'For a child is born to us, a son is given us; upon his shoulder dominion rests. They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace' (Is 9:5).
2. Archdiocese creates two charter schools.

From our staff report in April:

The archdiocese recently received approval to create two charter schools in Indianapolis—a move that will make it the first Catholic diocese in the United States that has committed to overseeing a school involved in this educational approach.

“When the 2010-11 school year opens in August, St. Anthony Catholic School and St. Andrew & St. Rita Catholic Academy will become charter schools. While they will still be managed by the archdiocese, they will have to change their names and they will no longer be able to promote the Catholic faith during school hours. The two schools are currently part of the six schools that form the Mother Theodore Catholic Academies—a consortium of Catholic schools in the archdiocese to focus on educating students in urban areas of Indianapolis. ‘The other four schools in the consortium—Central Catholic School, Holy Angels School, Holy Cross Central School and St. Philip Nerli School—will continue as Catholic schools. ‘Many urban Catholic schools are closing across the nation, and we did not want to leave the students or communities we currently serve,’ said Msgr. Joseph F. Schaeedi, vicar general of the archdiocese. ‘Through this transformation, an urgent and unmet need within urban Indianapolis will be filled.’

3. St. Anne Parish dedicates new church three years after fire arson.

St. Anne Church in New Castle was destroyed in an arson fire on April 7, 2007—Holy Saturday. Three years later, on Feb. 28, the rebuilt church was consecrated by Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein.

Mary Ann Wyand reported the following in her news coverage:

“Such growth … surprised Benedictine Father Dennis Robinson, Saint Meinrad’s resident superior.”

“According to Father Denis, there are several reasons for the growth in seminarians enrollment in St. Meinrad—improved relationships with dioceses, strengthening of its collegiate formation program, support given by the alumni of Saint Meinrad, a realignment of enrollment in seminaries across the country, and the closing and consolidating of some smaller seminaries. ‘He also noted that there has been a general increase in the number of seminarians nationwide in recent years.”

By Brandon A. Evans

Philosophy department Chair at The University of Montana Paul D. Gruber, Ph.D. said: ‘I don’t mean a small church that is being destroyed by the fire. I mean the church that is being destroyed by the fire.’

‘The history of every faith community is a pilgrimage often marked by challenges,’ Archbishop Buechlein said. ‘I doubt that the pastor and folks who founded your parish envisioned that someday we would have to experience a fire by arson.’

4. The Office of Catholic Education hires a new director.

Harry Plummer started his service in the archdiocese as the executive director of the Office of Catholic Education and Faith Formation on July 1, after serving the past three years as the superintendent of Catholic schools for the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings in Montana.

The father of eight was born and baptized in Indianapolis.

Aaron Foshee, left, a seminarian for the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City studying at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad, helps Archdiocese of Indianapolis seminarian Anthony Hollowell, right, move his belongings into the southern Indiana seminary on Aug. 26. The seminarian enrollment at Saint Meinrad is at a 25-year high this year.

SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral and Saint Meinrad announce Christmas Liturgies

The Christmas liturgical schedules for SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral and the Archabbey Church of Our Lady of Einsiedeln at Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad are as follows:

SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

Dec. 24—4:25 p.m. carols, 5 p.m. Mass. 11:15 a.m. vigil service of Lessons and carols, midnight Mass with Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein scheduled as the principal celebrant.


Saint Meinrad Archabbey Church

Dec. 24—7 p.m. vigil, 10 p.m. Mass. Dec. 25—9:30 a.m. Mass. All times for liturgies at Saint Meinrad Archabbey Church are Central Standard Time.

For the Christmas liturgical schedules of other religious communities or parishes in the archdiocese, contact their offices. †

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The Criterion and the Catholic Center are closed from Dec. 23 to Jan. 2 for Christmas holiday.

The Criterion O’Meara Catholic Center will be closed from Dec. 23 through Jan. 2 in observance of the holidays. Archdiocesan agencies will reopen at 8 a.m. on Monday, Jan. 3, 2011. †

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On the Cover

The Christmas Liturgy Schedule:

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis offers the following Christmas Liturgies:

SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

December 24:

4:25 p.m. carols
5 p.m. Mass
11:15 a.m. vigil service of Lessons and Carols

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Church

December 24:

7 p.m. vigil
10 p.m. Mass

December 25:

9:30 a.m. Mass

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis offers a variety of Christmas Liturgies throughout the holiday season.
Haiti earthquake, Pope Benedict named top story, newsmaker of 2010

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The devastating Jan. 12 earthquake in Haiti, and the recovery and rebuilding efforts that followed it topped the religious news stories of 2010, and Pope Benedict XVI was again the top newsmaker, according to the annual poll conducted by Catholic News Service.

This year’s five-point scale was 140. The most a newsmaker could receive on the ballot was 10 points for a first-place vote, nine points for second, etc., and five points for third place. Among the 25 newsmakers on the ballot, Pope Benedict was the clear first-place winner.

The poll was the 49th annual survey conducted by CNS. This year’s ballots were distributed on Dec. 3, and the deadline for returns was on Dec. 9.

With 28 editors and CNS staff members submitting ballots, the maximum points that a story could have received was 280. The most a newsmaker could receive on the five-point scale was 140.

Here are the choices for top 10 stories and top newsmakers of 2010, followed by points received in the weighted ballot count and, in parentheses, the number of first-place votes received.

### 2010 TOP NEWS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stories</th>
<th>Newsmakers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Haiti earthquake</td>
<td>Pope Benedict XVI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Clergy sex abuse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Economy, recession</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Gulf oil spill</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Religious Newsmakers

1. Pope Benedict XVI
2. Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan
4. Sister Carol Keehan
5. President Barack Obama

### Editor’s Choice for Top 10 Stories

- **1. Haiti earthquake**: The Jan. 12 disaster left 230,000 people dead and 1.5 million homeless. The country struggled with recovery and an outbreak of cholera.
- **2. Health care reform**
- **3. Clergy sex abuse**
- **4. Economy, recession**
- **5. Gulf oil spill**
- **6. Economy, recession**
- **7. Same-sex marriage and related issues**
- **8. Papal travels, 68**
- **9. Midterm elections, 59**
- **10. Chilean miners’ rescue, 56 (2)**

### Editor’s Choice for Top 10 Newsmakers

- **1. Pope Benedict XVI**
- **2. Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan**
- **4. Sister Carol Keehan**
- **5. President Barack Obama**

### Vatican Christmas: It may be short on snow, but it is big in spirit and unique

**VATICAN CITY (CNS) —** While snowfall is a rarity and Santa Claus is seldom seen, Christmas at the Vatican is much more discreet.

Cranes erect an enormous green lorry alongside the granite obelisk in St. Peter’s Square, and workers nestled in cherry picker buckets adorn the tree with lights, ornaments and tinsel.

This year’s tree is decorated with 3,000 gold and silver balls, and 1,500 white and yellow LED lights, which have lower energy consumption and greater durability. The tree is topped with a flashing star.

Construction of the larger-than-life Nativity scene takes weeks, and yards of thick burlap keep curious eyes from seeing the final product until its unveiling on Christmas Eve.

But even further from the public eye are the holiday traditions of the papal household. While Pope John Paul II had a cloistered attitude, Pope Benedict XVI is much more discreet.

In addition to the public events, Pope Benedict celebrates Christmas privately with the members of his papal household.

“We celebrate Christmas together, listen to the holiday music, and exchange gifts,” he said in the recent book-length interview Light of the World.

The close-knit papal family includes Pope Benedict’s two secretaries, and a small group of women from the Memores Domini lay community who care for the papal apartment. Unfortunately, this holiday season is marked with the death of one of the pope’s close collaborators, Manuela Camagni, who died on Nov. 24 after she was struck by a car.

A close friend of the pope still delivers traditional Bavarian food every Christmas season.

Thaddaeus Joseph Kuehnel, a German banker in Munich, has spent the past 28 years hand delivering the pope’s favorite sweets and sausages from Bavaria.

Kuehnel told Catholic News Service that he was driving to Rome the week before Christmas to deliver Bavarian sausages from the pope’s favorite restaurant, Franziskaner, as well as special mustard, and sweets from the Zents food company, which specializes in marzipan and jams.

The papal goodie bag also includes cakes and cookies that cloistered nuns baked specifically for the pope.

A close friend of the pope still delivers traditional Bavarian food every Christmas season.

Kuehnel said that the pope has three different grottos for the grotto to symbolize that the only weapon a Christian needs is Christ.
Peace be with you

Of earth peace to those on whom his favor rests! (Lk 2:14).

That seems to be the preferred translation from the original greek of the angels’ message to the shepherds after they announced the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. Other translations have been “Peace on earth; good will toward men” and “Peace on earth to men of good will.”

Regardless, we get the idea. The birth of our Savior and Lord should bring peace to those who deserve peace. St. Luke’s Gospel speaks of peace six times, usually after Jesus cured someone and says, “Go in peace.”

But Luke also says that the people proclaimed, “Let this be known among all the people.” And we are convinced that most Muslims in Iraq are the poorest of the poor. They have had to flee the country, which is a consequence of the war in Iraq. They have had to flee to the United States and the rest of the international community.

Meanwhile, the United States is still engaged in wars that seem to be accomplishing nothing positive. One of the most serious consequences of the war in Iraq is the persecution of Christians and other foreigners there by radical Muslims. They have to flee the country, which is a consequence of the war in Iraq. They have had to flee to the United States and the rest of the international community.

The war in Afghanistan seems to be accomplishing nothing, except adding to our national debt. There appears to be agreement that there can be no military victory there. It also is acknowledged that the United Nations, the Taliban has no threat to the security of the United States. Yet, we continue to fight.

The answer to the persistent question “Can’t we all just get along?” seems to be “No.” There are people out there who are determined to kill us, and do it in the name of religion. Moderate Muslims—and we are convinced that most Muslims are moderate—seem unable to control those who believe that they have a duty to kill “infidels.” Consequently, we have no choice but to defend ourselves in every possible way.

Our search for peace, though, must not mean just an absence of wars. We talk of inner peace, and this is the peace that Jesus seemed to wish for his disciples and those he healed.

We must continue to work for peace in the world. Jesus said during his Sermon on the Mount, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Mt 5:9)

But let us also pray for that inner peace that the world cannot give.

—John F. Fink

Letters to the Editor

Is Midnight Mass a tradition of the past?

I would like to address a growing concern that I have noticed during the recent years. Midnight Mass is a time-honored tradition that has been celebrated for centuries. It is a time to reflect on the true meaning of Christmas and to remember the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

However, I have noticed a trend of people not attending Midnight Mass. This has led me to question whether this tradition is still relevant in today’s society.

I believe that Midnight Mass is an important tradition that should be preserved. It is a time to come together with family and friends to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. It is a time to reflect on the true meaning of Christmas and to remember the love and peace that this season represents.

I would like to encourage everyone to attend Midnight Mass this year. It is a time to come together and celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a time to reflect on the true meaning of Christmas and to remember the love and peace that this season represents.

—Sue Smith

We must pursue the truth on the wings of love, reader says

In a false illusory reality that promotes false truth or no truth at all, nothing is important and everything is acceptable as long as pleasure is held as the highest good or source of moral value.

We are creating a world where there is no recognizable truth, no benchmark, and truth is merely a subjective concept that lacks a universal standard. The distinction between real fake has been blurred, and it is in this nebulous state of existence that we become all too familiar with the shadows and fronts of our own dissent.

“Truth,” like the word “love,” has been made into a commodity to be bought and sold. The Internet serves as a medium for promoting and spreading ideas, and for in the most extreme cases, to effect change and bring about justice.

Many philosophers claim that man is incapable of knowing the truth, and that love is just an array of transient emotions. Emotional love and intellectual love are the two most distorted creeds to the philosophy of hedonism, and the discarding of scientific methods.

Truth has verification and love produces fruits. Both point to that which nothing greater can be conceived. We can know the truth. We must seek the truth. We must pursue the truth on the wings of love.

Kirth N. Roush

Order of Carmelite Discalced Secular Indianapolis

Be Our Guest/Susan Wills

Thoughts on the Incarnation

I never tire of hearing Christmas carols—even if they are being piped into stores and malls just to encourage shoppers to buy. But hearing Christmas tunes recently got me thinking. The decorating frenzy of Christmas trees, lights, garlands, poinsettia plants and Santa Claus statuary often seems devoid of Christian meaning. What exactly is being celebrated with all the music, decor and festivities of the season?

The answer, I think, is that many people are celebrating Christmas traditions and trappings rather than the stupendous event of Christ’s coming to Earth. The content is forgotten, but the glow of Christians past remains.

The chasm between show and substance came home to me when comparing my chery secular carols to Alfred Reed’s magnificent Russian Christmas Music. (my gift to you, available on YouTube). In the finale of the closing movement, when the Son of God breaks through eternity into time, leaving his throne in heaven to assume our mortal flesh, and the angelic host fills the sky proclaiming the miracle of Christ’s birth, the music swells to a glorious crescendo of pealing bells, thrilling percussion and withering brass. This is the kind of music that captures the awesome wonder of Christ’s Incarnation and birth.

Words always fall short of conveying the meaning of this unfathomable mystery. But at the beginning of his encyclical letter “The Gospel of Life,” Pope John Paul II summarized the essential points:

1. By his Incarnation, the Son of God has united himself in some fashion with every human being… This saving event reveals to humanity not only the boundless love of God which he so loved the world that he gave his only Son (Jn 3:16), but also the incomparable value of every human person” (82).

By taking on our flesh—becoming human in all things but sin—Jesus ennoble all human life. Our dignity derives from the truth that God created us in his image and loves us to the point of becoming man, suffering and dying to win our redemption, and thus allowing the Holy Spirit to dwell in us.

This understanding of human dignity is understood today by a materialist and dualistic view of the human person. Many people think of human body as something inhabitable, having no inherent value. Our bodies can be used for our pleasure. Should a body become burdensome or in the way, we can dispose of it.

How one understands the human person—as an insignificant bit player in the dream of life or as a creature loved by God, a unity of body and soul who will live eternally—affects one’s behavior toward others. We can be dismissive of those don’t contribute to our immediate happiness or we can see them through God’s eyes.

As C.S. Lewis explained in The Weight of Glory: “The dullest and most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creation which, if you saw it, would be strongly tempted to worship. There are no ordinary people. Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbor is the holiest object presented to your senses. If he is your Christian neighbor, he is holy in almost the same way, for in him also Christ is truly hidden.”

As Christmas gatherings, in long checkout lines and in overcrowded parking lots, let’s remember that Christ lives in the people around us.

Let’s celebrate Christmas with profound gratitude, that through his Incarnation and birth, Jesus showed us the meaning of love and the priceless value of every human life.
Live gratefully for God and each other this Christmas

E

F

Viva esta Navidad con agradecimiento a Dios y al prójimo

Let’s remind ourselves that spiritual reunion is real reunion, too. I make a special point of praying in spirit with my deceased parents and relatives. I also meet my close friends in a prayer of the heart at Christmas Midnight Mass. Know that I shall meet all of you and your loved ones in my Christmas Masses and prayer. If you like, please come and join me in the celebration of Midnight Mass at the Cathedral of SS. Peter and Paul in Indianapolis.

May the peace and joy of Christ be with you and God bless our New Year 2011!

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

Recordemos que la reunión espiritual también es una reunión real. Me hago el propósito especial de rezar espiritualmente con mis padres y familiares difuntos. También me reúno con mis amigos más cercanos en una oración de corazón en la Misa de Gallo. Sé que me reuniré con todos ustedes y sus seres queridos en mis misas de Navidad y en la oración. Si lo desean, acompañenme a celebrar la Misa de Gallo en la Catedral de San Pedro y San Pablo en Indianapolis.

¿Que la paz y el gozo de Cristo los acompañe? Y que Dios bendiga nuestro Nuevo Año 2011!

¿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
Archdiocese of Indianapolis
1400 N. Meridian St.
P.O. Box 1410
Indianapolis, IN 46202-1410

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

La intención del Arzobispo Buechlein para vocaciones en diciembre

Catholic Grade Schools: that they may teach our children the Catholic faith and assist them in hearing and answering God’s call to serve in the Church, especially as priests or religious.

The long and beautiful tradition of the season, enhanced by joyful music and beautiful decorations, and the custom of sharing gifts and bountiful meals all lend a romantic air to Christmas.

Yet, being hard of heart or indifferent to the feast is not out of the question for any of us. Being without faith and hope is not beyond any one of us.

Indeed, Christmas is meaningless if we are without faith and hope. If viewed as a mere secular celebration, it can even be a burden. Some of our folks find the Christmas holiday a time of depression. And so we pray because we are fragile and culpable.

In an audience with young people early in his pontificate, Pope John Paul II said, “We need to admit humbly that we are poor creatures, with confused ideas.... We are fragile and in constant need of interior strength and consolation. Prayer gives us strength for great ideals, for keeping up our faith, for charity, purity of conscience; prayer gives us strength to rise up from indigence and guilt, if we have the humbleness to give in to temptation and weakness.

“Prayer gives light by which to see and to judge from God’s perspective and from eternity. That is why you must not give up prayer! One mustn’t let a day go by without praying a little! Prayer is a duty, but it is also a joy because it is a dialogue with God through Jesus with Young People, March 14, 1979, In Conversation with God, Volume One). In fact, Christmas time should give us pause to measure the quality of our faith.

Are we willing to see that the holiday time decorates a spiritual meaning of Christmas? Can we trace all that we know as the Christmas celebration to the birth of Jesus? Can we get in touch with the Jesus, who is born like one of us?

Do we believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God and our Savior? Do we understand that prayer is a conversation with the Son of God?

“Christmas season gives us an opportunity for a timely boost to our faith. Is it a live flame that warms the heart or perhaps is it merely a spark?

Through every liturgical season of the Church, God offers us special graces, special helps, to deepening our faith or our task. Why is prayer? To look for and to accept the gift that God offers us through the ministry of the Church.

It would be unjust of us to miss a gracious opportunity, if we ignore the inspiration that comes our way at Christmas time.

Surely the tradition of giving gifts at Christmas time finds its roots in the fantastic gift that God gave the human family when he gave his only Son for our salvation from sin and death.

In the spirit of God’s gift-giving, we are led to give as a sign of our love for each other. The whole evolution of the tradition of Santa Claus is rooted in a spiritual tradition of giving because of our love for each other.

And God’s gift of his only Son is our model. The spiritual call of Christmas is to live gratefully for God and for each other. The spiritual gift of Christmas is the help we need to do that. In different ways, a special Christmas gift awaits each of us.

We may find it in the sacrament of penance and reconciliation. Mercy is God’s greatest gift. We surely find it in the celebration of holy Mass.

Wherever we are, on Christmas day and throughout this season of special love, however distant we may be from loved ones—I think of our loved ones who have recently gone home to God or loved ones who may serve the military in Iraq or Afghanistan—however separated we may feel from loved ones, we can truly meet them in Church, in the spirit of our prayer, especially at Mass and holy Communion.

Let’s remind ourselves that spiritual reunion is real reunion, too. I make a special point of praying in spirit with my deceased parents and relatives. I also meet my close friends in a prayer of the heart at Christmas Midnight Mass. Know that I shall meet all of you and your loved ones in my Christmas Masses and prayer. If you like, please come and join me in the celebration of Midnight Mass at the Cathedral of SS. Peter and Paul in Indianapolis.

May the peace and joy of Christ be with you and God bless our New Year 2011!...
December 17
Northside Knights of Columbus Hall, 2100 E. 71st St., Indianapolis. Catholic Business Exchange, Mass, breakfast and program. Richard Mourdock, state treasurer, presenter, 6-8:30 a.m., online reservations only. Reservations and information: www.catholicbusinessexchange.org.

Holy Spirit Church, 10350 Glacer Way, Fishers, Ind. (Diocese of Lafayette). Charismatic prayer service and worship, 7 p.m., Mass, 7:30 p.m., prayer and worship. Information: 317-849-9245.

December 18
St. Michael the Archangel Church, 3354 W. 30th St., Indianapolis. Helpers of God’s Precious Infants, pro-life Mass, Father Todd Goodson, celebrant, 8:30 a.m., followed by rosary outside abortion clinic and Benediction at church. Information: Archdiocesan Office for Pro-Life Ministry, 317-236-1569 or 317-382-8385, ext. 1569.

December 19
St. Michael the Archangel Parish, 3354 W. 30th St., Indianapolis. Second annual “Lessons and Carols,” 6:30 p.m., free-will donations accepted. Information: 317-926-7359.

Richmond Catholic Community, 701 N. 4th St., Richmond. Charismatic prayer group, 7 p.m. Information: richmondcatholicparish.com.

MKVS, Divine Mercy and Glorious Cross Center, Rexville, located on 925 South, 8 mile east of 421 South and 12 miles south of Versailles. Mass, noon, on third Sunday holy hour and pitch-in, groups of 10 pray the Marian Way, 1 p.m., Father Elmer Burwinkel, celebrant. Information: 812-689-3551.

December 20

December 21
St. Joseph Church, 1375 S. Mckley Ave., Indianapolis. “Advent and Christmas Concert,” musicians Tony Arcinena and Linda Yu-Picard and vocalist Katie Staak, presenters, 7-9 p.m., free-will offering benefiting “Needs of Hope,” a transitional housing facility at St. Joseph Parish that assists women recovering from addictions.

December 22
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 8220 W. State Road 48, Bloomington. New Year’s Eve prayer service and Mass, devotion of the Blessed Sacrament, 9-11 p.m. Mass 11:45 p.m. Information: 812-825-4642, ext. 200 or marianoasis@bluemarble.net

December 23
St. Mary’s Cathedral Basilica, 300 W. Alabama St., Columbus. Archbishop Reck, Mass, Noon, Holy Hour and pitch-in.

December 26
MKVS, Divine Mercy and Glorious Cross Center, Rexville, located on 925 South, 8 mile east of 421 South and 12 miles south of Versailles. Mass, noon, on third Sunday holy hour and pitch-in, groups of 10 pray the Marian Way, 1 p.m., Father Elmer Burwinkel, celebrant. Information: 812-689-3551.

December 29
Father Paul Poehl, Parish, New Albany Deanery Catholic Youth Ministries, ski trip, youth, young adults and families, 10 a.m.-9 p.m., $25 per person includes ski rental and lift pass, ski lessons and lunch, registration deadline at noon on Dec. 22. Information: 317-945-2000.

December 31
Mother of the Redeemer Retreat Center, 8220 W. State Road 48, Bloomington.

New Year’s Eve prayer service and Mass, devotion of the Blessed Sacrament, 9-11 p.m. Mass 11:45 p.m. Information: 812-825-4642, ext. 200 or marianoasis@bluemarble.net

January 1
Mother of the Redeemer Retreat Center, 8220 W. State Road 48, Bloomington.

Solemnity of the Holy Mother of God, Mass, 10 a.m. Information: 812-825-4642, ext. 200 or marianoasis@bluemarble.net

January 2
Mother of the Redeemer Retreat Center, 8220 W. State Road 48, Bloomington.

Epiphany Sunday, Mass, 9 a.m., potluck dinner following Mass. Information: 812-825-4642, ext. 200 or marianoasis@bluemarble.net

MKVS, Divine Mercy and Glorious Cross Center, Rexville, located on 925 South, 8 mile east of 421 South and 12 miles south of Versailles. Mass, noon, on third Sunday holy hour and pitch-in, groups of 10 pray the Marian Way. 1 p.m., Father Elmer Burwinkel, celebrant. Information: 812-689-3551.

January 5
Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center, staff lounge, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. Solo Seniors, Catholic, educational, charitable and social singles, 50 and over, single, separated, widowed or divorced, new members welcome. 6:30 p.m. Information: 317-370-1189.

January 6
Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. Abba, Father Chapter, Catholics United for the Faith, “Islam and Christianity,” part one, 6-9 p.m. Information: 317-236-1569.

January 8
St. Rose Parish, Family Life Center, 3603 S. Meridian St., Indianapolis. 10th Annual Seedling Seniors meeting, 1 p.m., age 50 and over. Information: 317-562-5004.

January 13

St. Vincent de Paul Society council to benefit from vehicle donations

The St. Vincent de Paul Society is launching a nationwide vehicle donation program.

Proceeds from these donations will benefit local councils of the society, including the council based in the archdiocese of Indianapolis. The Indianapolis council, which is operated entirely by volunteers, manages a food pantry, a distribution center for household goods and clothing, programs for homeless people and shut-ins, a free legal clinic, and free medical services through collaboration with the Gennesaret Free Clinic.

For more information about the vehicle donation program, call 800-322-8284 or log on to www.svpindycars.com. For more information about the Indianapolis council of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, log on to www.svpindy.org.

Ring in the New Year while on retreat

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5355 E. 56th St., Indianapolis is hosting its annual New Year’s Eve retreat, titled “Growing the Holy,” on Dec. 31 and Jan. 1.

Father James Farrell, Fatima’s director, and Father John McCaslin, the pastor of Holy Trinity and St. Anthony parishes, both in Indianapolis, and other retreat directors.

The cost of the retreat is $135 per person or $250 per married couple. The overnight retreat begins with arrival at 4 p.m. on New Year’s Eve and concludes after brunch on New Year’s Day.

The registration fee includes overnight accommodations, a holiday dinner, a toast and appetizers to enjoy while watching the New Year as it peaks over the horizon, a continental breakfast and New Year’s Day brunch.

Registration for this annual retreat has filled up quickly in the past. Those interested in participating in the retreat should call Fatima at 317-545-7681 before Dec. 22.

Retreats and Programs

December 31-January 1
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5355 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. “New Year’s Eve Retreat,” Information: 317-545-7681 or spaso@archindy.org

January 7-9
Sisters of St. Benedict, Monastery Immaculate Conception, 802 E. 10th St., Ferdinand, Ind. (Evansville Diocese). “Come and See!,” silent reflection day, 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m., free-will donations accepted. Information: 812-734-9999 or vocations@hemlock.org.

January 10
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5355 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. “Come Away and Rest Ashile,” silent reflection day, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., $25 per person includes light breakfast and lunch. Information: 317-545-7681 or spaso@archindy.org

January 14-16
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5355 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. “Inbit Weekend,” marriage preparation retreat. Information: 317-545-7681 or spaso@archindy.org

January 15
Sisters of St. Benedict, Monastery Immaculate Conception, 802 E. 10th St., Ferdinand, Ind. (Evansville Diocese). “A Prayer for Reflection,” Father Michael McKinney, presenter. Information: 317-545-7681 or spaso@archindy.org

January 27
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5355 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. “Day of Reflection,” Father Michael McKinney, presenter. Information: 317-545-7681 or spaso@archindy.org

January 30
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5355 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. “Pro-Cana Conference,” marriage preparation program. 2-6 p.m. Information: 317-236-1586 or 800-256-1582, ext. 1586.

Caroling on horseback

Five members of the senior class of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College ride horses wearing holiday attire on Dec. 7 on the school’s campus in St. Mary-of-the-woods. The students sang Christmas carols during their annual December ride. Since 1989, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College has maintained a stable of horses as part of its department of equine studies.

Cèche display

This cèche is one of several Nativity scenes on display through Jan. 10 at the Saint Meinrad Archabbey Library in St. Meinrad. The cèches come from the monastery’s collections and the Catherine A. Smith Nativity Collection, which was donated to Saint Meinrad Archabbey in 2002. Smith began collecting cèches in 1971 during her extensive travels around the world. The cèches are free and open to the public. For library hours, call 812-357-6401 or 800-807-7311 or visit the Archabbey Library’s website at www.saintmeinrad.edu/library/library_hours.aspx.
Isaiah’s prophecy proclaims the hope of salvation

By Fr. Dale Launderville, O.S.B.

In a time of war and economic difficulties, a country looks for a way forward. In Isaiah 7, from which the first reading for the Fourth Sunday of Advent is taken, the prophet Isaiah comes to King Ahaz in Jerusalem around 733 B.C. and exhorts him to have confidence. The neighboring kings from Samaria and Syria are putting extreme pressure on Ahaz to enter into an Alliance with them to resist the more powerful king of Assyria from the east. Ahaz does not want to be part of this alliance. Isaiah counsels him to have faith that the Lord will take care of him. Therefore, he should do nothing.

But Ahaz is worried about these two less powerful neighboring kings so much so that his heart and that of his people have been shaking “as the trees of the forest tremble in the wind” (Is 7:2).

It seems even before Isaiah counsels him to avoid taking any action, Ahaz has already made up his mind to undercut the neighboring kings from Samaria and Syria by making an alliance with the more powerful king of Assyria.

In the short run, this alliance with Assyria will give Ahaz a measure of leverage in his rule in Jerusalem. But in the long run, it will mean selling out his people and his region to an Assyrian king intent on swallowing up all the smaller countries within his reach. Isaiah tries to keep Ahaz from taking this shortsighted, self-destructive action of entering into an alliance with the king of Assyria. He counsels him that the pressure from the two lesser kings of Samaria and Syria will dissipate within a short time.

And so Isaiah gives him a sign: “The virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel” (Is 7:14). Isaiah continues, predicting that, before this child is 20 years old, “the land of Israel that you dread shall be deserted” (Is 7:16). This prophecy is a challenge to do nothing and calm one’s fears by trusting that all will work out proves to be too much for King Ahaz. He makes the alliance with the king of Assyria. This action leads to the deportation of the 10 Israeliite tribes in Samaria.

Ahaz’s betrayal of the covenant bond for the sake of his own power and security in the short run would reshape the subsequent history of Israel and Judah. Isaiah’s message was clear, but it was one that required trust.

When Isaiah gave Ahaz the sign of the virgin with child, most likely Ahaz would have understood this young woman to be his wife. She soon gave birth to her son, Hezekiah. The meaning of Isaiah’s divinely inspired message, however, was not exhausted by the birth of Hezekiah.

Surely, Hezekiah was born, and the kings of Samaria and Syria at that time were banished. But the identity of the virgin and her son would be the subject of hope and speculation in subsequent centuries among the Israelite/Jewish peoples who treasured the prophecy of Isaiah. The heart of this message is contained in the name Immanuel, which means “God is with us.”

If we truly believe that God is with us, then we will be able to let go of our efforts to save ourselves and allow God to be our ultimate concern. The prophet Isaiah proclaimed that by this sign God would work through the dynasty of David in Jerusalem to bring well-being to the people. This form of royal government had been in place for more than 200 years by the time Hezekiah began to rule Judah (725 B.C.). Hezekiah rose high in Isaiah’s estimation as a Davidic king, who was aware that his power came from the Lord.

The prophecy about the virgin giving birth to a child was ultimately realized in the birth of Jesus Christ to the Virgin Mary in first-century Palestine.

“Isaiah’s prophecy about a virgin giving birth to a child was ultimately realized in the birth of Jesus Christ to the Virgin Mary in first-century Palestine.”

This stained-glass window depicting the prophet Isaiah highlights his prophecy about a virgin giving birth to a child that has been realized in the birth of Jesus Christ to the Virgin Mary.

This Week’s Question

What is your favorite verse from Scripture concerning Christmas?

“Peace on Earth to men of good will” [Lk 2:14]. A person of good will is someone who is searching to do God’s will. It is in doing or at least in seeking to do God’s will that one experiences peace.” (Elaine Mozdy, Superior Township, Mich.)

“1 Corinthians 13:4 says that ‘love is patient; love is kind.’ The Christmas season is such a busy time, but these verses remind us that Christ is love and, if we want to be like him, we must be patient.” (Elaine Mozdy, Erie, Pa.)

“My favorites ... for Christmas or any time are the prelude to the Gospel of John 1:1-18, especially verse 14: ‘And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of the Father’s only Son, full of grace and truth.’ Any time I need a lift, I just read these words.” (Susan K. Rowland, Phoenix, Ariz.)

God News, joy found in Scripture:

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“Peace on Earth to men of good will” [Lk 2:14]. A person of good will is someone who is searching to do God’s will. It is in doing or at least in seeking to do God’s will that one experiences peace. “1 Corinthians 13:4 says that ‘love is patient; love is kind.’ The Christmas season is such a busy time, but these verses remind us that Christ is love and, if we want to be like him, we must be patient.” (Elaine Mozdy, Superior Township, Mich.)

“But in the long run, it will mean selling out his people and his region to an Assyrian king intent on swallowing up all the smaller countries within his reach. Isaiah tries to keep Ahaz from taking this shortsighted, self-destructive action of entering into an alliance with the king of Assyria. He counsels him that the pressure from the two lesser kings of Samaria and Syria will dissipate within a short time.

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One of the main themes of Isaiah’s prophecies is the hope of salvation. In this context, the prophecy of Isaiah about the virgin giving birth to a child is particularly significant. The prophecy not only provides a glimpse into the future, but it also serves as a reminder of God’s promise to his people. The story of the birth of Jesus Christ, as told in the Gospels, is a fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy. This event is a reminder of God’s love and merciful provision for his people, even in the darkest of times. It is a message of hope, mercy, and salvation, which is central to the Christian faith. As we continue to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, let us reflect on the significance of this event and its impact on our lives.
WISDOM OF THE SAINTS: ST. PETER CANISIUS

St. Peter Canisius, whose feast is on Dec. 21, is the first of two Jesuits to be proclaimed as Doctors of the Church—the second being St. Robert Bellarmine of Italy.

St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus, sent St. Peter Canisius to Germany in 1549. His mission was to turn the German-speaking lands of Europe to Catholic doctrine at Ingolstadt, Vienna, and other German cities. His work there led Pope Paul III to call Peter to Rome in 1542, where during his meditation after he received a blessing from Pope Paul III before he set out for Germany.

For his feast, the Church assigns an obligation to hear the Gospel from the book of the Catechism of the Catholic Church: Readings. It refers to a profound spiritual experience, a vision that he had at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome in 1554. In his vision, he chose the saintly Mary and Joseph to care for him. In the vision of the Angel Gabriel, who appeared to Mary, the Messenger of the Lord said: "Hail, favored one, you shall conceive and bear a son, to whom the name Jesus shall be given. He shall be great, and shall be called Son of the Most High; the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; his kingdom shall be known from one end of the earth to the other. To him shall be born the prince of peace, who is to be given the throne of David as his father. He shall rule in his kingdom with justice and righteousness from the earth to the heavens.

From the Editor Emeritus

German speakers of Europe. Throughout what was then the Holy Roman Catholic doctrine at Ingolstadt, Vienna, work there led Pope Leo XIII to call Peter to Rome in 1885. There he experienced the vision of the Angel Gabriel.

The answer is "yes." Compensation for a job well done is integral to the success of the programs so these students are not being addressed by the task force.

As we begin to change the way that we do business, the world, the person who does the best job often gets the least recognition. Pray with us—the Archdiocesan Compensation Task Force, the archdiocesan Office of Catholic Education and your school's board of directors—members for a safe and fruitful journey. We come to you blessed with strength of heart and clarity of mission as we continue to strive for excellence in Catholic education and faith formation.

The Baumbuchs and Father Morse say that they will continue to do as they have always done— to share with others what they have experienced.

The Baumbuchs and Father Morse say that they will continue to do as they have always done— to share with others what they have experienced.
Sunday, Dec. 19, 2010

The Sunday Readings

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

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

For its first reading, this weekend’s liturgy offers a passage from the first section of the Book of Isaiah. This reading refers to King Ahaz of the northern Kingdom of Judah. The reference allows us to see the promise of Christ, that one day a child would be born to Ahaz, who would be a sign of God’s favor.

Ahaz was promised a sign of God’s favor. This religious role overtook all other considerations. The final judgment of how well the kings performed was whether or not they were truly loyal to God. Urged to be loyal and devoted by Isaiah, Ahaz was promised a sign of God’s favor. The sign was the birth of a son, whose mother was Ahaz’s young bride or a virgin who actually was his concubine.

St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans provides the second reading.

Introducing himself, Paul firmly states that he is an Apostle, called by the Lord to proclaim the Gospel. Above and beyond everything, Paul saw his mission as a religious role. God never fails, and is never absent from people.

The Church also provides Advent to assist us in our personal effort to unite with the Lord.

Our union with God, which is so intimate that we can possess even God’s eternal life, occurred because of our unity, first with Jesus in a community of humanity. This union, established by creation, was completed in the Lord’s own humanity. We rarefy and reinforce our union with God by individually choosing holiness.

Turning toward prayer and strengthening our spiritual resolve by the uprooting of sin from our lives, the Church not only invites us to observe Advent, but also accommodates our spiritual progress. The question is if we shall respond.

As we ponder this question, the Church reassures us. Be strong, it advises. Our union with God, which is so intimate that we can possess even God’s eternal life, occurred because of our unity, first with Jesus in a community of humanity. This union, established by creation, was completed in the Lord’s own humanity. We rarefy and reinforce our union with God by individually choosing holiness.

How else could Mary have become the Son of God, also is man.

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Do we know when the first church building was constructed and where it was located?

If not, what is the oldest known building that has survived—if not intact, then at most in ruins?

You ask a question about Christian archaeology, a very important topic because of the Catholic Church’s claim of apostolic origin.

We can trace the Catholic Church back to the time of Christ by means of the unbaptized succession of the Roman pontiffs.

In fact, we know exactly where St. Peter was buried.

There are various archaeological claims for the oldest Catholic church in the world, and each has its own merits, whether in the Holy Land at Ribah in the Jordan or St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican in Rome. The Church of St. Simon Stylianos in Syria dates back to the fifth century and is well preserved.

Parts of the ancient burial monument of St. Peter are embedded in the foundations of that great Roman basilica and date from around A.D. 67. Also, parts of the original Constantinian Basilica of St. Peter (c. 320) can be found in the current version of St. Peter’s Basilica.

My pick for the oldest known Catholic church building that has survived and is currently in use is the “Pantheon” in Rome, which was built by the emperor Hadrian in A.D. 126. It was appropriated by the Catholic Church during the seventh century, and dedicated to “St. Mary and the Martyrs.” It is in perfect condition, and is a marvel to behold.

Go Ask Your Father!

Fr. Francis Hoffman

Catholic churches in Rome, Jordan and Syria are oldest surviving buildings

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The Criterion 2010 Christmas, Friday, December 17, 2010
Iraqi Embassy to the Vatican commemorates attack on Baghdad church

ROMED (CNS)—Two Iraqi women wore, pinned to their lapels, pictures of the loved ones they lost in a terrorist attack on a church in Baghdad. One woman had photos of her husband and young son, and the other woman had a creased black and white portrait of her mother. The pictures were stuck, tacked, secured by their hearts.

Other women wore rosaries around their necks or holy medals fastened to their shirts as a way to remember and pay witness to their Christian faith.

Forty-seven Iraqi Christian survivors of the attack on Oct. 31 on the Syrian Catholic church in Baghdad were among the many guests invited to a special commemoration of the 58 people who died during the terrorist siege of the church and the military raid that brought the blockade to an end.

The commemoration on Dec. 9 was held at the Iraqi Embassy to the Vatican, and was organized with the Iraqi Embassy in Italy.

One woman, who asked not to be named, said she lost her father, her brother, his wife and their four-month-old baby who was bludgeoned to death by the terrorist attackers.

Her three sisters were spared because they stayed home that Sunday morning, she said.

The petite 24-year-old woman said with a shy smile that her loved ones “had the best death you could have—inside a church while praying. It’s a testament of faith.”

She was one of 36 injured Iraqis—including three children—who came to Rome to receive treatment at the Gemelli Hospital. The Italian foreign ministry arranged for the injured Iraqis and 21 accompanying family members to fly to Rome.

By Dec. 9, most of them were no longer hospitalized, but they were awaiting news from the Italian government about their fate.

“They’re looking for refugee status and waiting for a response,” said Father Hans al-Jameel.

Many would like to stay in Italy, but their temporary visas were to expire on Dec. 15, “and they don’t know what will happen. They are not tranquil about it,” he told Catholic News Service.

The Iraqi priest from Niniveh is studying in Rome and lives near the hospital at a large religious center. He said he borrowed two vans a few days earlier, and picked up the Iraqi families to take them to the center and its outdoor grounds for a walk and stroll near a statue of Mary.

He celebrated a Syrian Mass for them and, later that evening, they had dinner together and played “zomboula,” an Iraqi variation of badminton.

“We even had prizes!” for the winners, he said.

“It was like a party. For a few moments, people could forget a bit,” he said.

Father al-Jameel said it has been difficult to figure out what is best for the Iraqi families, many of them women.

Most want to stay in Italy, but it would represent “a huge loss” for Iraq and the families they leave behind, he said.

“My advice is for them to go back, but I feel their fear. Maybe if they can stay awhile, and when they feel more certain maybe then they will return,” he said.

The call to not give in to fear and to stay in Iraq was echoed in the speeches at the embassy event, which was attended by Vatican diplomats and officials, including Cardinal Marc Ouellet, the prefect of the Congregation for Bishops, and Msgr. Khaldz Akasheh, the head of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue’s section for relations with Muslims.

Archbishop Jules Mihkael al-Jamil, the Syrian Catholic Church’s representative to the Vatican, said, “We are Iraqis. We will not emigrate.”

Archbishop al-Jamil criticized the “infidels who have nothing to do with religion,” who are trying to eliminate Christians from the Middle East by terrorizing them with threats, kidnappings and killings.

He called on Muslims to come out more forcefully against terrorist elements, and called on Western nations to help improve security in Iraq to favor the creation of “a new Orient that would be like a mosaic of different religions.”

Vatican launches project to restore and digitize millions in photo archives

This is a scan of a badly deteriorated negative of Pope John Paul II meeting his would-be assassin, Mehmet Ali Agca, in a Rome prison on Dec. 27, 1983. The Vatican is embarking on a project to restore and digitize its archive of more than 8 million photographic images.

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—The Vatican is embarking on a project to restore and digitize its archive of more than 8 million photographic images.

The images, which date to the 1930s, comprise a unique visual history of seven pontificates. But many of the negatives have been damaged by handling and poor storage, officials said.

The restoration project, unveiled at a news conference on Dec. 7, will take at least five years.

The negatives—including early glass-plate negatives—will be cleaned and scanned for digital preservation, and a new storage facility will control temperature and humidity levels to prevent future damage.

The archive had its beginnings in the 1930s when Rome photographer Francesco Giordani set up a photo studio near the Vatican and was called to do various portraits of Pope Pius XI. He was called more and more often when the Vatican newspaper began publishing photos in its pages, and by the 1960s his archive was already immense.

When Giordani retired in 1977, the photo archive was left with the Vatican, which didn’t really know what to do with the collection. After being temporarily housed at the Vatican Museums and elsewhere, it was entrusted to the offices of L’Osservatore Romano, the Vatican newspaper.

Officials said much of the damage to the negatives was the result of handling—not surprising, since many of the images were enlarged and printed for journalists or for pilgrims and other guests who wanted mementos of papal audiences and events.

Since 2006, the Vatican photographers have worked almost exclusively with digital cameras.

Iraqis attend a memorial Mass at the Syrian Catholic church in Baghdad on Dec. 10. The liturgy recalled the 58 people, mostly worshipers, who died in the Oct. 31 terrorist siege of the church and the military raid that followed. On Dec. 9, the Iraqi Embassy to the Vatican held a special commemoration remembering the people who died during the terrorist siege of the church.

Final Advent penance services are scheduled at archdiocesan parishes in several deaneries

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Benedict XVI is planning to make four foreign trips in 2011, including one to his German homeland and a three-day visit to the African country of Benin.

Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, the Vatican spokesman, told reporters on Dec. 14 that the pope would also make four trips to Italian cities. In all, the pope will spend 18 days on the road next year.

The pope will visit Croatia on April, has to date made 18 trips abroad, 12 of them in Europe.

The pope’s travels inside Italy in 2011 will take him to the northern cities of Aquila and Venice on May 7-8, to Montefeltro and the tiny Republic of San Marino on June 19, to the Adriatic city of Ancona on Sept. 11 for the National Eucharistic Congress, and to the southern cities of Lamezia Terme and Serra San Bruno on Oct. 9.

The pope will visit Benin on Nov. 18-20 and will be his second trip to Africa. In Benin, a small country in West Africa, Catholics make up about 50 percent of the population, and Muslims comprise about 25 percent.

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Pope Benedict XVI greets a young man at the Vatican on Dec. 1, who was injured when the Syrian Catholic cathedral in Baghdad, Iraq, was attacked on Oct. 31.

Pope Benedict XVI plans to make four foreign trips, including one to his German homeland and a three-day visit to the African country of Benin.

This is a scan of a badly deteriorated negative of Pope John Paul II meeting his would-be assassin, Mehmet Ali Agca, in a Rome prison on Dec. 27, 1983. The Vatican is embarking on a project to restore and digitize its archive of more than 8 million photographic images.

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. 20, 7 p.m. at St. Teresa Benedicita of the Cross, Bright
Dec. 19, 6 p.m. at St. Anthony of Padua, Morris

Indianapolis South Deanery
Dec. 20, 7 p.m. Our Lady of the Greenwood, Greenwood
Dec. 21, 7:30 p.m. St. Mark the Evangelist, D rural, 11 a.m. at St. John the Evangelist

Indianapolis West Deanery
Dec. 17, 7 p.m. at St. Michael the Archangel

New Albany Deanery
Dec. 19, 4 p.m. at Holy Family, New Albany

Advent, a season of joyful expectation before Christmas, began on Nov. 28. The Advent wreath, with a candle marking each week of the season, is a traditional symbol of the liturgical period.

Jennings County, at St. Mary, New Albany, Jennings County, at St. Joseph, Jennings County

Pope John Paul II, who was injured when the Syrian Catholic cathedral in Baghdad, Iraq, was attacked on Oct. 31, will visit the capital city of Baghdad, one of the six stops that make up his German homeland and a three-day visit to the African country of Benin.

This is a scan of a badly deteriorated negative of Pope John Paul II meeting his would-be assassin, Mehmet Ali Agca, in a Rome prison on Dec. 27, 1983. The Vatican is embarking on a project to restore and digitize its archive of more than 8 million photographic images.
The Incarnation: A myth that is also a fact

By John F. Fink

Is Christianity based on a myth? Yes, indeed. As the great Christian apologist and author C. S. Lewis wrote, “The heart of Christianity is a myth which is also a fact.”

His coming to realize that contributed to his conversion from atheism.

A myth, according to my dictionary, “is a traditional story of ostensible historical events that serves to unfold part of the world view of a people or explain a practice, belief or natural phenomenon.”

A second definition is “a popular belief or tradition that has grown up around a practice, belief or natural phenomenon.”

According to these definitions, the story of the Incarnation, which we Christians celebrate on Christmas, certainly is a myth. It’s a story that unfolds part of the world view of us Christians and is a belief centered on the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity.

However, unlike most myths of the ancient world that have come down to us, this myth actually happened. Before it became a myth, it was a historic fact.

The myth of the Incarnation is that the Son of God, while retaining his divinity, assumed our humanity, body and soul, and was born of the Virgin Mary to dwell in our midst in order to accomplish our redemption.

That person, both God and man, was also a historic person who was born in Bethlehem of Judea during the reign of King Herod the Great.

Yes, skeptics will acknowledge, a man named Jesus lived during the first century of our common era and performed great signs. However, they argue, that doesn’t mean that he was also God.

Perhaps not. For that, we must rely on what his first followers knew with certainty about him—that he performed signs which no human being could do.

No mere human being could change water into wine, multiply a few loaves and fish to feed thousands of people, walk on water into wine, or raise the dead.

What was to become the great myth of Christianity became fact when the Virgin Mary conceived Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit. That, too, is often denied or doubted by modern thinkers because it’s against the laws of nature.

The earliest Christians, therefore, believed in the Incarnation.

What was to become the great myth of Christianity became fact when the Virgin Mary conceived Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit. That, too, is often denied or doubted by modern thinkers because it’s against the laws of nature.

Well, yes it is. Joseph obviously realized that since his first inclination was that Mary had been unfaithful to him, and “since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly” (Mt 1:19).

It took a visit from an angel in a dream to convince him that “it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her” (Mt 1:20).

Both Matthew and Luke believed that Mary’s virginity was essential to the claim that Jesus is uniquely the Son of God. The fact that Jesus was conceived without the sperm of a man being involved was a miracle.

A miracle is the transcending of a law of nature resulting in an unexplained occurrence that glories God. By definition, it’s against the laws of nature, just as were those things mentioned a few paragraphs back that Jesus did while he was on Earth.

Miracles do occur whether or not you and I experience them.

Of course, we do experience a miracle every time we see bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ during Mass.

Miracles do occur whether or not you and I experience them.

At Christmas, Mary can help us to find peace in anxious times

By Mary Jo Pedersen

For many, Mary, the mother of Jesus, seems to be inaccessible to many women—without sin, perfect in every way, saying “yes” to God’s will. How could most mothers relate to that image?

Honour Mary, yes. Pray through her powerful intercession, certainly. Look up to her with admiration, of course. But imitate her in the daily hectic pace of mothering? Is it possible?

Reflections on Mary in the Christmas season can help us to understand how Mary’s response to parenthood and the will of God was both extraordinary and ordinary.

Mary had the privilege of bringing Christ into the world, and every parent who gives birth to or adopts a child also has the privilege of bringing to life a new “image” of Christ in their children as they clean up, cook, carpool and instruct their kids.

Though there is little historical record of Mary’s mothering, the Scriptures give us profound insights into how she was able to parent in line with God’s will.

St. Luke tells us that at two critical parenting moments, Mary “kept all these things … in her heart.” One time was when the shepherds announced that Jesus would be the Messiah, and another time was when Jesus wandered away from his family at age 12, and was found in the temple in Jerusalem listening to and asking questions of the teachers of the Mosaic law (Lk 2:46-51).

Any mother can relate to Mary’s maternal struggle to figure out a child’s behavior, and most would not take such experiences as calmly.

In a very ordinary way, Mary’s wise response of keeping these life events in her heart helped the mystery of the Incarnation to unfold in human history.

Perhaps this is where Mary’s giving birth to Jesus and our minor role can meet.

In the midst of busy days, we can learn to ponder and be still when we face improbable or disturbing circumstances instead of reacting with anxiety or anger or defensiveness.

Parenting for Mary and for us is part of a journey of faith. In pondering all these things, Mary was open to the Holy Spirit in her heart. Instead of immediately reacting, she teaches us to ponder the anxieties and challenges of daily life.

No parent will find this posture of pondering easy. Most of us want to quickly control the situation surrounding our lives and our children, and it is wise for us to do that to some extent for their safety.

At the same time, however, taking time to be still and speak openly in prayer with God about our children, our future and daily worries is a prerequisite to doing what Mary did so well—allowing God to be born in our lives.

Mary was both a mother and a disciple of Jesus. We, too, are both parents and disciples. Today, as in first-century Palestine, God’s will is mysteriously unfolding in our lives. Jesus reveals himself to us gradually, in very ordinary and sometimes disturbing circumstances—the diagnosis of an illness, a job loss or the unexpected news of trouble in the family.

Nothing that happens to us is outside of the love of God, and we always have the opportunity of allowing divine wisdom to guide and comfort us.

Mary’s example shows us that. Maybe that is why we call her the Queen of Peace, and perhaps keeping things in our heart and pondering them is a way to bring peace into our lives and into the world.

(Cyril M. O’Connor, a veteran coordinator of marriage and family spirituality programs, lives in Omaha, Neb. He is the author of For Better, for Worse, for God: Exploring the Holy Mystery of Marriage, published by Loyola Press.)

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The Criterion Christmas 2010 Friday, December 17, 2010 Page 11
By Nancy O'Bryan

Special to The Criterion

The O'Bryan family has many family Christmas traditions, which usually begin over Thanksgiving weekend.

With at least two children away at college during the past eight years, the four-day Thanksgiving weekend is the only time that we can take the annual creative family photograph for the Christmas card, decorate the Christmas tree, and set up the outside lights and Nativity with the plastic, lighted figures that we have owned since the 1980s.

Also, traditionally, our son, Mitchell, always brought the Christ Child to this Nativity.

Mitchell was born with cerebral palsy, and could not walk or talk. He would always carry the plastic baby Jesus to its place in the manger with help from one of his siblings, who pushed his wheelchair, or his Dad, who carried him when he was younger.

Every Christmas Eve, the traditions continued with our faith and family. We always dressed in festive garb, which some people might call tacky Christmas sweaters.

We celebrated Christmas with our extended family during the afternoon on Christmas Eve, took our family picture in front of the tree—some pictures serious and others less serious with crazy hats and expressions—then attended the 7 p.m. Christmas Eve Mass at St. Luke the Evangelist Church in Indianapolis. This has been our tradition since the children were young. Our family is always together to celebrate the birth of our Lord, Jesus.

Last year, we did all of the usual Christmas Eve festivities: Christmas sweaters, a family dinner, the family photo in front of the Christmas tree before Mass, attended Mass, then went home and the kids watched a holiday movie together in the family room. Then we went to bed after midnight.

Christmas morning came, and we were heartbroken to discover that Mitchell had died suddenly.

Mitchell had gone to heaven during the night—a Christmas saint. In God's loving wisdom, Mitchell had his "re-birth" day on Jesus' birthday, a day when our family was always together.

As Father Noah Casey, the pastor of St. Luke Parish, said during his homily at Mitchell's funeral Mass, "Jesus said to him, 'Hey, Mitchell, you've been carrying me for a long time. How about me carrying you? And the Lord carried Mitchell into eternal life.'"

The devastating loss of our beloved son brought much outpouring of prayers and support from our family, friends and faith community.

We soon learned that although we had always considered Mitchell our heart and inspiration, he was that and much more to so many people.

Mitchell taught us so much about love, patience and strength. Because of God's guiding hand, the faith of our family, and Mitchell's gentle strength and loving, patient spirit, we had him with us for almost 23 years.

This year, we have continued the O'Bryan traditions at Thanksgiving and plan to do so at Christmas.

We took our family Christmas photo at the median that we have adopted for Mitchell. "Mitchell's Median" is near our neighborhood, west of Ditch Road on 86th Street. Our family project, planted with bushes, bulbs and perennials, is a living, blooming reminder of our wonderful son for all to enjoy.

We miss his crooked smile, the absolute joy he showed when our family was together, the peaceful look on his face each Sunday at Mass and his daily presence in our lives.

Christmas will be very different this year without Mitchell, but we know he is watching over all of us now and smiling at the really tacky sweaters we have chosen for this year's Christmas season.

(Nancy O'Bryan is a member of St. Luke the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis.)

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By Michael Howell

Special to The Criterion

Some of my fondest memories while growing up in St. Gabriel Parish in Connersville were helping my children decorate across the street from the parish and school.

At the time, St. Gabriel School was staffed by the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis from Oldenburg. Many years ago, my father was called upon by the superior to assist the sisters in decorating the convent for the Christmas season.

He had converted to the Catholic faith, and always considered it an honor that they would ask him for help during Advent.

Of course, Dad always had to have a helper and that was always me.

Dad would arrange a day with Sister Rose Ann, who called his day "fun and fun." Dad would gather his ladder and tools, and we would ceremoniously walk across the street to their home. The children were anxiously awaiting our arrival.

First, we went to the basement to gather all of the lights, tinsel, lights, garland and ornaments. Each sister would carry some of the decorations, and off to the huge front porch we would go to start our decorating project.

The school custodian was kind enough to have already delivered four Christmas trees and live garland to the convent for Dad to work with as we decorated the convent inside and out.

I don’t think they knew at the time, but Dad had nicknames for each sister.

He enjoyed joking with the sister that he called “the cub bear.”

She was a younger sister, who was light on her feet and had the heart of a child. While we decorated, she crawled in and out of windows in her long habit and laughed all the time.

Dad was in his element, smiling and singing with the sisters all joining him in song.

Sister Martha Clare helped him set up two Christmas trees on each corner of the porch then arrange a large tree on the balcony as well as another big tree inside the convent community room.

Once the trees were up, Dad had to wrap them in lights then the sisters would begin putting on the ornaments and garland.

Dad and I would go to the balcony and start hanging the live garland on the balcony porch.

When we were finished, with all the lights turned on, there were many appreciative "ohs" and "ahhs.”

Dad would step back and smile as each sister hugged him for helping them make their home a little happier.

Although there are no sisters living in the convent now, I can’t drive by it without thinking of the sisters and Dad decorating it.

Until he died, each year in early December my father would reminisce about his “days of fun with the nun.”

(Michael Howell is a member of St. Gabriel Parish in Connersville.)

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By Martha Ardis

Special to The Criterion

When I was growing up, my family honored the Sabbath. This was a non-negotiable tradition in our family.

Sundays started with church in the morning followed by Sunday lunch. Then it began. No TV, no radio, no homework—this was done on Saturdays— and no chores whatsoever.

Our afternoons and evenings were spent in silence every Sunday.

I can remember my father, who was a very tall man, staring disdainfully down at me whenever I tried to renegotiate our Sabbath customs. I would always lose.

As with most things that my parents instilled in me, I did not begin to fully appreciate their wisdom until I realized that I had lost something.

A few years ago, my life was becoming an endless “To Do” List, and that list was taking over my life. I was weirdly restless and not really satisfied with anything in my life.

A friend once told me that “God will get you where he wants you,” and this adage ran true for me.

After struggling with that call to “go away and rest,” God did get me where I needed to be.

I was welcomed by the Trappist monks at the Abbey of Gethsemani in Trappist, Ky., to rest my body, mind and soul in silence.

That special place gave me the opportunity to crank the “speedometer” way back and to reflect on my life. It also provided me with time to pray, and to finally listen to the things that God had been waiting to tell me.

When I returned home, I was obsessed about how to reclaim the spiritual experience that I had enjoyed at the monastery.

My soul had tasted the living waters, and I realized that quiet, reflective time is what I needed in order to continue down the path.

It took me a while to finally connect the dots, but when I did the answer was always there—the Sabbath.

God created the world in six days and said, “It is good.”

But the seventh day—the Sabbath—God made that day holy, and asked us to honor that day.

We all make choices in life, and those choices determine how we live our lives. It is not an easy choice to follow the road less traveled.

Choosing to honor the Sabbath, to take time to honor the day that God set “apart,” is not for the weak of heart. It will take courage.

St. John of the Cross knew about the need for silence, and left us with these words: "The Father spoke one word, who was His Son, and this word He is always speaking in eternal silence. It is in silence that the soul must hear it.”

I have never regretted returning to the weekly practice of honoring the Sabbath. It might be constructed as a time for “doing nothing” by some people.

But “doing nothing” and just being with God, isn’t that the greatest gift you can give yourself?

(Martha Ardis is a member of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Indianapolis.)

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Father and son enjoyed helping Franciscan sisters decorate convent

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Honoring the Sabbath is greatest gift you can give yourself all year

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Readers share their favorite Christmas stories

A different kind of Christmas last year is a treasured memory

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Page 12

The Criterion

Christmas 2010 Friday, December 17, 2010
Late-night flower delivery brings special meaning to Christmas

By Karl Hertz

In the early 1950s, I was a student at Cathedral High School, which at that time was located at 14th and Meridian streets in downtown Indianapolis. Now, the old school building is the archdiocese’s Archdiocesan O’Meara Catholic Center. Around the holidays, I delivered flowers for the Drive-In Flower Mart on 16th Street. It was always an adventure.

One year, at Easter, they had all the delivery people dress in white bunny outfits.

Another year, on Christmas Eve, I arrived back at the shop at about 11 p.m. to tell the owners that I was going to Midnight Mass.

As I recall, the owners had gone to Cathedral High School at an earlier time so they knew it was important for me to go to church on Christmas Eve.

However, they said that they needed me to make one more delivery. This time, it was to the mental hospital at the medical center.

I knew that it was going to take me further away from Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Indianapolis, where I planned to attend Midnight Mass.

When I protested, they offered to call my folks and explain, but I did it myself.

The flower arrangements were loaded, and off I went to the hospital.

On the way, I was very curious about my destination because I had never been in such a setting. It was a bleak place, especially on Christmas Eve. There was almost no staff to be found, and I was told to leave the flowers at the nurses’ station.

As I proceeded to do this, several patients saw the flowers. Some people wanted them and even followed me.

Finally, I told the people that I would set the flowers up at the nurses’ station, and that they were for everyone to see but not to move them.

Actually, some of the people scared me.

As I left, the patients were pulling up chairs and sitting quietly to just look at the flowers at the nurses’ station.

Merry Christmas, indeed!

I was late for Midnight Mass, but I have always thought that I had been in the right place. Fortunately for me, my folks agreed.

(Karl Hertz is a member of Lumen Christi Parish in Thiensville, Wis.)

Longtime friends looked forward to celebrating Christmas together

By Carolyn Bates-Greenman

Our parents, who eventually became great-grandparents, were best friends with our godparents.

Now, only one is still living. Our mother is 87, and my sister and I enjoy visiting her.

Every Sunday during our childhood, we were in church together. Every other Friday, our dads enjoyed developing photographs together, which was their shared hobby, while our mothers spent time baking delicious desserts.

Christmas was always a special time for us, particularly when as grade school children we started attending Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve. We did not exchange gifts because our treasures were our dear friends.

About eight o’clock on Christmas Eve, our families would get together. Even as youngsters, we were allowed a cup of eggnog or a glass of wine with fruitcake or recently baked cookies. We felt so very grown up.

Fondly recall our early Christmas Eves together!

Thus, our many Christmases together were special.

Now, as grandparents ourselves, we fondly recall our early Christmas Eves as special times with our friends when we celebrated Jesus’ birth.

( Carolyn Bates-Greenman is a member of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in New Albany, Ind.)

St. Joseph is the Church’s saint for all seasons and a model of faith

By St. Joan RoccaSalvo

St. Joseph is the Church’s saint for all seasons. His role in salvation history should not be underestimated, and this is particularly true during the Advent and Christmas seasons.

On discovering that Mary, his betrothed, was already pregnant, St. Joseph was to be the legitimate father of Jesus. But he was not his, he pondered and worried. How could this have happened?

According to the law, the marriage had already taken place. They were betrothed, but they did not as yet live together. Joseph refused to put Mary to shame. The law permitted him to divorce her. The law also permitted stoning an adulterous woman. But there was a better way.

It is important to understand that Joseph had no foreknowledge of Mary’s divine pregnancy. He had to be told about it.

According to the prophecies, the Messiah would come from the house of David, Joseph’s ancestral heritage. The Book of Isaiah prophesied: “The virgin shall be with child” and “A shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse” (Is 7:14, 11:1).

Joseph’s illustrious ancestry had its checkered past. King David cut a stunning figure of saint and sinner, and the four women mentioned in the family tree did not fare too well either. Mary’s scandalous pregnancy would now be added to the list.

In the midst of an intractable dilemma came the angel’s declaration to Joseph in a dream.

The father, presumably Joseph, would be responsible both for legitimizing the child and for naming him.

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

When he awoke from the dream, he did as the angel bid him.

Who among us today would be so foolish?

Joseph’s “yes” reiterated and confirmed Mary’s acceptance of God’s will for her. The assent of faith united belief and total commitment. The presence of God moved Joseph to leave his own security to travel toward God’s plan, even though, like Mary, he was free to refuse it.

Actions do speak much louder than words.

Joseph was a just man. Because he remained rooted in the Lord, he brought forth fruit. “The just man shall flourish like the palm tree, like a cedar of Lebanon shall he grow” (Ps 92:13).

The just are “like a tree planted near running water, that yields its fruit in due season, and whose leaves never fade. [Whatever he does prospers]” (Ps 1:1-3).

( St. Joseph Sister Joan RoccaSalvo earned doctorates in music and liturgical studies.)

Adoration of the Magi

By Dr. Lydia Abad

Dec. 13, 1983, is a memorable date for my family.

This was the day that my Mom and Dad flew back to the Philippines to take part in the nine-day novena called Simbang Gabi, an Advent custom which prepares Filipinos for Christmas. This starts on Dec. 16 at 4 a.m. with prayers and singing. After the Mass, the people enjoy delicacies at different houses.

I would have liked them to spend Christmas with us since the last one was 17 years ago. I really wished we were together.

Well, we were together later because on the flight home Dad suffered a fatal heart attack so our family spent the Christmas season with Mom in the Philippines.

( Dr. Lydia Abad is a member of St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis.)

Father’s sudden death unites his grieving family in the Philippines

By Sr. Joan Roccasalvo, C.S.J.

We were in church together.

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(St. Joseph Sister Joan Roccasalvo earned doctorates in music and liturgical studies.)
Families often have beloved and time-tested traditions around the holidays.

Some families gather each year to worship together at Midnight Mass. Some share meals inspired by recipes passed down from one generation to the next. Other families come together at a grandfather’s house on Christmas Eve to exchange presents.

A special Christmas tradition of the children and grandchildren of Henry Von Essen, a member of St. Michael Parish in Greenfield, can be traced back all the way to New York City, where Henry, 83, grew up in the 1930s and 1940s.

Beginning to raise his family in the late 1950s, Henry decided to move out of New York. But he didn’t exactly know where he wanted to put down roots.

“I got in a car with my brother and we were traveling out west,” said Henry, who still boasts a clear New York accent. “That was in 1957. We got as far as Greenfield. And I said, ‘I don’t want to go out any further.’”

When asked why he chose Greenfield, Henry’s answer was simple.

“The people were just beautiful,” he said. “Everybody was so brotherly. You know?”

Henry and his family eventually made the move permanent, moving “lock, stock and barrel” to Greenfield in 1959.

Among his prized possessions that Henry brought to Indiana was a Nativity scene that he used to set up outside his home in New York. But storage space was limited in the home he was renting in Greenfield.

So shortly before Christmas in 1959, Henry called St. Michael’s pastor at the time, Father Daniel Nolan.

“I called up Father Nolan and said, ‘Father, I’ve got a beautiful Nativity set. . . Could I put it up for the church?’” Henry said. “He said, ‘We’ve never had an outside Nativity. That’d be beautiful.’”

So Henry and his 5-year-old son, Larry, went over to the parish and set it up.

Henry’s family has continued to put Nativity sets at the parish now for 51 consecutive years, a tradition old enough that it is in its third crèche scene.

According to Benedictine Father Severin Messick, St. Michael’s current pastor, this tradition is still important.

“It’s a small thing in the life of a parish,” Father Severin said. “It’s a small gesture in the [broader] scheme of things. But it’s a gesture filled with a lot of love and devotion.”

According to Larry, the tradition is also a sign of the deep faith of Henry, a faith that he has worked hard to pass on to his children and grandchildren.

“Your faith is the greatest gift that you can pass on down to your children,” Larry said. “And doing this is a way of showing your faith. It makes you reflect on your grandfather, on your uncle—the previous generations and their faith and how that’s carried on.”

It’s not the only way that Henry passed on the faith.

He taught his grandsons, Steve and Tim Kottlowski, now 20 and 18, how to be altar servers.

“I made the finest altar boys out of them that you’ve ever seen,” Henry said with pride.

And during their middle and high school years, the brothers would work in the summer for their grandfather, who would teach them lessons about the faith during breaks.

“He would read us passages from his little missal book,” Steve said. “He’d tell us to take a break, and he’d read us a passage or have us read it and explain it.”

The hard work that Henry put in to plant seeds of faith in his children and grandchildren must be paying off. Steve has participated in two mission trips and regularly attends Sunday Mass at St. Michael Church.

In recent years, the task of putting up the Nativity set and other Christmas decorations around the parish church has largely been taken on by Larry, Steve and Tim. All are members of St. Michael Parish.

Tim is happy to carry on a family tradition. But he’s also pleased that he makes Christmas better for other families who come to St. Michael Church to celebrate the holiday.

“It’s nice to put a smile on other people’s faces,” he said. “You can always hear people talking in church about the decorations and how nice they are. It’s just nice to know that you’ve affected them in some way and brought them closer either to the Church or just to the spirit of Christmas.”

Now the brothers, who are students at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, are looking forward to carrying on the tradition of putting up the Nativity set at St. Michael Parish well into the future.

“We and my brother are talking about carrying it on,” Tim said. “We want to be engineers, and try and figure out how we could build a structure that would last a little bit longer and would be easier to move around.”

At the same time, Tim realizes that he might, like his grandfather, move away. Yet wherever he goes, or even if he stays, “he’ll take his faith with him.”

Even if I did move,” he said. “I’d probably figure out a way to get involved in another parish somewhere and maybe start my own tradition.”
Family’s Christmases were frugal, but filled with love and fun times

By Theresa McHolland
Special to The Criterion

I have many good family Christmas memories from years past. Going back to 1944 when I was 10 years old, I can remember our Christmases as joyful and religious.

Our Christmas celebration started with a procession. The youngest child carried the Baby Jesus to the crib while we sang “Silent Night.”

Dad would go out on Christmas Eve to find a tree because he could get one free. Then my parents would stay up half the night decorating it.

Our family didn’t have a lot of money, but we seemed to get everything we asked for each Christmas.

Sometimes our gifts were second-hand clothing. Mother would sew new outfits for our dolls, and we were happy to have them.

Our stockings were hung on the mantle, and had oranges and nuts in them, not candy. This was the only happy gift we would make me.

I picked a name off of our parish “caring tree,” because I wanted a bicycle. I didn’t get it and was disappointed. I told my mother, and she said, “Sometimes God will give you something else in its place. You got a new baby sister instead.”

“Sometimes God will give you something else in its place. You got a new baby sister instead.”

My sister was born on Dec. 17, but I was not “a happy camper” because I wanted a bicycle.

I don’t remember my parents exchanging gifts. I’m sure they made many sacrifices for us six children.

I wouldn’t trade those Christmases for anything in the world.

(Teresa McHolland is a member of Holy Spirit Parish in Fishers, Ind., in the Lafayette Diocese.)

Parish ‘caring tree’ helps make Christmas special for gift giver

By Zola Ernstes
Special to The Criterion

I picked a name off of our parish “caring tree,” said a little prayer, bought a small gift then made a friendly visit.

I thought about how happy the person would be, but never gave much thought about how happy it would make me.

Her eyes lit up, and so did mine. It truly was Christmas time!

(Zola Ernstes is a member of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Shelby County.)

CHRIST’S COMING IN CHRISTMAS

Please join
Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein, O.S.B.,
the pastor and parishioners of SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral
on Christmas Eve
to celebrate Christ’s coming in Christmas.

Vigil service of scripture and song
11:15 p.m.
Presider: Rev. Mr. Dustin Boehm

Midnight Mass
12:00 a.m.
Presider: Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein, O.S.B.

Secured Parking
SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral lot
(enter from North Pennsylvania Street)

The Catholic Center lot
(enter from West 14th Street)

Papal blessing

A child holds a figurine of the baby Jesus as Pope Benedict XVI leads the Angelus prayer at the Vatican on Dec. 12. Children brought statues of the baby Jesus for the pope to bless during the papal audience.

Last Christmas spent with her father creates many special family memories for a lifetime

By Michelle Fellman
Special to The Criterion

Christmas 1998 was a very special Christmas for me as it was my last Christmas with my dad.

We were having our house built, and since my father had prostate cancer we decided to move in with him to help with his care.

That Christmas, we put up the silver tree with colorful lighting that we had not done since I was a little girl.

When we took it down after that Christmas season, he gave me the tree, which I now put up every year in his memory.

That year, we also baked cookies with my kids and my dad, who baked Christmas cookies every year.

These are my most memorable moments with my dad, and I will always treasure them.

Dr. Mel Zimmerman, my dad, died in April 1999.

I love you, Dad, and I have written this reflection in your memory.

(Michelle Fellman is a member of St. Roch Parish in Indianapolis.)

At this holiday season

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul expresses its grateful THANK YOU to our volunteers who donate their time so selflessly...to our donors who contribute their financial support so generously...to our clients who teach us the value of resilience so hopefully...to Our Heavenly Father for the supreme gift of His Divine Son.

May the peace and joy of the Christ Child be with you this Christmas season.

Society of St. Vincent de Paul
3001 E. 30th Street
Indianapolis, IN 46218

www.svdpindy.org

Last Christmas spent with her father creates many special family memories for a lifetime

By Natalie Hoefer
Special to The Criterion

I had reached a spiritual low. Caught up in “doing,” I lost touch with God’s will.

Things finally imploded, and I found myself at adoration before the Blessed Sacrament with nothing to do but turn to God for guidance and direction.

Was I chastised for letting my relationship with God weaken? Of course not!

In my mind, I heard Christ say, “I’m so glad you’re here! Now I can finally give you the love and guidance that you’ve been needing!”

Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament then gave me a gift of grace—a sense of peace and calm.

I realized exactly what each of these elements represented to me—the beach was Christ’s peace, the waves were his mercy, the breeze was the Holy Spirit and the warmth was the unthomorable love that Christ has for me.

What bliss to just sit there and revel in accepting his gift of peace, mercy, Spirit and love!

I sighed with relief and closed my eyes, and an image played itself out in my mind.

I was on a beach with nothing to do but relax, enjoy the warmth of the sun, the gentle and refreshing breeze, the play of the waves.

Will the feeling last? Sadly, no—I’m human. But the gift of a spiritual beach vacation that Christ gave me while I prayed in his holy presence at adoration was a treasured moment of peace that, if I’m wise, I’ll turn back to when I find I have placed my shivering self on an iceberg far from God’s love.

I share this image in the hope that other people who are feeling overwhelmed can take a few minutes to revel in the joy and warmth of Christ’s peace, mercy, Spirit and love.

(Natalie Hoefer is a member of St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis.)

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Christ’s gift of a moment of peace helps woman experience joy and love during Advent season

By Michelle Fellman
Special to The Criterion

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(Natalie Hoefer is a member of St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis.)

CHRIST’S COMING IN CHRISTMAS

Please join
Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein, O.S.B.,
the pastor and parishioners of SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral
on Christmas Eve
to celebrate Christ’s coming in Christmas.

Vigil service of scripture and song
11:15 p.m.
Presider: Rev. Mr. Dustin Boehm

Midnight Mass
12:00 a.m.
Presider: Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein, O.S.B.

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SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral lot
(enter from North Pennsylvania Street)

The Catholic Center lot
(enter from West 14th Street)

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Love and truth, not violent revolution, bring positive change, pope says

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Changing the world for the better does not come from leaders making grandiose promises or calling for a violent revolution, Pope Benedict XVI said. It comes from the humble individuals who silently carry God’s light and love to everyone around them.

The pope made his remarks during a visit on Dec. 12 to a Rome parish that serves Italians from central and southern Italy as well as East European nations and other countries.

In his homily, the pope commented on the day’s readings for the third Sunday of Advent, in which John the Baptist sends some messengers to ask Jesus, “Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?”

The last two or three centuries have seen many people asking Jesus the same question, wondering if he really is the one who will change the world, the pope said.

“Many prophets, ideologues and dictators have come and said, ‘It is not the/one’ who will do so through empires, dictatorships and totalitarian regimes, he said. He did not change the world. It is us’

The word of God is a compass that points the right way and is ‘an anchor to silent light of truth, the goodness of God’s light on others. †

Pope Benedict XVI

The pope highlighted some of the men and women of the Church who have shown God’s light on others: St. Maximilian Kolbe, who sacrificed his life to save the life of another; St. Damien de Veuster, who helped the oppressed and suffering; and Blessed Teresa of Calcutta.

The pope asked that people get closer to God so that they can be points of light for others.

Later that day, the pope recited the Angelus with pilgrims at St. Peter’s Square.

The square was filled with children and families who brought statues of the baby Jesus for the pope to bless before placing them in Nativity scenes at home and at school.

Before blessing the figurines, the pope said listening to and reading sacred Scripture can help bring stability and direction in a world “that makes us feel invisible and every certainty seems to collapse.”

The word of God is a compass that points the right way and is “an anchor to keep from going adrift,” he said.

The pope said that the Advent season helps people cultivate greater patience and hope. Like the farmer who plants his seeds and patiently waits for the fruits to grow, the faithful need to have the farmer’s same balance of faith and reason, the pope said.

On the one hand, he said, people must understand the laws of nature and work in harmony with them and, on the other, have faith in God’s Providence, because some things are only in his hands. †

What was in the news on Dec. 16, 1960?

By Brandon A. Evans

This week, we continue to examine what was going on in the Church and the world 50 years ago as seen through the pages of The Criterion, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary. Here are some of the items found in the Dec. 16, 1960, issue of The Criterion:

• Are Sunday closing laws legal? Supreme Court to decide issue

WASHINGTON—Defenders and opponents of Sunday closing laws clashed for two days before the U.S. Supreme Court in a conflict whose outcome will have an impact wherever such laws are on the books.

Supporters of the Sunday laws argued that they are necessary social measures designed to guarantee workers a weekly day of rest and to protect the community against the evils of seven-day-a-week business. But opponents contended the laws’ real purpose is religious and that they violate the U.S. Constitution by protecting the Christian day of worship in preference to that of other religions.

• From a photo caption: “These four young people represent the thousands of archdiocesan Catholic youth who are actively campaigning to ‘Put Christ Back Into Christmas.’ Last year more than 20,000 stickers, posters and stamp books were distributed.”

• Cuba church bombings branded ‘unjust’

Cuba church bombings branded “unjust” by Logans, who praised the pope for the way he has spoken out against such acts. But he said the bombings were not a problem that was unique to Cuba.

• Holy See lists days when Mass must be offered for the people

The Holy See has issued a list of days when Mass must be offered for the people, saying the pope is(moveable feast days of Tithes, Masses for the poor, etc.)

• In the southwest, the Holy See has issued a list of days when Mass must be offered for the people, saying the pope is(moveable feast days of Tithes, Masses for the poor, etc.)

• Protestant church appeals for racial justice

With this being the last issue of the Criterion this year, below are some other headlines that were found in the final two issues of 1960:

From the Dec. 23, 1960, issue:

• Seek Christian unity with charity, Vatican official urges Catholics

• Archbishop Ritter is first Hoosier Cardinal

• Evidence, monsignors to adopt new headress Dec. 27

From the Dec. 30, 1960, issue:

• Based on Poverty: Farm labor system called social blast

• The medical insurance controversy

• Catholic highlights of the past year

• Present missals usable, faithful are reminded

(Read all of these stories from our Dec. 16, Dec. 23 and Dec. 30 issues of 1960 by logging on to our archives at www.CriterionOnline.com.) †

READINGS

continued from page 9

Monday, Dec. 27 (continued)

Psalm 97:1-2, 5-6, 11-12
John 20:1a, 2-8

Tuesday, Dec. 28

The Holy Innocents, martyrs
1 John 1:5-22
Psalm 124:2-5, 7b-8
Matthew 2:13-18

Wednesday, Dec. 29

Thomas Becket, bishop and martyr
1 John 2:3-11
Psalm 96:1-3, 5-6
Luke 2:22-35

Thursday, Dec. 30

1 John 2:12-17
Psalm 96:7-10
Luke 2:36-40

Friday, Dec. 31

1 John 2:18-21
Psalm 96:1-2, 11-13
John 1:1-18

Saturday, Jan. 1

The Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God
62:22-27
Psalm 67:2-3, 5-6, 8
Galatians 4:4-7
Luke 2:16-21

Sunday, Jan. 2

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

Matthew 2:1-12

Monday, Jan. 3

The Most Holy Name of Jesus
1 John 3:22-4:6
Psalm 2:7-8, 10-12a
Matthew 4:12-17, 23-25

Tuesday, Jan. 4

Elizabeth Ann Seton, religious
1 John 4:7-10
Psalm 72:1-4, 7-8
Mark 6:34-44

Wednesday, Jan. 5

John Neumann, bishop
1 John 4:11-18
Psalm 72:1-2, 10, 12-13
Mark 6:45-52

Thursday, Jan. 6

André Bessette, religious
1 John 4:9-5:4
Psalm 72:1-2, 14, 15b, 17
Luke 4:14-22a

Friday, Jan. 7

Raymond of Peñafort, priest
1 John 5:5-8
Psalm 147:12-15, 19-20
Luke 5:12-16

Saturday, Jan. 8

The Holy Innocents, martyrs
1 John 5:14-21
Psalm 149:1-6a, 9b
John 3:22-30

Sunday, Jan. 9

The Baptism of the Lord
Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7
Psalm 29:1-2, 3-4, 9-10
Acts 10:34-36, 42
Matthew 3:13-17 †

Christmas TV Mass for Shut-Ins

This beautiful 30-minute Mass will be produced from the Crypt Church at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. †

The Mass can be seen at 6:30 a.m. every Sunday on CW4/WTTV.

* * *

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Archdiocese of Indianapolis
earthquake in Haiti, parishes across the archdiocese that have done mission work there made initial plans to assist in the relief work in the impoverished island nation.

“The Archdiocese of Indianapolis as a whole is providing aid through second collections taken up in every parish on the weekends of Jan. 16-17 and Jan. 23-24. The money donated in these collections, taken up at the request of Archbishop Daniel M. Bechlel, will be given to Catholic Relief Services, which is coordinating support from Church agencies around the world.

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Jeffersonville, Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish in Greenwood, St. Ambrose Parish in Seymour, St. Bartholomew Parish in Columbus and St. Malachi Parish in Brownsburg all have sister parishes in the northern part of Haiti that seem to have come out of the earthquake relatively unscathed.”

St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Indianapolis, which has longstanding ties with a parish in Haiti, organized a 10-member medical trip outside the capital city of Port-au-Prince.

8. Archdiocese begins to prepare for changes in the Mass

Beginning mid-year, the archdiocese began preparing priests, deacons and laity for coming changes to the English translation of the Mass, which will take effect on the weekend of Nov. 26-27, 2011—the First Sunday of Advent.

Father Patrick Beidelman, the archdiocesan director of liturgy, will help ministry leaders prepare for the change. Sean Gallagher reported:

Included among the ministry leaders that Father Beidelman and other archdiocesan Office of Worship staff members will meet with over the next 15 months are priests, deacons, deacon candidates, parish life coordinators, other lay parish staff members, and those involved in liturgical and music ministry.

Video presentations on the new translation of the Mass, to be posted on the archdiocese’s website, will be geared for teachers, catechists, and those who minister to youths and young adults.

“My hope, as we work with those in leadership in our parish and school communities in the archdiocese, Father Beidelman said, is that they themselves will learn this new translation and come to a deeper understanding of the meaning of our worship of God in the Mass.”

9. The Criterion celebrates its 50th anniversary

From our staff report composed mostly by editor emeritus John F. Fink.

“In its Sept. 23, 1960, issue, this announcement appeared in The Indiana Catholic: ‘Archbishop [Paul C.] Schulte has announced that with this issue The Indiana Catholic ceases to be the official publication of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. Two weeks later, on Oct. 7, 1960, The Criterion was published for the first time. Msgr. Raymond T. Bosler, the founding editor of The Criterion, had been the editor of The Indiana Catholic for 13 years. Where did the name The Criterion come from? Msgr. Bosler said that Father Paul Courtney was then a full-time professor at Marian College, who also wrote editorials for the newspaper. His editorial in the first issue explained the name. Here is an excerpt:

‘Webster’s Dictionary says ‘criterion’ means ’a standard of judging, a rule or test by which anything is tried in forming a correct judgment respecting it.’ In short—a standard. It may seem a trifle immodest to label as ‘The Criterion’ a paper in which we editors express our views about numerous subjects, but if our readers will only accept the unofficial character we claim for our editorial opinions, the title ‘Criterion’ won’t seem too arrogant.’

Our special coverage has included a decade-by-decade timeline of major news events, a four-page, pull-out section in October and an ongoing column looking at the news 50 years ago.

The Criterion has also started to post full issues from the 1960s in its online archive.


From a news story written by Sean Gallagher:

“Retired Msgr. Richard T. Kavanagh died on Jan. 20 at St. Paul Hermitage in Beech Grove. He was 98.”

Msgr. Kavanagh, who died of natural causes, had lived at the Hermitage since 1998.

At 73 years, he was the longest serving priest in the history of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

Msgr. Mark Svarczkopf, the pastor of Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish in Greenwood, was the homilist during Msgr. Kavanagh’s Funeral Mass.

“He was a really good pastor, a real gentleman, very inspiring,” Msgr. Svarczkopf said. “I try to be like him, but I don’t think I’m making it.”

Msgr. Kavanagh served as the administrator and pastor of St. Michael the Archangel Parish in Indianapolis for more than 30 years.

He was active in the founding of the archdiocesan Catholic Youth Organization and the construction of the four interparochial high schools in Indianapolis. He also started the archdiocesan Office of Purchasing and guided the renovation of the former home of Cathedral High School into the Archbishop O’Meara Catholic Center in Indianapolis.

(To read our original coverage for all of these stories, including additional links of interest, read this story on our website at www.CriterionOnline.com.)

———
Indian Nativity

An Indian artist’s rendition of the Nativity is painted on a leaf from the palm tree, which is known as the “tree of enlightenment” in India. The painting is on display at the archdiocesan Mission Office at the Archbishop O’Meara Catholic Center in Indianapolis. The hand-painted Nativity scenes are created by jobless and handicapped youths at the PIME Missions in India.

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.


CARTER, Dolores P., 93, St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower), Indianapolis, Nov. 11. Aunt of several.


WHITAKER, Violet J., 86, St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower), Indianapolis, Nov. 25. Aunt of several.


Zena, her daughter, Georgia and their sponsored child, Angelica.

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**Green Bay bishop becomes first in U.S. to approve Marian apparitions**

CHAMPAIGN, Ill. (CNS)—Bishop David L. Ricken of Green Bay said he has experience in examining apparitions seen by Adele Brise in 1859, making the apparitions of Mary that occurred some 18 miles northeast of Green Bay the first in the United States to receive a formal declaration.

Bishop Ricken made the announcement in Champion during Mass at the Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help on Dec. 31, the feast of the Immaculate Conception.

More than 250 invited guests filled the shrine chapel to hear Bishop Ricken read the official decree on the authenticity of the apparitions, although he also noted that the faithful are not obligated to believe that they are true. He also issued a second decree, formally approving the shrine as a devotional shrine.

As he declared, “I do hereby approve these apparitions as of worthy belief,” the congregation burst into applause, with many in attendance moved to tears.

“This is now an official declaration and an explicit recognition of what has been going on in the development and expression of people’s faith in our Lord Jesus,” Bishop Ricken said in his homily. “Mary always leads us to Jesus. We hold Mary in such high regard because she is the mother of our Savior Jesus Christ. So she is probably the greatest evangelist and catechist who ever lived. She has been sent out all these years since Christ’s death and resurrection to proclaim this good news.”

Bishop Ricken said the proclamation was a desire of many people. “So many of you have asked for this in one way or another,” he said. “I regard this also as a simple declaration in that it already states what has been going on here so quietly for so many years.”

“I think this gift we give back to the Blessed Mother for all the prayers she has answered in this place. All the solace and comfort she has given to thousands of souls over the years.”

“In many ways, it is also a thank-you gift to Adele Brise, that Belgian immigrant who came here to this country. We owe a great deal to her witness because she was simple, she was uneducated in our terms today. She was a humble soul, but she was obedient.”

Brise died on Oct. 25, 1862, but the message Brise answered in the 1850s, the bishop said, “was part of a divine plan. There’s no hope. There’s no faith. There’s nothing to live for.”

As he declared, “I do hereby approve these apparitions as of worthy belief,” the congregation burst into applause, with many in attendance moved to tears.

“While the declaration will not change the way longtime visitors see this place, it will mean a lot spiritually,” he added. †

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Candidates must be a practicing Catholic, have a Bachelor degree or equivalent work experience in marketing and communications or related field and have a minimum of five years of professional experience with a proven track record as a dynamic communicator. The ideal candidate will be energetic, self-starter, creative, with excellent organizational and interpersonal skills.

Qualified candidates should send a cover letter, resume with references and a writing sample by December 31, 2010 to:

**officemanager@stalphonsusca.org** or
St. Alphonsus Ligouri Catholic Church, 437 West Oak St., Zionville, IN 46077, Attention: Sonya Derocher.
GREENWOOD—Manuel de la Rosa remembers the first solemn Mass held on the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe at Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish in Greenwood in 1996.

Since he portrayed St. Juan Diego, a humble Aztec Indian in whom the Virgin Mary appeared at Tepeyac, Mexico, in 1531, it would be hard to forget.

“It was something that I really wanted to do,” recalled de la Rosa, who was a third-grade student at Our Lady of the Greenwood School at the time. “I was in a Spanish class of only about five children, and our teacher kind of introduced the idea of participating in the Our Lady of Guadalupe Mass. I was pretty excited to be a part of that.”

“Then Martha McQueen [the chairperson of the Committee of Guadalupe] approached me personally, and asked me if I would like to represent Juan Diego at the Mass.”

Now a 23-year-old graduate student studying biology at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, de la Rosa was among the more than 500 people who attended the 15th annual solemn Mass at Our Lady of the Greenwood Church honoring Our Lady of Guadalupe, the “Patroness of the Americas,” on Dec. 10.

De la Rosa, who is of Filipino descent, said that the Virgin Mary continues to play a big role in his life of faith.

“One of my favorite prayers is the Hail Mary. Basically, I kind of look to Our Lady as a role model of faith, ... a role model in which she is able to reach the human race and bring people to her Son,” said the 2005 graduate of Roncalli High School in Indianapolis. “That is what she has always meant to me.”

The Dec. 10 bilingual Mass included readings in both English and Spanish. As in years past, the opening procession included individuals carrying flags from countries in North, South and Central America, an offering of roses from members of various parish ministries, members of the Bishop Chatard Assembly Honor Guard of the Knights of Columbus, and Committee of Guadalupe members carrying a framed image of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

During the Mass, children processed to the front of the church to place red roses on the steps leading to the altar, and McQueen also offered a reflection on the history of the Virgin Mary’s appearances to Juan Diego.

In his homily, Msgr. Mark Svarczkopf, the pastor of Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish, said that the Blessed Virgin appeared to a native American, Juan Diego, and her message was “one of hope, one of human dignity, one of equality that all people should live together and show each other extreme dignity because they were all equally loved by God. And all of them could look to Mary as a spiritual mother.”

“Mary promotes peace. She promotes justice. She promotes the human dignity of all of her children, no matter what their nationality, no matter what their customs or backgrounds,” he added. “It is one to unite us all.”

The annual solemn Mass was organized by the Committee of Guadalupe, whose members are from St. Rose of Lima, SS. Francis and Clare, St. Barnabas and Our Lady of the Greenwood parishes as well as students at Marian University and Roncalli High School. Msgr. Svarczkopf also shared how the Committee of Guadalupe recently received a letter from officials at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City recognizing the annual celebration at Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish “in union with all the Americas,” he said.

Tom Urrutia, a member of the Committee of Guadalupe, served as the bilingual liturgical master of ceremonies. A member of Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish since 1976, Urrutia’s grandfather moved from Puerto Rico to Pennsylvania and later to Indiana, where he worked as an interpreter for Eli Lilly and Company.

“I am so honored to do this,” he said of his part in the annual celebration, which has helped him appreciate and learn more about his heritage. “It has introduced me to the Virgin of Guadalupe. I [wear] a medal. Every morning, on the way to work, I pray to the Virgin of Guadalupe.”