way of life is the deep faith and vibrant devotion that our ancestors carried with them as their most prized possessions as they left everything else behind.

Pope Benedict says that the people and nations of Europe are w丝 wds we should attend to. Without God, we are truly on our own, a people set adrift in the hostile waters of individualism, relativism and materialism.

Europe must be open to transcendence and return to its Christian roots, the Holy Father says. His words and Europe’s response—is of vital interest to us here in Indiana and throughout the United States. Will we return to God? Or will we go in the other direction?

"Our future and the future of our children and grandchildren depends on our answer," Pope Benedict says.

I suppose that we can get general agreement on the proposition that children should not kill, maim or sexually assault people.

In the world of video games, however, they can do all of these things virtually.

"Grand Theft Auto" famously allows players to commit murder and other violent crimes, like shooting around prostitutes.

"Postal II" invites players to set others on fire with napalm, beat police officers to death as they beg for mercy, and urinate on people to make them vomit.

Manufacturers of these games maintain that this is OK because the violence is virtual, not real.

The state of California sees it differently. It passed a law in 2005 forbidding the sale to minors of video games that depict gruesome acts of violence against people. (Parents can still buy the games for their children.)

Courts have issued injunctions against similar laws in other states. That is what happened here, in a case called Schwarzenegger v. Entertainment Merchants Association. California has taken the case to the Supreme Court where it was argued in early November.

The question for the court is whether the law is inconsistent with the freedom of speech guaranteed by the First Amendment.

Freedom of speech does not protect literally all kinds of speech. Obscenity—certain kinds of really sexually explicit speech—is carved out. But the court has not carved out a similar exception for violent speech.

There are other exceptions to the First Amendment that depend on the characteristics of the speaker or the audience. Children are the best example. We have different free-speech rules for them than we do for adults because the y are still growing up.

Children are citizens, but they are not allowed to vote until they are 18. States can ban children from buying pornography, even if it is not le gally considered obscene.

The government forbids radio stations from broadcasting some vulgar or profane language during hours when young people may be listening. Public schools can punish students for using racist epithets that are, in other contexts, protected by the First Amendment.

There might be a legal basis for arguing that California can forbid sales to children.

Let us forget for a minute about the legal rules and think about moral ones. There is, in the modern liberal view of human relations, a consequentialist view of evil that might be summed up in the phrase "no harm, no foul."

According to this view, the husband who keeps a stash of pornography can still be the model of fidelity because what he does in his fantasy life isn’t really cheating, after all.

This approach ignores the real-life consequences of fantasy of the forbidden: brutality and violation of the participants, subtle erosion of marital affection.

The measurable effects are particularly evident with the young, who have a way of imitating in real life what they see others do and what they watch on television.

There are also effects on the soul—no less real, but invisible to the modern mind.

The philosophical disconnect between thought and action is a rejection of a more sophisticated classical and Catholic view of the human soul. Just as every act forms us for good or ill, so do our thoughts. We make ourselves worse each time we entertain evil as a possible option, even if we never have the opportunity to act on our malicious ideas.

This obviously applies when we engage the mind in evil for long periods for the sake of entertainment, and especially when the entertainment is so realistic and brutal.

Prolonged exposure to gratuitous violence is likely to have an even worse effect on children’s formation. The state has an interest here because children who play violent video games are learning to think and do bad things.

The Supreme Court will decide the case in June. Whatever it does, parents might want to think twice when shopping for video games this Christmas.

(John Garvey is president of The Catholic University of America in Washington.)

Letters Policy

Letters from readers are welcome and should be informed, relevant, well-expressed, concise, temperate in tone, courteous and respectful.

Letters editors reserve the right to select and edit the letters based on space limitations, past editorial content and space limitations.

Letters must be signed, but, for serious reasons, names may be withheld.

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Pray and keep on looking for ward during Advent

Para los años que he utilizado un libro que contiene meditaciones diarias, como una herramienta para las reflexiones matutinas. De vez en cuando hago citas de dichas series en mi columna semanal. Con el fin de prepararme para la temporada del Adviento saqué de mi biblioteca el primer volumen de Vida´s (Scepter Press) off my book shelf.

Descubrí un pasaje de la vida de Santa Teresa de Ávila que me resultó atractivo. No había reparado en él. Dicho pasaje aborda la realidad sobre las distracciones durante la oración. Deseo citarlo extensamente ya que algunos de ustedes me han dicho que luchan contra el desafío de la aridez: this only came when I had no book, whereupon my soul would at once become disturbed and my thoughts be gin to wander. As soon as I started to read, they began to reappear. I tried to act like bait to my soul. Often the mere fact that I had it by me was sufficient. Sometimes I read a little, sometimes a great deal, according to the favor which the Lord showed me” (St. Teresa, Life, 4).

As I turned to the suggested meditation for the First Sunday of Advent, I found a quotation from an Advent sermon by Mgr. Ronald Knox. He had a way of preaching that hits home. And so I offer another lengthy quotation.

“Everybody knows, even those of us who have lived most unadventurously, what it is to go on for miles, it seems, eagerly straining your eyes towards the lights that somehow mean home. How difficult it is, when you are doing that, to judge distances! In pitch darkness, it might be a couple of miles to your destination; it might be a few hundred yards. So it was, I think, with the Hebrew prophets, as they looked forward to the redemption of their people. They could not have told you within a hundred years, within 500 years, when it was the deliverance would come. They only knew that some time, in the distant future, the House of David would beget anew; some time, a key would be found to fit the door of their prison house; some time the light that only shone now, like a will-o’-the-wisp on the horizon, would broaden out, at last, into perfect day."

This attitude of expectation is one which the Church wants to encourage in us, her children, permanently. She sees it as an essential part of our Christian drill that we should still be looking forward, getting on for 2,000 years, now, since the first Christmas Day came and went, and we must still be looking forward. So she encourages us, during Advent, to take the shepherd-folk for our guides, and imagine ourselves traveling with them, at dead of night, straining our eyes towards that chink of light which streams out, we know, from the cave at Bethlehem” (R. A. Knox, Sermon on Advent, Dec. 21, 1947).

Mgr. Knox said we must keep on looking forward. How do we do so during this time of Advent?

First of all, it means we must set aside prayer with a renewed attentiveness. Vigilance is required of us at all times, but in this season of expectation it is particularly appropriate. We need to examine our values to see if perhaps we are so fixed on “the things of the earth,” that we miss the point of Christmas, indeed of life itself.

Do you have an intention for Archbishop Buechlein’s prayer list? You may mail it to him at:

Archbishop Buechlein’s Prayer List
Archdiocese of Indianapolis
1400 N. Meridian St.
P.O. Box 1410
Indianapolis, IN 46202-1410

La intención del Arzobispo Buechlein para vocaciones en noviembre

Las escuelas secundarias católicas: que ellas sean una fuente continua para promover las vocaciones católicas de servir y dedicar su vida como regalo a los demás, especialmente en el cargo de sacerdotes o religiosos.

¿Tiene una intención que desee incluir en la lista de oración del Arzobispo Buechlein? Puede enviar su correspondencia a:

Lista de oración del Arzobispo Buechlein
Arquidiócesis deIndianápolis
1400 N. Meridian St.
P.O. Box 1410
Indianapolis, IN 46202-1410

Traducido por: Daniela Guanipa, Language Training Center, Indianapolis.

Oren y continúen mirando hacia el futuro durante el Adviento

Por esos años he utilizado un libro que contiene meditaciones diarias, como una herramienta para las reflexiones matutinas. De vez en cuando hago citas de dichas series en mi columna semanal. Con el fin de prepararme para la temporada del Adviento saqué de mi biblioteca el primer volumen de Vida, Contiene meditaciones diarias, 4, 9). Santa Teresa tenía los pies sobre la tierra. Conforme procedía la meditación sugerida para el Primer Domingo de Adviento, encontré una cita del sermón sobre el Adviento del monseñor Ronald Knox. Su forma de predicar le ganó un nuevo amante; por tanto, ofreció otra cita extensa.

“Todo el mundo ha tenido la experiencia, incluso los que hemos vivido sin mayores osadías, de lo que es caminar en la noche y arrastrar los pies durante kilómetros, alargando ávidamente la vista hacia una luz en la lejanía que representa de alguna forma el hogar. ¡Qué difícil resulta apreciar en plena oscuridad las distancias! Lo mismo puede haber un par de kilómetros hasta el lugar de nuestro destino, que unos pocos cientos de metros. En esa situación se encontraban los profetas cuando miraban hacia adentro, en espera de la redención de su pueblo. No podían decir, con una aproximación de cien años ni de quinientos, cuándo habría de venir el Mesías. Solo sabían que en algún momento la estirpe de David retomaría de nuevo, que en alguna época encontraría una llave para abrir las puertas de la cárcel, la luz que sólo se divisaba entonces como un punto débil en el horizonte se ensancharía al fin, hasta ser un día perfecto.

Esta misma actitud de expectación desea la Iglesia presentar a sus hijos en todos los momentos de nuestra vida. Considera como una parte esencia de su misión hacer que sigamos mirando al futuro, aunque ya en vista a cumplirse el segundo milenio de aquella primera Navidad, que la liturgia nos presenta inmenso. Nos obliga a caminar con los pastores, en plena noche, vigilantes, dirigiendo nuestra mirada hacia aquella luz que sale de la gruta de Belén” (R.A. Knox, Sermón sobre el Adviento, 21-XII-1947).

Monseñor Knox dice que debemos seguir mirando hacia el futuro. ¡Cómo podemos hacer esto durante la época del Adviento?

Primero que nada, significa que debemos observar y rezar con renovada conciencia. Se nos exige estar atentos en todo momento, pero en esta temporada de expectativa resulta especialmente adecuado. Debemos examinar nuestros valores para determinar si quizás estamos tan concentrados en las “cosas mundanas” que pasamos por alto el significado de la Navidad, y en efecto, de la vida misma. Tal vez resulte adecuado practicar algunos sacrificios como parte de nuestra manera de estar un poco más atentos a los verdaderos valores que nos presenta el Adviento y para la Navidad. Nuestras parroquias ofrecen el sacramento de la penitencia y de la reconciliación. Quizá podríamos hacer un esfuerzo adicional para beneficiarnos de este sacramento como la principal forma para prepararos para la celebración de la Navidad.

Hoy dos festividades marianas que también ofrecen una forma especial para celebrar la temporada del Adviento. La fiesta de la Inmaculada Concepción y la festividad de María como Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe resultan oportunas.

Arquidiócesis deIndianápolis
1400 N. Meridian St.
P.O. Box 1410
Indianapolis, IN 46202-1410
November 27
St. Luke the Evangelist Church, 7355 Holliday Drive E, Indianapolis. “Pro-life Prayer Vigil for All Nascent Human Life,” 9:30 a.m. Information: 317-328-0948 or slukeprayer@gmail.com

November 27-28
Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish, 335 S. Meridian St., Greenwood. “National Day of Prayer Display,” Sat. 2-7 p.m.; Sun. 9 a.m.-6 p.m. Information: 317-888-2861 or cmackitt@gmail.com

November 28

December 1
St. Mary Parish, 317 N. New Jersey St., Indianapolis. Solo Seniors, Catholic, educational, charitable and social singles, 50 and over, single, separated, widowed or divorced, new members welcome, 6:30 p.m. Information: 317-370-1189.

December 1

December 2
Marian University, Marian Hall, 3200 Cold Spring Road, Indianapolis. “Catholic High School Choral Festival,” 7:30 p.m., no charge. Information: cmeyer@marian.edu

December 3
Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Parish, 520 Stevens St., Indianapolis. Lumen Dei meeting, 6:30 a.m. Mass, breakfast and program in Priory Hall. “How our mission work with the U-India partnership affects our spiritual and professional life,” Susan Cosley, presenter, 15 members, $20 non-members. Information: 317-435-3447 or e-mail maxmao96@comcast.net.

December 3
Mount St. Francis Retreat Center, 101 St. Anthony’s Drive, Mount St. Francis. New Albany Deacon Catholic Young Adult Ministry, “Advent Renewal,” free-will offering, reconciliation, Benedictine Fr. Brian Baker, presenter, 11 a.m. Information: 812-945-2000 or marlene@junagryouth.org.

December 3
Marian University Adult Education, 4354 Keystone Crossing Blvd., Ste. 108, Indianapolis. Open house and informational session, 5:45-6:45 p.m. Information: 317-252-5681 or kwebb@marian.edu.

December 5
Mother of the Redeemer Retreat Center, 8220 W. State Road 48, Bloomington. “Silent Night–Christmas Caroling,” 6:30 p.m. Information: 317-545-6755 or 317-256-1279.

December 5

December 5
St. Louis School, 17 S. Louis Place, Batesville, Eighth-grade class hosts “Alaskan-can-eat breakfast,” 7 a.m.-12:30 p.m., free-will offering. St. Paul Parish, 9788 N. Dearborn Road, New Albany. Parents Involvement in Education (PIE), hot breakfast bar buffet, 7 a.m., free-will offering, pictures with Santa, 9:30-11:30 a.m. Information: 317-663-2661.

December 5
Marian University, Peine Theatre, 3300 Cold Spring Road, Indianapolis. Dead Mans Walking, 8 p.m., no charge. Information: cmeyer@marian.edu.

December 8

December 8
Maryman University, 3-6 p.m., presentation following dinner, $30 per person. Information: 317-236-4750 or 317-236-1096.

December 9
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5355 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. Carmelite “Madrigal Dinner and Choral Concert,” Thurs. and Fri., $28 per person, $24 for students and senior citizens, Sat., 5:30 p.m. Information: 317-977-4824 or send her an e-mail at marjoriegpke@sbcglobal.net.

December 10

December 11
Oldenburg Franciscan Center, Oldenburg. “Advent–The Amazing Mystery of God’s Word–We Wait for God’s Revelation,” Francesca Sister Barbara Hileman, presenter, 9 a.m.-2:30 p.m., $54 per person includes lunch. Information: 812-893-6337 or center@oldenburgcfo.com.

December 14

Events Calendar

November 27
St. Luke the Evangelist Church, 7355 Holliday Drive E, Indianapolis. “Pro-life Prayer Vigil for All Nascent Human Life,” 9:30 a.m. Information: 317-328-0948 or slukeprayer@gmail.com

November 27-28
Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish, 335 S. Meridian St., Greenwood. “National Day of Prayer Display,” Sat. 2-7 p.m.; Sun. 9 a.m.-6 p.m. Information: 317-888-2861 or cmackitt@gmail.com

November 28

December 1
St. Mary Parish, 317 N. New Jersey St., Indianapolis. Solo Seniors, Catholic, educational, charitable and social singles, 50 and over, single, separated, widowed or divorced, new members welcome, 6:30 p.m. Information: 317-370-1189.

December 1

December 2
Marian University, Marian Hall, 3200 Cold Spring Road, Indianapolis. “Catholic High School Choral Festival,” 7:30 p.m., no charge. Information: cmeyer@marian.edu

December 3
Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Parish, 520 Stevens St., Indianapolis. Lumen Dei meeting, 6:30 a.m. Mass, breakfast and program in Priory Hall. “How our mission work with the U-India partnership affects our spiritual and professional life,” Susan Cosley, presenter, 15 members, $20 non-members. Information: 317-435-3447 or e-mail maxmao96@comcast.net.

December 3
Mount St. Francis Retreat Center, 101 St. Anthony’s Drive, Mount St. Francis. New Albany Deacon Catholic Young Adult Ministry, “Advent Renewal,” free-will offering, reconciliation, Benedictine Fr. Brian Baker, presenter, 11 a.m. Information: 812-945-2000 or marlene@junagryouth.org.

December 3
Marian University Adult Education, 4354 Keystone Crossing Blvd., Ste. 108, Indianapolis. Open house and informational session, 5:45-6:45 p.m. Information: 317-252-5681 or kwebb@marian.edu.

December 8
Mother of the Redeemer Retreat Center, 8220 W. State Road 48, Bloomington. “Silent Night–Christmas Caroling,” 6:30 p.m. Information: 317-545-6755 or 317-256-1279.

December 8
Maryman University, 3-6 p.m., presentation following dinner, $30 per person. Information: 317-236-4750 or 317-236-1096.

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December 14
For many people, life often seems like a slog through the swamp. And as one wit put it, when you are up to your waist in alligators, it is hard to remember that your primary objective is to drain the swamp! Life is not easy, and there are many obstacles that make it more difficult. We yearn for something better. At least from the viewpoint of the world, life looks better on the top of a mountain.

The prophet Isaiah uses the image of a mountain to portray the kingdom of God for which we long. “The mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established as the highest mountain and raised above the hills. All nations shall stream toward it” (Is 2:2).

The nation of Israel will see its faith in God validated, and God’s people will know peace. “One nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war against” (Is 2:4).

This reading from Isaiah begins the season of Advent, which is a time to express our yearning for the kingdom of God. We know that the kingdom has come in Jesus, and yet it is not here fully. So we express our longing during Mass: “We wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.”

Every Advent, we begin the season by looking forward to Christ’s coming—not his first coming at Bethlehem, but his second coming at the end of time.

As we move through the season, the liturgy focuses our attention more and more on Christ’s first coming that we will recall and celebrate on Christmas. But at the be ginning of Advent, we focus on what is yet to come. Our awareness of the gap between the vision of the kingdom and the realities of our present world leads us to the prayer of lament during Advent. We cry out to God about the sorry state of our world, asking for help to survive despite the alligators and to work to drain the swamp— to improve the world in which we live. Thus we yearn for the coming of God’s kingdom in its fullness, but we also commit ourselves to work for justice and peace, to spread God’s love so that our world will move a bit closer to that vision.

Of course, sometimes, as Cassius says in Shakespeare’s Julius Caesar: “The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves.” Not all the evil in the world is outside of us. Some of it has found a home in our minds and hearts. If the kingdom is to come more fully, it must penetrate our defenses and displace the evil that dwells in us. Thus, Advent is also a season that calls us to repentance and conversion.

The challenge, of course, is to continue to live in hope and to persevere in our efforts.

While we can legitimately complain to God about the state of the world, God could also complain to us that we are often part of the problem rather than part of the solution. Advent calls us to change our minds and hearts in order to come into closer agreement with the will of God. The improvement of our own lives, like the improvement of our world, is a long, slow process.

The challenge, of course, is to continue to live in hope and to persevere in our efforts. That is where the vision is important. Only if we keep the vision in our minds and hearts will we find the strength and courage we need.

The Responsorial Psalm for the First Sunday of Advent echoes Isaiah’s vision and invites us to anticipate what it will be like when God’s kingdom has fully come: “Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.” Then we will live in peace with all people. Then we will give thanks to the Lord forever! (Father Lawrence E. Mick is a priest of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati and a freelance writer.)

The Church has designated Advent as a time to step back and reflect on where we are and where we are going. The busyness that keeps us from tending to what is most important in our lives is evoked in the Gospel of Matthew with reference to routines of people prior to the flood at the time of Noah. The people “were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day that Noah entered into the ark.” (Mt 24:38).

They were caught off guard. They had no chance to get their lives in order: to ask also ourselves, to become reconciled to God and other people, to reach out to that person whom one has been avoiding.

The relationships that we so often take for granted may slip away from us if we always tend to other things first. Jesus warns us that we need to have our priorities straight and act upon them today rather than tomorrow, “for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come” (Mt 24:44).

St. Paul echoes this theme of vigilance. He wants us to be aware that we already live in the end times even though the full realization of that end is yet to come. He says: “You know the time; it is the hour now for you to awake from sleep” (Rom 13:11). Although we have already been baptized into Christ’s death and resurrection, it is urgent for us to embrace now the new life we have been offered.

So St. Paul exhorts us: “Let us then throw off the works of darkness [and] put on the armor of light” (Rom 13:12).

To be clothed in light is to live in faith, hope and love, not squandering our time and energy on activities that tie us up in ourselves and do not contribute to love of God and others.

The network of meaningful relationships that we call family is to be cared for then extended within our parish communities so that our identity as God’s family takes on flesh and bones. When St. Paul says: “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the desires of the flesh” (Rom 13:14), he is calling us to put aside self-centered existence, for it is a way of life that deprives us of a future.

Instead of looking for distractions or activities that will obliter ate consciousness, St. Paul urges us to embrace the reality of Christ, who surrounds us and is near to us. Now is the time of decision.

Jesus Christ is our ultimate concern; therefore, in a special way in this time of Advent, all other concerns should be aligned with this life-giving relationship.

Benedictine Father Dale Launderville is a Scripture scholar at St. John’s University in Collegeville, Minn.
Wisdom of the saints: St. Francis Xavier

St. Francis Xavier, whose feast is on Dec. 3, is considered the greatest missionary since St. Paul and the founder of the Society of Jesus (1534-40). He is also the patron of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, along with St. Theodora Guerin.

He met St. Ignatius of Loyola while both men were students at the Uni versity of Paris. They and five others founded the Society of Jesus (1534-40). Francis was ordained a priest in 1537. In 1541, he was appointed an apostolic nuncio to the court of King Philip of Spain. In 1542, he was assigned to India on a mission that would take him to Japan.

He arrived in Japan in 1549, where he taught the local Japanese people about the Catholic faith. In 1552, he was arrested and imprisoned by the Japanese government. He died in 1552 while being held captive by the Japanese government.

In these days of Advent leading to Christmas, as I crawl in traffic snarls around shopping centers, try to make extra purchases with a thinning budget, and stress over holiday obligations, I wonder if my preparations have been more about consumerism than the One whose birth we are to celebrate. Then, resilient trumpets squeal "Joy to the World" amidst tinkling Salvation Army bells, a fellow shopper extends a courtesy and dues deliver a chorus of light shimmering in the presence of Christmas. "Please stay in touch," I hear him say. "I think of you so often." I open my Bible and study the birth of the Christ in the second chapter of the Gospel of Luke. At first, I begin to pray, my focus shifts. I ponder Mary and Joseph’s trust in God and the unsanctioned beginnings of his plan of salvation. There is no worldly possessions, no gaining expectations. There is only love.

I continue to read, and the Christ child appears here, a shadow of my heart, delivering harmony, fellowship and good will. An overwhelming conviction arises that these precious gifts far exceed anything money can buy.

This Christmas, may you discover peaceful joys, quiet moments and the everlasting love of Christ. Born in humanity, he transcends all ages and reaches into our times, our activities, and our hearts.

Stay in touch with God and others this Christmas and beyond.

Emmaus Walk/Debra Tomaselli

Cornucopia/Cynthia Dewey

Making sure that we are not the Pharisee in the story

Remember the Pharisee in St. Luke’s Gospel who was thankful he wasn’t like the poor sinner sitting behind him in the temple. (Lk 18:9-14). After all, the Pharisee practiced piety all the time, and gave alms to good causes, and followed the letter of the law, unlike that other wretch.

Of course, we like to think that we aren’t the Pharisee in the story, but I suspect that is not always the case. Speaking from personal experience, I must admit that I am thankful that I am not like some others: serial killers, adulterers, child abusers. I am thankful that I have never been a Judas or a Francis Xavier, whose feast is on Dec. 3, considered the greatest missionary since St. Paul and the founder of the Society of Jesus (1534-40). He is also the patron of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, along with St. Theodora Guerin.

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The Sunday Readings

Sunday, Nov. 28, 2010

• Isaiah 2:1-5
• Romans 13:11-14
• Matthew 24:37-44

The Church organizes the biblical readings at Mass into three cycles—A, B and C. This weekend, the First Sunday of Advent, begins the new liturgical year. Therefore, the readings for this weekend, and until Advent 2011, will be within Cycle A.

Predominantly, the Gospel readings will come from the Gospel of St. Matthew. Because of this emphasis, this forthcoming year will be an opportunity to learn about and reflect upon Matthew’s Gospel.

This weekend’s first reading is from the first section of the Book of Isaiah. Invitably, all of Isaiah is eloquent and profound.

In this section, Isaiah is blunt and frank. He often warned the people that if they did not return to religious fidelity then doom awaited them. This is a theme of the first section.

While forbidding, the reading is not hopeless. Isaiah also reassured the people that if they reformed then God would protect them. The faithful should never despair.

After all, such was the ancient Covenant. God promised to protect and secure the people, although the people themselves could, at least for a while, bring catastrophe upon themselves by their sins. The almighty God will judge the good and the bad. Such is the divine right. It is also, pure and simple, very logical because all behavior must be balanced into our loving hearts. For the Light of the World to come

Step up
To the Advent wreath.
Lean in
And look closely.
See each candle’s unlit wick,
Soon to be progressively lit
With our lives, until
Into every corner of our hearts
As we expectantly prepare

For the Light of the World to come
And be born there.

By Cathy Lamperski Dearing

(Cathy Lamperski Dearing is a member of St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis.)

Daily Readings

Monday, Nov. 29
Isaiah 4:2-6
Psalm 122:1-9
Matthew 8:5-11

Tuesday, Nov. 30
Andrew, Apostle
Romans 10:9-18
Psalm 19:8-11
Matthew 4:18-22

Wednesday, Dec. 1
Isaiah 25:6-10a
Psalm 23:1-2
Matthew 15:29-37

Thursday, Dec. 2
Isaiah 26:1-12
Psalm 118:1, 8-9, 19-21, 25-27a
Matthew 7:21, 24-27

Friday, Dec. 3
Romans 13:11-14
Psalm 137:1-4
Matthew 9:27-31

Saturday, Dec. 4
John of Damascus, priest
Isaiah 30:19-21, 23-26
Psalm 147:1-6
Matthew 9:35-10:1, 5a, 6-8

Sunday, Dec. 5
Second Sunday of Advent
Isaiah 11:1-10
Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17
Romans 15:4-8
Matthew 3:1-12

Heaven is eternal life in God where our bodies will be conformed to God’s glory.

Q Your recent column about life after death, which explains that purgatory is not a “place” but a condition of cleansing, strengthens what we have been taught about the afterlife.

But we have a question about heaven as a state or place.

We were taught as children that heaven had to be a physical place so that after the resurrection of our bodies we would have a place to exist.

Mary’s assumption and Jesus’ resurrection were proof of this.

How do your explanation and your quotations from Pope John Paul II fit in with that? (Pennsylvania)

A As you infer, Pope John Paul II, in his remarks about heaven, hell and purgatory, simply made explicit what has always been implicit in our faith.

I think few Christians really believe that heaven is a space or place.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us that the word “heaven” marks what it says heaven is a “place”—the word means something different in this context.

Interestingly, Pope Benedict XVI returned to this subject in his homily on Aug. 15, 2010, the feast of the Assumption.

Expanding on Mary’s being taken into heaven at the end of her earthly life, he noted that by the word “heaven” we are not referring to a star somewhere in the universe.

“We wish to say that God, the God who made himself close to us, does not abandon us in or after death, but keeps a place for us and gives us eternity.” he said “We mean that in God there is room for us.”

We, as Pope Benedict said, “ushered into eternity with the whole of our being in him, in his Creator love,” and it is “this love that we call ‘heaven.’”

Jesus, said the Holy Father, “is the guarantee for us that the one being-man and being-God can exist and live, the one within the other, for eternity.”

It is not only part of us that will continue to exist, Pope Benedict explained “God knows and loves the whole of the human being, what we are.

And God welcomes into his eternity what he longs for us with all his love, of hope, joy and sorrow.”

Our Christian faith, therefore, is not in some salvation of the soul in a vague afterlife where everything cherished by us in this world is somehow eluminated.

“Nothing is that precious and dear to us,” Pope Benedict proclaimed, “will fall into ruin. Rather, it will find fullness in God.”

The pope carries this theme to another level.

In eternity, he said, our world “will also be the fulfillment of this earth, as St. Paul says, ‘Creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God’” (Rom 8:21).

It is this belief, he added, that makes us Christians desire “to build a world open to God, people full of joy who can glimpse the beauty of the future world amidst the worries of daily life, and in this certanity live, believe and hope.”

Heaven is eternal life in God, who “will change our lowly body to conform to his glorified body” (Phil 3:21).

What exactly that means or how it happens is mysterious and, as Pope John Paul said, it is beyond words even suffice to explain it.

We return ultimately to Jesus’ last meal with his disciples for an additional insight.

When they probed him for more information about what is in store for us after this life, Jesus replied, in effect, that if he tried to tell them, they wouldn’t understand, and they should just trust him that it will be glorious.

A (Free brochure describing basic Catholic prayers, beliefs and moral precepts is available by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Father John Dutzen, Box 3315, Peoria, IL 61612. Questions may be sent to Father Dutzen at the same address or by e-mail to jdutzen@aol.com.)

Readers may submit prose or poetry for faith column

The Criterion invites readers to submit original prose or poetry relating to faith or experiences of prayer for possible publication in the “My Journey to God” column. Secular reflections also are appreciated. Please include name, address, parish and telephone number with submissions.

Send material for consideration to “My Journey to God,” P.O. Box 1410, Indianapolis, IN 46206, or e-mail to criterion@archindy.org.
Rest in peace

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


AHIK, Margaret (Commons) Gavaghan, Brother of James Gavaghan. Brother of James Johnson, Dennis, Ginnie and Robert Gavaghan. Grandfather of one.


HIGGS, Robert E., 87, St. Augustine Home for the Aged, Indianapolis, Oct. 3. Brother of Dorothy Thomas.


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Protecting life to its natural end

Dr. Paul A. Byrne, a clinical professor of pediatrics at the University of Toledo Medical Center in Toledo, Ohio, gave a presentation titled “Protect and preserve life to its natural end” on Nov. 5 at St. John the Apostles Parish in Bloomington, Byrne, a past president of the Catholic Medical Association, discussed brain death and its implications for organ donations. “We get our life from God,” Byrne said during his presentation. A member of the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars, he argues that there is no consensus on the diagnosis criteria for brain death. “Brain death is not true death,” he said. What one doctor considers death, another does not, leading to great arbitrariness. Byrne is among those asking if “brain death” was created for a solely utilitarian purpose—to acquire organs for transplant so that many lives would be saved. He recommended that people go to the Life Guardian Foundation, http://lifeguardianfoundation.org, an organization dedicated to educating the public that the life of the human person is a gift, for more information. “Respect is owed to every human person regardless of their state of health throughout their entire lifespan from conception until his or her natural end,” the Web site’s mission statement says.

Father Adrian Figuerola Pijano was first chaplain at St. Augustine Home for the Aged

Father Adrian Figuerola Pijano, the former chaplain at the Little Sisters of the Poor at St. Augustine Home for the Aged in Indianapolis, died on Nov. 16 at the home. He was 92.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Nov. 20 at the St. Augustine Home Chapel. Burial followed at the Pioneers’ Circle at Our Lady of Peace Cemetery in Indianapolis.

Father Adrian was born on June 16, 1918, in Spain.

Providence Sister Marianne McGriff was an educator, artist and iconographer

Marianne McGriff, formerly Sister Trinita Marie, died on Oct. 24 at Union Hospital in Terre Haute. She was 84.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Oct. 28 at the Church of the Immaculate Conception at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. Burial followed at the sisters’ cemetery at the motherhouse.

The former Mary Ann McGriff was born on May 5, 1926, in Laton, Ind. She entered the congregation of the Sisters of Providence on Feb. 2, 1944, professed her first vows on Aug. 15, 1946, and professed her final vows on Aug. 15, 1951.

Sister Marianne earned a bachelor’s degree in education at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, a master’s degree in education at the University of Dayton in Dayton, Ohio, and a master’s degree in religious education at the University of Notre Dame in Notre Dame, Ind.

During 66 years as a Sister of Providence, she taught at Catholic grade schools in Indiana, Illinois and Maryland for 22 years.

She joined the archdiocese.


Her body was taken to the Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. Memorial gifts may be sent to the Sisters of the Poor, St. Augustine Home for the Aged, 2345 W. 86th St., Indianapolis, IN 46220.

Sister Marianne began focusing on the place of art in spiritual development. Initially, clay was her preferred medium.

In 1989, she began Open Spaces, a spiritual formation center, in Elkhart, Ind. Her book, Reflections in Clay: Mirror of Truth, was published in 2000.

In 2006, Sister Marianne returned to the motherhouse, completing her work as an iconographer and worked in that medium until her death.

Her icons have been displayed at the Providence Center and reproductions are available for sale at the Providence Center Gift Shop.

Surviving are a brother, Philip McGriff of Maricopa, Ariz., and two sisters, Marjorie Bronsing of South Bend, Ind., and Providence Sister Francine McGriff of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods.
Advent penance services are available on archdiocesan Web site

During the season of Advent, the Archdiocese of Indianapolis will have a special Web page at www.archindy.org/advant. The page contains various Advent resources, including links to the daily readings, reflections from Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein, penance service schedules, images of past Christmas supplement covers and links of interest to other Advent Web sites.

Tell City Deanery
Dec. 12, 4 p.m. at St. Paul, Tell City

Terre Haute Deanery
Dec. 2, 7 p.m. at St. Mar gaert, Terre Haute
Dec. 7, 7 p.m. at Annunciation, Brazil
Dec. 9, 7 p.m. at Sacred Heart, Seelyville
Dec. 9, 9 p.m. and 7 p.m., Sacred Heart, Clinton
Dec. 10, 7 p.m. at St. Joseph, Rockville
Dec. 14, 1:30 p.m. at St. Ann, Terre Haute
Dec. 14, 7 p.m. at St. Joseph Uni versity, Terre Haute
Dec. 15, 7 p.m. at St. Paul the Apostle, Greensburg

New Leadership Award
Young organizer receives CCHD’s Cardinal Bernardin New Leadership Award

The daughter of immigrants from the Azores, Carreiro, 29, has focused much of her recent or ganizing efforts to help troubled homeowners avoid foreclosure on their homes. During the height of the foreclosure crisis in 2009, she helped organize two meetings involving local residents—many of them of Latino and Portuguese background—who told local, state and federal officials of their concerns related to employment and the prospect of losing their homes. Her work involved identifying struggling people, training them to speak for themselves and supporting them as they addressed officials.

Careers told the gathering that her work as a missionary in East Timor, which she was forced to leave when violence flared, has guided her work in Brockton and that her Catholic faith plays a key role as she attempts to correct injustices that affected marginalized people.

Baltimore (CNS)—The executive director of an interfaith community group working to improve the lives of low-income and poor people near Boston was honored with the Cardinal Bernardin New Leadership Award from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development.

Her work involved identifying struggling people, training them to speak for themselves and supporting them as they addressed officials.

Careers told the gathering that her work as a missionary in East Timor, which she was forced to leave when violence flared, has guided her work in Brockton and that her Catholic faith plays a key role as she attempts to correct injustices that affected marginalized people.

Strong in干事 is nothing without consistency. At Northwestem Mutual, we've reached the best possible financial strengths after more than 20 years.
By Brandon A. Evans

During the consistory to create new cardinals this fall, the Pope named the new cardinals that "Jesus' 'style of living became the basis of new relationships within the Christian community and of a new way of exercising authority.'

Even after Jesus explained to the disciples that following him would involve them in a "Common Agreement on Mutual Recognition of Baptism." It was drawn up over the past six years by a team headed by the Cardinal-Reformed dialogue group, made up of representatives of the USCCB, Christian Reformed Church in North America, Presbyterian Church in America, Reformed Church in America and United Church of Christ.

Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory of Atlanta, chairman of the bishops' Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, announced the new cardinals, calling the bishops’ vote "a milestone in the ecumenical journey." The cardinals approved a $180 million balanced budget for the USCCB in 2011, but they refused to agree to an increase in the assessment on dioceses to fund the conference’s work in 2012. Cardinal George opened the first day of the assembly in June.

What was in the news on Nov. 25, 1960?

**Bishops elect new leadership, pass agreement on baptism**

BALTIMORE (CNS)—The 2010 fall general assembly of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops was devoted primarily to internal matters—the election of new conference leaders, discussion on how their own statements should be produced, budgetary and structural questions and internal processes. The conference leaders integrate new media into diocesan structures.

The bishops also affirmed an historic agreement to recognize baptisms in four Protestant Church communities. Public sessions made up the first two days of the Nov. 15-18 assembly with the bishops spending the remainder of the meeting in private groups.

The last public action the bishops took was a nearly unanimous vote on Nov. 16 to approve preparation of a brief policy statement on assisted suicide, which they will debate and vote on at their spring assembly in June.

Before the afternoon vote, Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, chairman of the bishops’ Committee on Pro-Life Activities, outlined the "increasingly urgent threat" posed by the widening use of assisted suicide in the United States.

The one surprise of the meeting came on Nov. 16 when the bishops, after affirming the sitting vice president, Bishop Gerald F. Kicanas of Tucson, Ariz., was not elected to succeed Chicago Cardinal Francis E. George, who was consecrated as his three-year term as president. Bishop Kicanas lost to New York Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan 128-111 in third-ballot voting.

It marked the first time since the bishops’ conference was founded in 1966 following the Second Vatican Council that a sitting vice president who sought the presidency did not win the election. In 1974, and 1977, circumstances dictated that the vice president not run to lead the conference.

During the executive session on Nov. 16, Cardinal George named Bishop Kicanas chairman of the board of Catholic Charities, the U.S. bishops’ overseas relief and development agency. Archbishop Dolan held the post, but had to vacate it upon his election as president.

In other voting on Nov. 16, the bishops also chose treasurer Bishop Joseph J. Kurtz of Louisville, Ky., as vice president and Bishop Michael J. Bransfield of Wheeling-Charleston, W.Va., as treasurer. They also selected chairman-elect for six committees. Archbishop Kurtz and Bishop Bransfield took office at the conclusion of the meeting, while the chairman-elect will be in charge of their committees beginning in November 2011.

In other action on Nov. 16, the bishops, by a 203-23 vote, affirmed "a Common Agreement on Mutual Recognition of Baptism." It was drawn up over the past six years by a team headed by the Catholic-Reformed dialogue group, made up of representatives of the USCCB, Christian Reformed Church in North America, Presbyterian Church in America, Reformed Church in America and United Church of Christ.

Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory of Atlanta, chairman of the bishops’ Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, announced the new cardinals, calling the bishops’ vote "a milestone in the ecumenical journey." The cardinals approved a $180 million balanced budget for the USCCB in 2011, but they refused to agree to an increase in the assessment on dioceses to fund the conference’s work in 2012.

Cardinal George opened the first day of the assembly in June.

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