Pope confirms he will visit Philadelphia in September

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Francis said he would attend the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia in September, making it the first confirmed stop on what is expected to be a more extensive papal visit to North America.

The pope made the announcement on Nov. 17 in a speech opening an interreligious conference on traditional marriage.

“I would like to confirm that, God willing, in September 2015 I will go to Philadelphia for the eighth World Meeting of Families,” the pope said.

The announcement had been widely expected because Pope Benedict XVI had said before his retirement that he hoped to attend the Philadelphia event. Popes typically fulfill their predecessors’ publicly known travel plans, as Pope Francis did in July 2013 when he attended World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro.

Philadelphia Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, who was in Rome for the families’ meeting, told Catholic News Service the announcement was “a surprise in the sense that it was announced so early; you know, usually they don’t make these announcements—four months out is the typical, and here we are 10 months away, and the Holy Father said he is coming to Philadelphia.

“The Holy Father has said that he’s going to be coming to Philadelphia for quite a few months,” he told Catholic News Service.

“He’s been telling me that personally, but for him to announce it officially that he is coming so early is really quite an unusual thing, so it’s going to re-energize our efforts. There’s a lot of enthusiasm already, but I think 90 percent of the enthusiasm’s based on the fact that the Holy Father will be with us, and now that he’s said that, I expect that there will be even a double amount of enthusiasm … and I’m very happy about that.”

Family will celebrate the strength, love and faith that binds them through blessings, challenges

By John Shaughnessy

As parents, John and Mary Ruckelshaus believe that one of the greatest blessings of their life is when their grown children all return home at the same time.

As a college student who lives away from home, 22-year-old Jay Ruckelshaus knows there’s something special about returning to the place where you grew up and being embraced again by family and friends.

And the homecoming will be even more meaningful this time for the Ruckelshaus family, including Jay’s older siblings, 27-year-old Drew and 26-year-old Maggie.

For the first Thanksgiving in four years, they will all be together in the family’s Indianapolis home, celebrating the strength, the love and the faith that has always bound them—especially through some of the most challenging and devastating times a family can face.

“We got a phone call at 1:30 in the morning,” John recalls. “It was every news came.

Then, in the early morning hours of a summer day in 2011, more heartbreaking news came.

“We went a phone call at 1:30 in the morning.” John recalls. “It was every parent’s worst nightmare.”

In those words, there’s a hint of the challenges and heartaches that have confronted this family from St. Pius X Parish in Indianapolis.

When Drew and Maggie were little, they were both diagnosed with congenital glaucoma, a condition that led to about 20 surgeries each to prevent blindness.

When Drew was 9, he was struck with leukemia. Six months of chemotherapy followed. So did five years of waiting to see whether the cancer would return.

Then, in the early morning hours of a summer day in 2011, more heartbreaking news came.

“We went a phone call at 1:30 in the morning.” John recalls. “It was every parent’s worst nightmare.”

In the wake of synagogue shooting, Jerusalem patriarch calls for end to violence in the Holy Land

JERUSALEM (CNS)—After an early morning synagogue attack left four people dead and eight injured on Nov. 18, Latin Patriarch Fouad Twal called for an end to all violence in the Holy Land.

“We are praying and waiting. We are sad,” said Patriarch Twal. “We must, all people of responsibility, politicians and religious leaders, do our best in our positions to condemn this violence and avoid as much as possible the causes which lead other people to violence.”

The attack occurred in the Har Nof neighborhood of West Jerusalem, which is popular with the Anglo-Orthodox Jewish community. Three of the dead had dual Israeli-American citizenship, one had Israeli-British citizenship.

The two perpetrators of the attacks, Palestinian consuls from East Jerusalem, were killed at the scene by Israeli police.

“Violence leads to more violence,” Patriarch Twal told Catholic News Service.

He said he sent condolences to the families of all the victims of the recent wave of violence that has rocked Jerusalem as Israel moves toward expanding Jewish settlements in the area, and Palestinians fear a Jewish presence on the shared holy site of the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif, in Jerusalem’s Old City.

According to a temuous and contested status quo agreement, Jews are allowed to visit the site where, according to Jewish tradition, the Biblical Jewish temple stood, but they are not allowed to pray there.

According to Muslim tradition, it is the site where Muhammad ascended into heaven.

A day prior to the synagogue attack, a Palestinian bus driver who worked for an Israeli cooperative was found hanged in his bus at the terminal. Israeli police called the death a suicide after a medical investigation, but the man’s family and the Palestinian media maintain that it was a lynching. Some have said the synagogue killings were in retaliation for his death.

“You can’t occupy and then think people will be quiet,” Patriarch Twal said, referring to Israel occupation of Palestinian lands. “We are against any kind of violence either from a state group or private groups.

“We are in a very bad situation and...
The archdiocese is seeking families and individuals to become part of an archdiocesan representative group at the 2015 World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia. The archdiocesan group will consist of about 50 people who will be part of a Sept. 20-28 pilgrimage to the World Meeting of Families and Festival of Families. Pope Francis has confirmed that he will attend the gathering, and celebrate Mass for an estimated 1 million people on Sept. 26.

Families and individuals from across central and southern Indiana will be selected to represent the archdiocese by application or nomination process, which includes family demographics and an essay portion with three questions:

1) What gifts and strengths do you bring that would be beneficial to the pilgrimage to World Meeting of Families?
2) What do you hope to learn during the pilgrimage?
3) How do you plan on bringing back what you learn to your family, parish and community to enhance and build up the Christian family and Church and society within the Archdiocese of Indianapolis?

The application and nomination deadline is Jan. 13, 2015. The group from the archdiocese will be diverse in family type (nuclear, single-parent, blended, grandparents parents), state of life (married, divorced, never married, religious, priest, deacon) as well as age, in location in the archdiocese, and ethnicity.

The eighth World Meeting of Families will take place for the first time in the United States in Philadelphia on Sept. 21-25, 2015. The conference is expected to draw thousands of attendees from more than 150 countries—and more than 1 million pilgrims for the papal visit and Mass on Sept. 26.

The archdiocese is seeking families to come to parishes or communities to talk about the World Meeting of Families next September in Philadelphia. The one-hour talk includes an introduction to the 10 themes of preparatory catechesis, a collection of what the Church teaches concerning marriage, family and the purpose of humanity: • Created for Joy
• The Mission of Love
• The Meaning of Human Sexuality
• Two Become One
• Creating the Future
• All Love Bears Fruit
• Light in a Dark World
• A Home for the Wounded Heart
• Mother, Teacher, Family: The Nature and Role of the Church
• Choosing Life

For more information, to nominate a family, or to apply as a family to represent the archdiocese at this historical event, please visit www.archindy.org/wmf2015 or contact Scott Seibert at 317-326-1527 or scott.seibert@archindy.org.

For general information regarding the World Meeting of Families as well as parish and school catechetical resources, visit www.worldmeeting2015.org.

Office of Pro-Life and Family Life offers speakers on World Meeting of Families

CatholicPhilly.com reported the archbishop noted that Pope Francis has “focused on ‘the many challenges that families face today globally. His charisma, presence and voice will electrify the gathering.’

‘As I’ve said many times before, I believe that the presence of the Holy Father will bring all of us—Catholic and non-Catholic alike—together in tremendous power, unifying and healing ways. We look forward to Pope Francis’ arrival in Philadelphia next September, and we will welcome him joyfully with open arms and prayerful hearts.’

In August, Pope Francis told reporters accompanying him on the plane back from South Korea that he “would like” to go to Philadelphia. The pope also noted that President Barack Obama and the U.S. Congress had invited him to Washington, D.C., and that the secretary-general of the United Nations had invited him to New York.

‘Maybe the three cities together, no?’ Pope Francis said, adding that he could also visit the shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico on the same trip—but ‘it is not certain.’

Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, Vatican spokesman, told reporters on Nov. 17 that Pope Francis wanted to be a ‘guarantee organizers’ that he would be present at the meeting in Philadelphia, ‘but he did not say anything about other possible stops or events during that trip. And for now I do not have anything to add in that regard.’

Although few details of the papal visit have been made public, organizers for the families’ congress expect Pope Francis to arrive on Sept. 25 for an afternoon public visit with civic officials. That would begin his first trip as pope to the United States and the second papal visit to Philadelphia in a generation; St. John Paul II visited the city in 1979. He will be the fourth sitting pope to visit the U.S.

During his visit, Pope Francis is expected to attend on Sept. 26 the Festival of Families, a cultural celebration for hundreds of thousands of people along Philadelphia’s main cultural boulevard, the Benjamin Franklin Parkway.

Donna Farrell, executive director for the 2015 World Meeting of Families and chief planner, said although Philadelphia has hosted St. John Paul II’s visit, the city ‘has not had something like this unique Festival of Families. It’s really going to be something special.’

Registration for the congress opened in mid-November. The meeting will be a weeklong series of talks, discussions and activities. Pope Francis is also expected to celebrate a public Mass for an estimated 1 million people on Sept. 26 on the steps of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, in full view of the crowds arrayed for the ‘Ben Franklin Parkway.

Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Louisville, Ky., president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, welcomed the pope’s announcement.

‘The presence of Pope Francis at the World Meeting of Families in our country will be a joyful moment for millions of Catholics and people of good will,’ Archbishop Kurtz said. ‘Our great hope has been that the Holy Father would visit us next year to inspire our families in their mission of love. It is a blessing to hear the pope himself announce the much anticipated visit.”

For more information, contact Scott Seibert at 317-326-1527, 800-382-9836 ext. 1527, or e-mail scott.seibert@archindy.org.
Veterans: Faith was bedrock of our lives during conflicts

By Natalie Hoefer

During World War I, before the United States Air Force existed, Sgt. Thomas Marcotte served as an aircraft mechanic for the Air Service of the Signal Corps of the United States Army. He is not alive to tell his story, but his son Don likes to share the wartime stories of his father, “an interesting man, a very religious man.” While Don Marcotte, a member of St. Christopher Parish in Indianapolis, says there are many tales to share about the “storybook exploits” of his father, one experience of faith particularly stands out.

The story takes place in France where Don, “passing through a French town, [my father] learned about a local ‘holy French nun’ with saving his life several times. (Submitted photo)"

Don shares that his father “prayed to the nun he would be kept safe in the war. He carried the prayer book in the breast pocket of his bullet proof shirt.”

One day, Sgt. Marcotte was sent out to repair a downed plane in an area between two trenches of opposing troops. Although there had been no activity between the trenches for few days, Don relates how his father “heard a shot ring out as he bent over the engine of the plane, and he felt a burning pain in his chest.”

Upon reaching the safety of a bomb shell crater, he noticed a bullet hole in his shirt.

“On that icon of his shirt, there was a bullet hole in his undershirt,” Don explains. “The ‘holy French nun’ had put a bullet a hole in his shirt.”

As the bullet left, it took the covering of a bloody furrow across the skin of one breast and buried a strip from the entrance of the bullet to the other breast.

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Don says his father believed the nun saved his life several other times, “including a plane crash he was in.”

In 1925, less than a decade after the U.S. entered World War I, the nun whose prayer book was then located on the south side of Chicago. Sadly, a fire destroyed both the shrine and the prayer book in 1975.

Throughout his life, his father developed a strong devotion to St. Thérèse. Don says, “She was his favorite saint. He prays to her all the time.”

That devotion spread to the rest of the Marcotte family, including Don.

“I have a [St. Thérèse] medal around my neck that I’ve been wearing for 40 years,” he shares.

A level of inner peace

When Marine Staff Sgt. William Medford was deployed to Okinawa, Japan, in the summer of 1990, he went with a non-military mission in mind. “One of my personal goals during this deployment was to prepare for confirmation, to be formally received into the [Catholic] Church,” says Medford, a baptized Catholic who had married a Catholic.

“I felt it was important for me to profess the Catholic faith through confirmation in order to strengthen our family and my Christian faith,” he says.

Medford had started meeting with the Catholic chaplain on the base during his deployment. Medford continued speaking with the priest assigned to his unit about his decision to enter into the full communion of the Church. His steps to be received into the Church were soon put on the fast track.

“As it became more apparent that we were going to have to drive Iraqi forces out of Kuwait, the serving priest and I agreed that [shortly after] confirmation and his receipt the Eucharist, with the understanding that I attend RCIA [Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults] classes post-deployment,” Medford explains.

Although Medford had memories of receiving the sacraments of confirmation and holy communion, he couldn’t remember them. Medford states that his "faith during Desert Storm enabled me to not only deal personally with the aggression, emotion and violence of war, but also to support others as they tried to deal with what we were facing."

“I recall through prayer having that moment where I was able to release my worries to God. I was still scared, but I was provided with a calm of mind and spirit and Peace, enough where I could carry on with the mission and provide moral leadership."

After his deployment, Medford fulfilled his promise to attend RCIA classes, while stationed at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina. His first sacraments may have been hastened by war, but the effects have been lasting.

Now, more than 20 years later, the Gulf War veteran and his wife are members of St. Paul Catholic Center in Bloomington.

And after two decades, says Medford, he still continues to grow in his “Catholic Christian faith through prayer, Mass, ministry and family.”

Catholic roots guided me through the war

Retired Army Specialist Norbert Schott feels his mother’s prayers toward Our Lady of Perpetual Help were answered in the assignment he received during the Vietnam War.

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I had a beautiful Catholic-Franciscan family life as part of Sacred Heart Church in Indianapolis. Going to Mass and confession were regular tools of growth. I did not abandon them in Vietnam."

—Retired Army Specialist Norbert Schott

Above, Gulf War veteran Marine Staff Sgt. William Medford sits in a tent during the conflict. It was just before the war began that Medford became Catholic. (Submitted photo)

Right, Army Sgt. Thomas Marcotte sits in the cockpit of a plane during World War I. His son Don likes to share stories about the exploits of his father from the time of the war, including how his father credits a certain “fond French nun” with saving his life several times. (Submitted photo)

Holy Trinity to celebrate final Mass on Nov. 23

Holy Trinity Parish, 2618 West St. Claire St. in Indianapolis, will celebrate the final Mass in its parish church at 10 a.m. on Sunday, Nov. 23.

On Nov. 30, Holy Trinity Parish will celebrate its last Mass in its church, located near nearby St. Anthony Parish in Indianapolis. The merger came about through the Connected in the Spirit pastoral planning process.

The parish was founded in 1906 and served the Slovenian Catholic community for many years.

Following Mass, an open house will be held at The Slovenian National Home, 2517 W. 10th St. in Indianapolis, at 11 a.m. Please bring a covered dish to share.

For more information, call 317-632-0619 or e-mail slovenianindy@gmail.com.
The month of November begins with a celebration of saints and sinners (All Saints and All Souls), and concludes with the uniquely American feast of Thanksgiving, a “harvest festival” that recalls God’s abundant goodness to us.

November is a time to be especially grateful for the people (living and dead) who have gone before us, and for the goodness and beauty of the Earth that feeds, clothes and shelters us as we journey to our heavenly home.

Gratitude is an emotion that is truly liberating. Have you ever met a genuinely grateful person who was bitter, mean or resentful? It’s impossible to trulythank for what we have while being consumed with anger for what we don’t have.

Jealousy of others’ gifts can’t be sustained when we’re focused gratefully on all the gifts God has given to us. Misery results from an obsession with an environment that is God’s gift to us. We gain peace in our dying days and strengthening faith.

We may become aware of a need to ask for and receive forgiveness for others and from God. We may become aware of God’s presence and receive a strengthened faith.

November is gratitude month

The prospect of a very attractive, recently married young woman with a terminal illness facing excruciating pain and suffering as she dies is enough to move anyone. The life and death of 29-year-old Brittany Maynard recently captured enormous media attention when she declared she was moving to Oregon to commit suicide after having been informed by her doctors that she had an aggressive form of brain cancer, and likely had only six months to live. She brought her life to a close on Nov. 1, a date she had selected ahead of time, by taking a lethal dose of barbiturates prescribed by her doctor.

In the public discussions that have ensued, some have ventured to argue that suicide under such desperate circumstances would, in fact, be justifiable. A recent opinion article from Time magazine observed that few faults those who were trapped on the top floors of the Twin Towers on 9/11 when the flames jumped to their deaths below as the flames surged around them.

Similarly, the article suggests that those who face the prospect of a difficult, pain-racked death from a terminal disease should be able to take their own life through physician-assisted suicide without fault or blame.

For those jumping of the Twin Towers, however, we recognize a horrific situation of desperation, and even the possibility of a kind of mental breakdown in those final panic-stricken moments. Their agonizing choice to hurl themselves out of the building to their deaths below would be, objectively speaking, a suicidal act, and would not represent a morally good choice, but their moral culpability would almost certainly be diminished, if not eliminated, by the harrowing circumstances in which they found themselves, driven by terror worse than anything else.

Clearly, grave psychological disturbances, anguish, or grave fear of suffering can diminish the responsibility of the one committing suicide.

Yet in the face of a terminal medical diagnosis, it is not reasonable to let our fears dictate our choices. Instead, it behooves us to confront and resolve those fears without yielding to panic, and without allowing unpleasant futures to loom in our imagination.

Brittany Maynard not only greatly feared the pain of death for herself, but also argued that protecting her family from pain and suffering was an important consideration in her decision to carry out physician-assisted suicide: “I probably would have suffered in hospice care for weeks or even months. And my family would have had to watch that. I did not want this nightmare scenario for my family.”

Yet even with very noble intentions and a loving concern for our family, we can unwittingly become overzealous in our desire to “protect” them from suffering.

Brittany’s desire to protect her family and friends from committing suicide also led her to cross over critical moral boundaries such that she deprived her family and friends of the chance to love her through her sickness.

She could not have known the form runs contrary to our duty to love—to love ourselves and to love our neighbor—because it unjustly breaks important ties of solidarity we have with family, friends and others to whom we continue to have obligations. It is always violent to eliminate suffering by eliminating the sufferer. We effectively give up on the Creator and all he has created. We refuse the help of our neighbor, the love of a family member, or even the beauty of another sun-drenched day to lighten our affliction.

Even as our lives wind down, we have a calling to be good stewards of the gift of life. Hospice and palliative care, along with careful pain management, can lighten our burdens during the dying process. The mutual support of family and friends enables us, and them, to grow in unexpected ways.

By respecting and working through the dying process, we can encounter deep and unanticipated graces. We may recognize the need to ask for and receive forgiveness for others and from God. We may become aware of God’s presence and receive a strengthened faith.

We gain peace in our dying days and hope for the fulfillment of our mortality and our situation, journeying down the road that still opens ahead of us, even as it becomes easier to find meaning in it with the same tenacity and generosity we did when the road was yet longer.

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

Dar y recibir las gracias con una actitud de agradecimiento

“Thanksgiving Day is a harvest festival celebrated primarily in the United States and Canada. Traditionally, it is a time to give thanks for the harvest and express gratitude in general. While it may have been religious in origin, Thanksgiving is now primarily identified as a secular holiday.” (Wikipedia, the free online encyclopedia)

November is sometimes called gratitude month. It’s the time of year when we Americans celebrate Thanksgiving, a time when we are invited to be grateful for all the gifts we have received from a good and gracious God.

I spent 20 years living in Rome and traveling all over the world on behalf of my religious community, the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer (Redemptorists). Nothing unites Americans abroad more than the annual Thanksgiving celebration. It’s part of our DNA, and no matter where we are in the world, when Thanksgiving Day comes around, we Americans find a way to celebrate.

This year, Thanksgiving Day is observed on Nov. 27. That’s just a few days before the second anniversary of my installation as archbishop of Indianapolis on Dec. 3, 2012. This year, I will be giving thanks for two blessed years here in central and southern Indiana! In a very special way, I will be giving thanks to Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI who sent me here to serve all God’s people in this historic local Church, and to our Holy Father, Pope Francis, who inspires us all to serve as missionary disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I am also grateful to the people of central and southern Indiana, to my dedicated co-workers at the Archdiocese of T. O. Meara Catholic Cathedral and in parishes, schools and archdiocesan agencies in every diocese; to my brother priests and deacons; to my assistant in episcopal ministry, Bishop Christopher J. Coyne, and my predecessor in this ministry, Archbishop Emeritus Daniel M. Buechlein, O.S.B. All have shown me what Hoosier hospitality truly means, and I am grateful.

I hope that you can enjoy this very special time of giving thanks, not only for the family and friends! Holidays can be hard times for people who are in poor health, who are homeless or who are experiencing emotional or financial difficulties. Let’s be sure to pray for those who are less fortunate than we are, and let’s help them in every way we can this Thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving is a secular holiday, not a religious holy day, the encyclopedia says. That’s technically true, but for those of us who are believers, it is impossible to express “gratitude in general.” Our thanks go to the God who created us and who sustains us by his grace. We Christians believe that this God is a person who knows us individually, and who cares about each one of us. When we give thanks to him, it is always an intimate and personal thing.

We Catholics celebrate the holy Eucharist (whose name comes from the Greek word for thanksgiving) every day, but on this day, Thanksgiving, we give special thanks to God for all his abundant blessings. That includes the gift of life itself, our parents and families, the love that we share with spouses and children, our friends, our freedom as Americans, our vocations as disciples of Jesus Christ, our material possessions, our spiritual gifts and talents, and much, much more. Gratitude is a powerful virtue. It opens our hearts to the healing power of God’s grace. It helps us look beyond our own selfish wants and fears to the gifts we receive from others, and to the opportunities we have to share with others and to return thanks to God for all that he has generously given to us.

If God can thank us, and forgive us, in spite of our selfishness and sin, shouldn’t we be able to do the same? Shouldn’t we have the faith and the courage to look beyond our own needs and wants and fears to the gifts we have received from God and from so many others?

When you go to Mass this weekend, say a special word of thanks to God for all his blessings. Say a prayer of thanksgiving for all the people in your life who have shared their gifts with you. Say a prayer of contrition for your sins, and ask for the grace to forgive those who have harmed you in any way.

For us, Thanksgiving is not just a secular holiday. It is a moment of grace for all of us who have been blessed by God to say thank you. May we thank God always for his goodness to us! May our hearts overflow with gratitude for all the gifts we have received from a loving and generous God. Happy Thanksgiving!

Dar y recibir las gracias con una actitud de agradecimiento

“El Día de Acción de Gracias es un festival agrícola que se celebra principalmente en Estados Unidos y Canadá. Tradicionalmente es una ocasión para que las familias celebren el agro y expresen gratitud en general. Aunque quizás sea de origen religioso, el Día de Acción de Gracias es conocido como ‘el mes del agradecimiento.’ Es la época del año en que, según la enciclopedia, se celebra la Eucaristía (nombre que se deriva de la palabra griega para thanksgiving).” (Wikipedia, la enciclopedia libre)

E n noviembre también se conoce como “el mes del agradecimiento.” “En la época del año en la que los estadounidenses celebran el Día de Acción de Gracias, ocasiona en la que se nos invita a dar gracias por los obsequios que hemos recibido de un Dios bueno y generoso.

Pasó 20 años viviendo en Roma y viajando por todo el mundo en nombre de mi comunidad religiosa, la Congregación del Santísimo Redentor (la Congregación Redentorista). El Día de Acción de Gracias es la celebración que retiene a los estadounidenses expatriados como ninguna otra. Forma parte de nuestro ADN y no importa en qué parte del mundo nos encontremos, cuando llega el Día de Acción de Gracias, los estadounidenses buscan la forma de celebrarlo.

En este Día de Acción de Gracias celebro el 27 de noviembre, tan solo unos días antes de celebrar mi segundo aniversario de instalación como arzobispo de Indiana.

2012. Este año estoy dando las gracias por donaciones innumerables de bendiciones que he vivido aquí en el centro y el sur de Indiana. De una forma muy especial estoy dando gracias a Santa Inés, un convento Benedicto XVI que me envió aquí a servir al pueblo de Dios en esta Iglesia histórica, así como también a nuestro Santo Padre, el papa Francisco, quien nos inspira a servir como discípulos misioneros de nuestro Señor Jesucristo.

También estoy inmensamente agradecido con todos el pueblo del centro y del sur de Indiana, con mis dedicados compañeros de trabajo del Centro Católico Arzobispal Edward T. Meara y de las parroquias, escuelas y agencias arquidiocesanas de cada uno de los deanatos; con mis hermanos sacerdotes y diáconos; con mi asistente en el ministerio episcopal, el obispo Christopher J. Coyne, y con mi predecesor en este ministerio, el arzobispo emérito Daniel M. Buechlein, O.S.B. Todos me han demostrado el verdadero significado de la hospitalidad de los ermitaños de Indiana y les estoy profundamente agradecido por esto.

Espero que puedan disfrutar de esta época tan especial del año, rodeados de familiares y amigos. Las fiestas pueden ser momentos difíciles para las personas que sufre de enfermedades de salud, para aquellos que no tienen hogar o para los que están atravesando dificultades emocionales o económicas. No olvidemos rezar por aquellos menos afortunados que nosotros y ayudemoslos en todo lo que podamos durante esta época de Acción de Gracias.

Según la enciclopedia, el Día de Acción de Gracias es una festividad laica, no religiosa. Aunque es un evento religioso, es especialmente cierto, a los creyentes nos resulta imposible expresar “gratitude in general.” Nuestro agradecimiento se eleva al Dios que nos creó y que nos sustenta con su gracia. Los cristianos creemos que ese Dios es un ser que nos conoce y que se preocupa por cada uno de nosotros. Cuando lo damos las gracias, siempre lo hacemos de forma íntima y personal.

Los católicos celebramos la Santa Encarnación (nombre que se deriva de la palabra griega de agradecimiento) todos los días, pero en este en particular, el Día de Acción de Gracias, le agradecemos especialmente a Dios por sus abundantes bendiciones. Esto incluye el don de la vida misma, nuestros padres y familias, el amor que compartimos con cónyuges e hijos, nuestros amigos, nuestra libertad como estadounidenses, nuestras vocaciones como discípulos de Jesucristo, nuestras posesiones materiales, nuestros dones y talentos intelectuales, y mucho, mucho más.

El agradecimiento es una virtud muy poderosa, abre nuestros corazones al poder salvador de la gracia de Dios. Nos ayuda a ver más allá de nuestros deseos egoístas y temerosos, y a concentrar nuestra atención en los obsequios que recibimos de los demás, en las oportunidades que se nos presentan para compartir con el próximo y en el grato acto de donación que nos ha dado tan generosamente.

Si Dios puede darnos las gracias y perdonar nuestras inmensas fallas y pecados, ¿acaso no deberíamos hacerlo nosotros? ¿Acaso no deberíamos tener la fe y el valor para ver más allá de nuestras propias necesidades, deseos y temores, y posar la mirada en los obsequios que hemos recibido de Dios y de los demás?

Cuando vayan a la misa este fin de semana, dediquen unas palabras de agradecimiento especiales para Dios por todas sus bendiciones. Eleven una oración de agradecimiento por todas las personas en su vida que han compartido sus dones con ustedes. Entonen una oración de contrición por sus pecados y pidan por la gracia para poder perdonar a aquellos que de algún modo los hayan perjudicado.

Para nosotros, el Día de Acción de Gracias no es un festival laico. Se trata de un momento de gracia para todos lo que hemos sido bendecidos por Dios y la oportunidad de expresar nuestra gratitud. ¡Que siempre le demos gracias a Dios por su bondad con nosotros! Que nuestros corazones estén rebosantes de agradecimiento por todos los obsequios que hemos recibido de un Dios amoroso y generoso.

¡Feliz Día de Acción de Gracias! †

Traducido por: Daniela Guanipa,
Language Training Center, Indianapolis.
Several retreat centers exist and around the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. Below are selected retreats and programs each is offering during the Advent season.

One-day programs

On Dec. 6, the Kordes Center will host a Monastery Immaculate Conception Advent retreat on “The Festival of Lessons and Carols,” followed by a reception. The cost of the retreat is $215 for a single room or $130 for commuters. An additional personal day of retreat at the Benedict Inn will follow the liturgy at the Saint Meinrad Community Center. †

On Dec. 8, the Retreat House, located in Henryville, will host an Advent retreat titled “‘Jesus: Savior and Son.” The cost is $35, which includes lodging, meals, and all activities. For more information, call 317-846-3404, ext. 480.

On Dec. 10, the St. Joseph Retreat Center will offer a Personal Day of Retreat titled “Advent: A Personal Day of Reflection and Renewal.” The cost is $35, which includes lodging, meals, and all activities. For more information, call 317-313-5534.

On Dec. 12-14, Oldenburg Franciscan Center in Oldenburg will offer an Advent retreat titled “Journey with St. Francis.” The retreat begins at 7:30 a.m. on Dec. 12, and concludes at noon on Dec. 14. During the gathering, participants will have time to reflect on the spiritual meaning of the Advent and Christmas seasons, focusing on how they share hope, joy and Jesus. The retreat will be led by Franciscan Sister Jane McConnell, author of Daily We Seek You. The cost of the retreat is $215 for a single room or $130 for commuters. To register or for more information, call 317-833-6437 or e-mail center@oldenburgfrs.com.

On Dec. 19-21, Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guest House and Retreat Center will offer a retreat titled “Savor and Son.” The cost is $35, which includes lodging, meals, and all activities. For more information, call 812-357-6585, or e-mail ormzoeller@saintmeinrad.edu.
Msgr. Stumpf to lead pilgrimage ‘in the Footsteps of St. Paul’

By Sean Gallagher

Msgr. William Stumpf, vicar general of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, will lead the pilgrimage to Greece and Turkey from April 13-24, 2015.

The 11-day pilgrimage, titled “The Footsteps of St. Paul,” will feature several places where the great Apostle first brought the Gospel to Europe. It is being organized by the Carmel, Ind.-based Tekton Ministries.

Msgr. Stumpf desired to lead a pilgrimage to places connected to St. Paul after traveling to the Holy Land in 2010.

“It made the Scriptures come alive in a way that they’d never come alive for me before,” he said, “so I thought that it would be perfect to experience the footsteps of St. Paul.”

In addition to touring historic sites in Greece and Turkey, the pilgrimage will feature daily Mass at places of key importance to the early history of the Church.

The pilgrimage will begin in Athens and Corinth and will feature a tour of ancient ruins there, including the famous Parthenon, as well as places where St. Paul preached the Gospel.

Pilgrims will later visit Berea and Thessaloniki, two cities where Paul spent time on his missionary journeys.

In Turkey, pilgrims will visit some of the sites of the seven Churches mentioned in Revelation and the island of Patmos, where St. John received the visions he described in the last book of the Bible.

Near the end of the pilgrimage, participants will visit the modern city of Izmir, which is the site of the ancient city of Ephesus, where St. Paul ministered there. It is also considered by tradition as a home of Mary after Jesus’ Ascension.

The pilgrimage will end with a trip to Istanbul featuring a tour of the Hagia Sophia Museum, housed in the large basilica of the same name built in the sixth century.

Msgr. Stumpf hopes a pilgrimage to many places tied closely to several books of the New Testament will help pilgrims experience the richness of the Bible in a new way.

“When you look at the Bible, you’re always relating it to as some place over there,” he said. “When you actually encounter the place, you encounter the story differently. It becomes more a part of you.”

“I think it will be a really wonderful pilgrimage. It should be fun, educational and spiritually enriching.”

“The In the Footsteps of St. Paul” pilgrimage is $3,280 per person for double occupancy and $3,792 for single occupancy. The pilgrimage includes round-trip, economy-class air transportation, deluxe motor coach, daily breakfast and dinner, entrance fees and comprehensive sightseeing guides. For more information, call Tekton Ministries at 866-905-3787, send an e-mail to pilgrimagetektonministries.org or log on to www.tektonministries.org.

Bishops OK several liturgy items, endorse sainthood cause, hold elections

BALTIMORE (CNS)—Though there were no actions on the U.S. bishops’ agenda in Baltimore dealing with immigration reform and other public policy issues, the president of their conference said on Nov. 11 that he hopes the politicians will supplement the work that committees and USCCB staff are doing.

In a brief comment during the annual fall general assembly of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Louisville, Ky., assembly of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said he hopes senators soon on several topics.

“I think that the conference planning process is working quite well.”

The current four goals, or priorities, are faith formation, justice, evangelization and religious liberty—which together are trying to pinpoint what Catholics in the pew are thinking and why they accept or disregard Church teachings.

The compilation of vast data is being assembled for bishops to read and also will be relayed in a series of workshops. One of the major findings from the study—that Catholics want to find out more about their faith—has prompted plans for a 2017 convocation in Orlando, Fla., the week of July 4.

In considering the bishops’ ethical directives for Catholic health care, the discussion focused on whether to revise Part 6, “Forming New Partnerships with Health Care Organizations.” It will take into account principles suggested by the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Once completed, the revision will be presented to the bishops for final approval.

Bishop Richard J. Malone of Buffalo, N.Y., chairman of the Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth, invited the bishops to a 2015 Lay Ecclesial Ministry Summit. The June 7, 2015, event will mark the 10th anniversary of the bishops’ statement “Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord.” It will be held just prior to the USCCB spring general assembly in St. Louis.

In elections, Archbishop Gregory M. Aymond of New Orleans won the secretary-elect spot. The committee chairman-elect are: Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan, chairman of the Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations, gave a presentation on the newly revised “Guidelines for Receiving Pastoral Ministers in the United States.”

“The In the Footsteps of St. Paul” pilgrimage is $3,280 per person for double occupancy and $3,792 for single occupancy. The pilgrimage includes round-trip, economy-class air transportation, deluxe motor coach, daily breakfast and dinner, entrance fees and comprehensive sightseeing guides. For more information, call Tekton Ministries at 866-905-3787, send an e-mail to pilgrimagetektonministries.org or log on to www.tektonministries.org.

COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS THIS THANKSGIVING

But remember those whose tally comes up short.

For the past 50 years, The Society of St. Vincent de Paul has assisted those suffering hardship in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. We provide free food from our Client Choice Food Pantry at 3001 E. 10th Street and household items, appliances, bedding, furniture and clothing from our Distribution Center at 1201 E. Maryland Street.

We are all volunteers, so your contributions won’t be spent on payroll expenses. Instead, they’ll go directly to helping others. Can you help us? Visit our website svdpindy.org to make a donation, become a volunteer, or schedule pick-up of appliances, furniture and household items. Or call 317.687.1006.

The ruins of a fourth-century basilica named for Mary are seen in the ancient town of Ephesus near Izmir, Turkey. Msgr. William Stumpf, vicar general, will lead a pilgrimage from April 13-24, 2015, to Greece and Turkey that will include Ephesus, traditionally considered a home of Mary after Jesus’ Ascension. (CNS photo/Jeff Naveh, Tekton Ministries)

When you look at the Bible, you’re always relating to it as some place over there. When you actually encounter the place, you encounter the story differently. It becomes more a part of you. —Msgr. William Stumpf

Bishop Michael F. Burbidge of Raleigh, N.C., chairman of the Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations, gave a presentation on the newly revised “Guidelines for Receiving Pastoral Ministers in the United States.”

By the time of the 1999 meeting in Dallas, he said, he thought the conference should endorse sainthood causes. Msgr. William Stumpf, vicar general, had recommended the cause of Father Paul Wattson, an Episcopal priest who co-founded the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVP) with Father William Enright in 1844.
RUCKELSHAUS

continued from page 1

Two months removed from graduating as a valedictorian at Cathedral High School in Indianapolis, Jay had a hard time getting into his wheelchair, that day he had come to visit Jay at the Shepherd Center, he was exposed to all these incredible patients," John recalls. "It was inspiring to watch Jay wheel into other rooms, giving them hope and inspiration. He just touched so many of those kids through his generosity, his compassion and his inclusiveness."

John stops and shakes his head before he continues: "In a strange way, in a fantastic way, the accident has taken Jay to another level."

Reaching beyond the immediate

It is the night of Oct. 28, 2014. Jay is in his room at Duke University, preparing for another round of exams, papers and commitments that are an ever-present part of college life. Now in his junior year, Jay has embraced Duke, and Duke has embraced him. He has joined a fraternity, started an undergraduate humanities academic journal, and cheered at home men's basketball games in the "Cameron crazies" student section.

"I've had a phenomenal experience at Duke so far," notes Jay, who is majoring in philosophy and political science. "Academically, I've been able to engage and conduct research with some of the foremost scholars across the country, which has been truly thrilling. Socially, I've made some fantastic friends. I couldn't be happier with my choice to come here."

To navigate his life at Duke, Jay still needs help around the clock. That's where his "wingman" Joe Witgsher comes into play.

A longtime friend from Indianapolis, Joe has been at Jay's side since Jay's freshman year at Duke. Joe, who is pursuing a nursing degree, helps Jay get into his wheelchair, cooks meals for him, and gets him into bed at night.

While challenges continue for Jay, so does his natural tendency to look past his own concerns to help others.

Remembering that his transition to life at Duke was initially overwhelming—even when surrounded by his family and friends—he realized that other students with similar disabilities and supports from school would likely struggle even more in making the transition.

So in 2013, he started a non-profit foundation designed to help other young people with spinal cord injuries achieve their goal of attending college. Called "Ramp Less Traveled," the foundation represents his belief that the college experience and society at large should be not just physically accessible, but broadly open and actively welcoming to students of all abilities.

The foundation has already provided scholarships to three college students with spinal cord injuries. More importantly, Jay and his mother have served as mentors to students and their parents in helping them make the transition to college.

Looking forward

"Making that step further, Jay organized and led a national conference on Oct. 22-23 at Duke called "Beyond Disability. Beyond Compliance."

"The goal of the conference was to move the national conversation about higher education and disability away from the negative language of obligation and legality, and toward more progressive solutions that put the person at the center of the conversation," he says. "And that's exactly what happened. I'm looking forward to see where these conversations lead in the future."

That focus also includes plans for his future.

"While I'm uncertain of the exact path I'll take, I know I'd like to work at the intersection of political theory and public policy," he says. "I'll be attending graduate school of some sort, potentially working toward a Ph.D. in political theory. I'd like to be a publicly-engaged academic—perhaps working at a think tank so I can keep one foot in the world of research and one foot in contemporary affairs."

Then Jay adds a future goal that will make everyone who knows him smile and laugh.

"I also plan on owning at least two dogs at a time throughout my life."

"Jay's mention of the dogs reflects an approach to life that he embraces more and more: "While disability advocacy does occupy a portion of my time, it does not define it. Many days, I like to enjoy some of the other hats I wear—those of being a student, a friend, a family member."

That leads the conversation back to the upcoming Thanksgiving dinner in Indianapolis, his first one there in four years.

The true measure of a person

"I'm really looking forward to spending this Thanksgiving at home," Jay says. "My favorite holiday—free food and no obligation to buy gifts. What's not to like? And I really enjoy spending time with my immediate and extended family, so staying home will be nice to do so in Indianapolis."

Fifteen people will gather for Thanksgiving dinner at the Ruckelshaus' home. Joining John, Mary, Drew, Maggie and Jay will be the children's four grandparents and several aunts and uncles. As Jay looks around the table that day, he will see the people who have been his greatest supporter through the joys and the struggles of his life. He will see the people who have given him one of the foundations he has relied upon these past three years: his faith.

"I think my faith has helped me remain grounded and connected with those around me as I transitioned from the hospital to Duke," Jay says. "It's enabled me to appreciate all that my family and friends have sacrificed for me to be where I am today."

"Our faith is strong," John says. "I feel as strong as ever in my relationship with God. He showed me the way through Jay. The sky is the limit for his potential."

Mary adds, "I think the true measure of a person is how you deal with adversity rather than how you deal with success. I keep going forward because I have my kids, they're still here, and they're still developing their gifts. Our children are very strong. And we get a lot of strength from each other."

"What's important is that Jay's story gives other people encouragement. Because somebody told me three years ago that Jay would have a good life, I wouldn't have thought that. But three years later, he has a great life. That's what perseverance does." She can't wait to have everyone together for Thanksgiving. "There will be lots of reminiscing and laughter. That's the best part of Thanksgiving for me. It's always great when we're together. It's priceless. When Jay's home, the circle is tight."

In August 2014, John Ruckelshaus, left, and his son, Jay Ruckelshaus, pose for a photo outside the chapel at Duke University, where Jay is in his junior year. [Submitted photo]

John Ruckelshaus receives first 'Joseph Tobin Award' for fatherhood

John Ruckelshaus was honored for his role as a father during the Oct. 10 Dad's Day event at Cathedral High School in Indianapolis. Ruckelshaus is the first-ever recipient of the "Joseph Tobin Award—Father of the Year," an annual award that the Cathedral Dad's Day program has named in honor of Joseph Tobin, Sr., the late father of Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin.

Similar to programs at other high schools, the Dad's Day program at Cathedral brings together fathers and their children once a month at the school to share breakfast, listen to a speaker and develop their relationship.

"I am very humbled by this award, knowing there are so many other fathers more deserving," Ruckelshaus said. "Fatherhood is a commitment, and the greatest investment one can make to the next generation."

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John Ruckelshaus, middle, is flanked by Duke University president Richard Brodhead, left, and Kye Cavanaugh, Duke's vice president of administration. This photo was taken during an Oct. 22-23 national conference at Duke on higher education and disability that Ruckelshaus organized. [Submitted photo]

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Saint’s feast day celebrates Church’s cultures, ethnicities

Caroline Reuter is no stranger to new languages.

As an undergraduate at the University of Notre Dame, she studied overseas in Spain for a time and learned to appreciate the gifts of a different culture.

So the unique combination of prayers in various languages she heard during the annual St. Martin de Porres Mass on Nov. 3 at St. Anthony Church in Indianapolis was music to her ears.

“It was beautiful. I loved the different languages … to hear Spanish again, to hear the combination, just to hear all the voices, all the people coming together and really the cultural aspect, it’s beautiful to see that brought here,” said the 2014 college graduate who is a first-year student in Echo, Notre Dame's two-year master’s degree program that trains prospective parish administrators of religious education, high school religion teachers and campus ministers.

“It was beautiful to see that community of the archdiocese, of the Church, really the universality of the Church in this Mass,” continued Reuter, who teaches sophomore religion at Roncalli High School and is a member of St. John the Evangelist Parish, both in Indianapolis.

During the Mass, readings and a homily were proclaimed in English and Spanish.

Prayers of the faithful were spoken in English, French, Spanish and Tagalog—a national language of the Philippines.

A later prayer during the Mass was said in Italian.

“Tonight, we celebrate the beauty, the joy and the challenge of being a truly Catholic Church,” said Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin, principal celebrant and homilist, at the beginning of the liturgy.

“We are called to grow here in central and southern Indiana, the double miracle of Pentecost. The first miracle is clear: Everyone hears the Good News, in their own language, in their own culture.

“The second miracle is the Holy Spirit doesn’t wipe it all out, so that everyone becomes like a gray porridge. We remain a rainbow that is illumined by the presence of Christ, and whose Holy Spirit brings us together and makes our diversity rich and good, and an image of God.”

The importance of St. Martin de Porres is that he embraced his identity as the son of an African and a Hispanic, noted Franciscan Brother Moses Gutierrez, director of the archdiocesan Office of Intercultural Ministry, during remarks before the Mass.

“I think this celebration brings people together. The wonderful life and story of St. Martin is an inspiration to all of us,” said Malone, a member of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Indianapolis and the coordinator of the gathering.

“The annual gathering began in 2004, said she was impressed by the turnout for the Mass.

“We are called to prolong here, in central and southern Indiana, the double miracle of Pentecost. The first miracle is clear: Everyone hears the Good News, in their own language, in their own culture.

“The second miracle is the Holy Spirit doesn’t wipe it all out, so that everyone becomes like a gray porridge. We remain a rainbow that is illumined by the presence of Christ, and whose Holy Spirit brings us together and makes our diversity rich and good, and an image of God.”

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“I think this celebration brings people together. The wonderful life and story of St. Martin is an inspiration to all of us,” said Malone, a member of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Indianapolis and the coordinator of the gathering.

“The annual celebration continues to grow, and each parish brings something different to that, so I think that’s been really good,” Malone also appreciated that St. Anthony Parish hosted this year’s liturgy.

“I think this is a parish that really celebrates this kind of feast… It’s just the continuing appreciation of the diversity of our Church, and I think the message that the archbishop had was very much in support of that diversity.”

Like Malone, Brother Moises appreciated “seeing the fruits” of the celebration, and over the years “people developing the passion, the skills and the attitudes needed to live out what St. Martin has been an example for us to do—to really embrace and relate with each other.”

He also said Archbishop Tobin spoke beautifully about the wonderful gift of diversity in our local Church.

“He [Archbishop Tobin] has a great sense of what our Catholic Church is all about, this global Church, bringing people together and embracing diversity,” Brother Moises said. “He and the pope [Francis] remind us all the time. It’s OK to be different. It’s not only OK, it’s beautiful to be different.”

“What I like is people really getting excited about the St. Martin de Porres celebration, about embracing the other.”

For more photos of the St. Martin de Porres celebration, see the online story at www.criteriononline.com. (Photos by Sean Gallagher)
CRS official sees wins in Ebola fight, but there’s ‘a lot more to do’

CCHD collection assists those ‘working on the margins’

When he looks at one of the new programs at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House in Indianapolis, Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin sees another example of the Catholic tradition of promoting human dignity.

The program is called the Ignatian Spirituality Project, “a program that offers retreats for the transitional homeless and those recovering from addiction,” the archbishop states.

In the same life-changing vein, Archbishop Tobin also cites the impact of the Indianapolis Congregational Action Network (INCAN), an interfaith organization whose efforts are supported by several Indianapolis parishes, including Our Lady of Lourdes, St. Anthony of Padua, St. Gabriel the Archangel and St. Monica.

“Over the last several years, INCAN has worked to implement plans to reduce gun violence, improve housing and employment opportunities, and work toward the reform of immigration laws,” he notes.

Archbishop Tobin focused on both those efforts in an Oct. 26 letter that he sent to Catholics in central and southern Indiana to promote the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD)—the annual campaign that Catholics are being asked to support during collections at their churches on Nov. 22-23.

“I encourage each of you to support the CCHD this year,” Tobin wrote in his letter. “In Indiana, there are 185 dioceses in the United States that receive assistance from CCHD funds—Craine House, which provides ‘transitional housing for women who are leaving the prison system and trying to get their life back in order.’

“Through their efforts, clients learn the necessary skills in raising healthy families, and develop the tools needed to thrive in their communities.”

It’s another example of how the CCHD helps people learn to provide for themselves and their families, she says.

“Through your support of the CCHD, you are helping to restore dignity to women, men and families who perhaps never had anyone tell them that they are valuable.”

(For more information about the CCHD and its efforts, visit the website. www.povertyusa.org)

By John Shaughnessy

RYE, N.Y. (CNS)—Catholic organizations and dioceses in the United States have responded to the outbreak of Ebola in West Africa with both generosity and extreme caution.

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) committed $1.5 million to pre-erected health centers in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea, the three West African countries affected by widespread transmission of the Ebola virus.

The money is being used to train health workers, ensure safe and dignified burials, develop and implement prevention awareness campaigns, maintain local Catholic health facilities and provide food to those in need. CRS is the U.S. bishops’ international relief and development agency.

In a letter to CRS staff on Nov. 7 from Senegal, Michael Stulman told Catholic News Service, “There has been progress in all three countries, but there is a lot more to do.”

Stulman is the CRS regional information officer for West and Central Africa. He traveled recently throughout the affected areas.

In Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia, the epidemic has killed almost 5,000, out of more than 13,000 reported cases, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). A total of 22 cases have been identified in Mali, Senegal and Nigeria. The outbreaks in Senegal and Nigeria were declared over in October, and the single case in Mali was announced in October.

There is also an outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in central Africa, with 67 cases. Other African countries are also affected. Ebola is one of the world’s most virulent viruses, with a fatality rate of up to 90 percent, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), which notes that there is no effective vaccine at this time. It is highly contagious and transmitted by direct contact with the body, blood fluids and tissues of infected people and animals.

Sierra Leone has 4,862 cases, including 1,130 deaths, according to the CDC. CRS has 120 staff and volunteers in Sierra Leone, Stulman said. They have focused on door-to-door education programs to help people understand that Ebola is real and to teach about prevention and control.

“Ebola is new to West Africa. No one has really seen anything on this scale,” Stulman said.

He said CRS is working closely with Catholic counterparts and other churches in Sierra Leone to provide safe and dignified burials for Ebola victims. The scale of deaths from Ebola and the likelihood of contagion from the bodies “requires a big shift in how people ordinarily honor the dead,” Stulman said.

In Liberia, CRS is working with a network of Catholic hospitals to provide routine healthcare, care, and develop systems and structures to protect patients and staff from Ebola, Stulman said. It is also trying to help reopen St. Joseph’s, the country’s second largest hospital, that closed when the lead doctor and other medical staff contracted Ebola.

The painstaking effort includes significant staff training and the implementation of a new triage system to separate Ebola cases from more common diseases that may have similar symptoms initially, Stulman said.

He said CRS’s long-term presence in Sierra Leone and collaboration with local religious leaders made it easier and quicker to spread educational messages.

In a Nov. 6 letter, CRS president and CEO Carolyn Woo and Bishop Richard E. Pates of Des Moines, Iowa, urged congressional leaders to speak out in support of the on-the-ground response to the Ebola virus and ramp down recent restrictions and unfounded fears.

Bishop Pates is the chairman of the USCCB Committee on International Justice and Peace.

“Morally and practically, we cannot completely wall ourselves off from this disease,” they wrote.

“The only way to care for and treating those infected by the disease where it is now running rampant, can we be safer here at home. With prudent measures to protect U.S. public health, it is important to make it possible for badly needed health and other workers to go to West Africa in order stop the crisis at its source and ultimately to protect our own people.”

On Nov. 5, President Barack Obama asked Congress to approve $6.2 billion in emergency funds to confront Ebola in West Africa and secure the United States against possible spread.

Acting out of “an abundance of caution,” the Diocese of Rochester, N.Y., has forbidden the dozen African priests who minister in the diocese to travel to West Africa for nonessential vacations or personal reasons. The restriction includes Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Senegal, Mali and Nigeria, as well as connecting flights through those countries.

Doug Mandelaro, diocesan director of communications, said the directive applies to “priests who work and minister here full time and who originate from their dioceses in Africa.”

He said it is “based on a concern that, should the situation change, these men might be subject to government travel and medical restrictions ... that might prevent their return for an extended period of time.”

In the Archdiocese of Louisville, Kentucky, and South Bend, Indiana, the Catholic Conference for Human Development in the Archdiocese of Louisville and the Catholic Conference for Human Development in the Archdiocese of South Bend also prohibited travel.

Susan Sherman, a Catholic school teacher, resigned in October after she was asked to take a precautionary 21-day paid leave after a mission trip to Kenya in East Africa.

A statement from Cecilia Hart Price, chief communications officer for the archdiocese, said the situation was attributable to an unacceptable communication failure, for which the leadership of the St. Margaret School and the archdiocese apologized to the teacher. The request to take the leave followed unsuccessful attempts to communicate facts and reduce fear among school parents concerned about Ebola during Sherman’s trip, the statement said. “In a perfectly rational, logical world, none of this should have transpired,” it said.

There have been no documented cases of Ebola in Kenya, which is more than 3,000 miles away from Liberia, the epicenter of the West African outbreak.
Families affected by violence, conflict need pastoral care

By David Gibson

A Chaldean Catholic couple and their children recently spent nights over the course of two months sleeping on their home’s roof in an Iraqi village. They kept watch for “the flashing lights” of approaching Islamic State artillery, Catholic News Service reported on Sept. 9.

They thought that “if there was an attack, we could see it coming and evacuate to save ourselves,” the father explained. Ultimately, the family resettled temporarily in Lebanon.

“The fear is continuing that your children might die in the next armed air or ground attack launched on your neighborhood. That is the frightening reality so many parents in the Middle East face,” he added.

Families in combat zones everywhere are fearful. Couples have much to lose, including each other. Parents know their children could be killed or maimed, or else exploited for gain by the forces of violence.

The risk remains, too, that in fleeing violence—losing home and homeland—families will end up separated for long periods.

Families contend with similar risks in zones of drug-cartel and gang violence in Central America and other regions. When warfare or social violence becomes local, parents agonize.

Syria’s Orthodox Patriarch Ignatius Aphrem II of Antioch told a September meeting in Washington about a Syrian Christian girl whose parents were murdered, and who two children were burned, their bodies thrown down a well.

Quoted by Catholic News Service, the patriarch described encountering a boy who, with others fleeing violence, took refuge in a small church hall in Iraq’s Kurdish region. Opening his arms, the boy exclaimed, “We have no place!”

The well-being of children such as the one described makes its way into today’s news reporting. But does it become a top concern for us?

Pope Francis definitely had children high in mind when he spoke in the Vatican Gardens during an “invocation for peace” in the Middle East ceremony on June 8. He was joined by Israel’s then-President Shimon Peres and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

Our world is “on loan to us from our children … who plead with us to tear down the walls of enmity and to set out on the path of dialogue and peace,” the pope said. Too many children have been innocent victims of war and violence, saplings cut down at the height of their promise,” he added.

Remembering these children instills “the courage of peace, the strength to persevere undaunted in dialogue,” he added.

The Church is greatly concerned about the effects on families of combat and forced migrations. Bishops and other Church leaders who gathered at the Vatican for the extraordinary assembly of the world Synod of Bishops from Oct. 5-19 discussed the challenges that face these families.

In the synod meeting’s closing document, the participants noted the importance in the Church’s pastoral care “of so many poor families, of those who cling to boats in order to reach a shore of survival, of refugees wandering without hope in the desert, of those persecuted because of their faith and the human and spiritual values which they hold.”

Families deserve the Church’s “attentive pastoral care” and the wider social community’s support, the Catholic bishops of the border regions between Mexico and the U.S. states of Texas and New Mexico said in November 2013. This is “particularly true” when the family “must bear the great strain of destabilizing social, political and economic forces.”

In February, “the 17-year-old nephew of a Catholic Relief Services’ staff member was gunned down” with a friend in Honduras after refusing to join a gang, said Richard Jones, a Catholic Relief Services (CRS) official. CRS is the international relief agency of the Catholic Church in the United States.

Jones testified on July 16 before the U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs on the reasons that Central American children were arriving in great numbers at the U.S. border.

“We have seen an increase of the gangs using children to distribute drugs in Honduras or to watch for police or others in the barrios of San Salvador and Guatemala City,” he told committee members.

Pope Francis encourages the Church to draw near suffering families.

“Suffering is powerful,” and when “we draw closer, we help one another greatly,” he commented during an in-flight press conference while returning from South Korea to Rome in August.

Asking why he took time in Korea to meet families who lost loved ones in the April 16 Sewol ferry disaster that took some 300 lives, principally teenagers, he responded: “I am a priest, and I feel the need to draw near. … I know that the comfort that any word of mine might give is no cure; it doesn’t bring the dead back to life, but human closeness at these times gives us strength. There is solidarity.”

(David Gibson served on Catholic News Service’s editorial staff for 37 years.)

Migrating families, peoples are a common theme in the Bible

By Fr. Lawrence E. Mick

In a message sent to a meeting in Mexico City in July, Pope Francis spoke about migration today: “Despite the large influx of migrants present in all continents and in almost all countries, migration is still seen as an emergency, or as a circumstantial and sporadic fact, while instead it has now become a hallmark of our society and a challenge.”

The pope spoke of the frequency of migration as part of globalization, and noted that the mass movement of people across borders is more common today than in the past.

At the same time, we know that such movement of people always has been part of the human experience. We find many examples of it in the Bible, which gives us a blueprint for migration of individuals, families and large groups of people.

Reports of several significant migrations appear in Genesis. After Cain killed his brother Abel, God banished him from his homeland, and he becomes a wanderer. Note that God puts a mark on Cain to protect him. The story of the Tower of Babel ends with God scattering the nations across the Earth.

When God calls Abram, he tells him to leave his homeland and travel to a land that God will show him: Canaan, which of course was already inhabited by the Canaanites.

There was a famine there, so Abram travelled to Egypt in search of food. Later he and his nephew Lot went back north to the Nephi (part of Canaan), but their flocks grew and the land was too crowded for both clans so Lot moved east toward Sodom.

One of the most important migrations came in the time of Moses, when the Israelites escaped enslavement in Egypt through the Exodus. For 40 years, they were wanderers until they reached the Promised Land (where they had to displace the Canaanites in battle).

The journey of Israel into Egypt and then back to the Promised Land is in the story of the Holy Family, who fled to Egypt to escape the murderous intentions of King Herod. After Herod died, they returned to their homeland, where Jesus grew up and carried out his mission.

We could list several other examples of the movement of families and clans and tribes in biblical times, but even this short list reveals some reasons that people migrated—then and now. Cain was exiled. Abram was called by God, then traveled to escape famine. Lot moved for economic reasons. Moses led the others out of oppression.

Today’s migrants and refugees have similar reasons for leaving their homelands. Most are forced or flee because they cannot support their families or because their lives are in danger. Some flee wars, some flee persecution and others flee recruitment or retaliation by gangs.

How should we respond? In Exodus, God commands the Israelites: “You shall not oppress or afflict a resident alien, for you were once aliens residing in the land of Egypt” (Ex 22:20; 23:9).

(Father Lawrence E. Mick is a priest of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.)
New Testament: Seven prophecies of the Jewish exile (Forty-sixth in a series of columns)

Six of the prophetic books in the Old Testament are prophecies...
This weekend closes the Church’s liturgical year of 2014. Next week, we will move with the First Sunday of Advent. Closing the year means that the Church has led us through 12 months of careful watch over Jesus. The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ the King joyfully summarizes the lessons of the past year. The Lord is king! He reigns! He lives!

The reading comes from the ancient Book of Ezekiel. In this reading, God speaks in the first person, promising protection of the flock, his people. He is the shepherd, seeking the lost, caring for the injured, rescuing the imperiled. God will also distinguish between the sheep and others who assume other identities because of their unfaithfulness.

St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians provides the second reading. This selection is a proclamation of the Resurrection and of the role of the Lord as Redeemer of humanity. He is the Risen Lord, the first of those who will rise to everlasting life. Those who will follow Jesus in being raised from the dead are “those who belong” to Christ, in other words, those persons who have admitted God, through Jesus, into their lives and who have received from the Lord the gift of grace, eternal life and strength.

The reading frankly admits that forces hostile to God are at work in the world. These forces cannot be dismissed as insignificant. However, they are by no means omnipotent. The power and life of God will endure in and through Jesus. God will triumph over all evil. No one bound to God should be dismissed as insignificant. However, they are part of God’s flock, his people. He is the shepherd, seeking the lost, caring for the injured, rescuing the imperiled. God will also distinguish between the sheep and others who assume other identities because of their unfaithfulness.

My Journey to God

By Linda Abner

Linda Abner is a member of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Indianapolis. She wrote this poem about the merging of St. Bernadette Parish in Indianapolis with Our Lady of Lourdes Parish through the Connected in the Spirit effort. St. Bernadette’s will officially merge with Our Lady of Lourdes on Nov. 30.

See how the light shines in this place!

See how the sun streams through colored glass—red, gold, orange—

Winds daintily saved for and given

By thankful parishioners.

See how it beams upon the Tabernacle

By thankful parishioners.

See how the light shines in this place!

The wealth of these parishioners.

The light

A mosaic circle in that wall, without beginning, without end,

See Jesus in the center.

A biblical description of the first-class relics is the physical body remains of a saint or blessed like bones, blood and hair; a second-class relic is a personal possession, such as clothing, devotional objects, handwritten letters or even furniture; and a third-class relic is an object that has touched a first-class relic. Those—usually small snips of cloth that have touched a blessed or saint’s tomb—often end up in public distribution fixed onto prayer cards. 

The church has a very intricate network of relics, some of which are very old. Some of the most famous relics are the ones that have been around since the earliest centuries of the Christian era because they evoke the memory of the person honored, and are thought to be in closer contact with the virtues of that saint.

The largest collection of relics belongs to the Vatican, and is kept at a central site adjacent to the Basilica of St. John Lateran in Rome. The practice of making relics generally available to the public, particularly first-class relics, ended about 20 years ago at the insistence of the Vatican.

Today, you can apply to the Vatican for a specific relic only with a letter of permission from your bishop, and only if the relic will be used for a church altar or other public purpose. The private ownership, especially of first-class relics, is highly discouraged since it is seen as limiting the evangelizing effect of the saint’s memory.

Occasionally, second- or third-class relics can be obtained by contacting the religious order or shrine of a particular saint. (The national shrine of St. Rita of Cascia is in Philadelphia, and the shrine of St. John Mary Vianney is in Ars-sur-Formans in France). If these shrines are unable to provide you with relics, they can at least offer you devotional material on the saints and information about their lives.

The Church’s Code of Canon Law says specifically and strongly that, “It is absolutely forbidden to sell sacred relics.” (1190). When relics are obtained, there is often a charge for the metal container enclosing the relic and for mailing costs, but not for the relic itself.

Question Corner/Tr. Kenneth Doyle

Use of first-class relics are reserved for public veneration and church altars

Q Please forgive my awkward handwriting. I have multiple sclerosis and also Parkinson’s disease, and can no longer do very well on a typewriter or computer. My question is: Why is it so hard to obtain first-class relics? Do I need permission from my bishop to obtain them?

A First, a primer on the three classes of relics. As explained by Catholic News Service: “A first-class relic is the physical body remains of a saint or blessed like bones, blood and hair; a second-class relic is a personal possession, such as clothing, devotional objects, handwritten letters or even furniture; and a third-class relic is an object that has touched a first-class relic. Those—usually small snips of cloth that have touched a blessed or saint’s tomb—often end up in public distribution fixed onto prayer cards.” 

Why do so many priests leave the altar as soon as the final hymn begins? Choirs often give much time to practice the hymn, and then the priest hurries off right after they start. So other people begin to leave, too, and nobody pays any attention to the music. I think it’s rude. (Boud Brook, New Jersey)

A I agree. The Church’s guidelines for the Mass (the General Instruction of the Roman Missal) are silent on the matter of a recessional hymn, and some parishes choose not to use one at all—their thinking being that the congregation is sent forth immediately to “glorify the Lord by their lives.”

But if a hymn is used, common courtesy and liturgical propriety ought to keep the priest at the altar for the greater part of it. Since it is a “recessional,” the final part of the hymn may accompany the priest back down the aisle, but he should encourage the congregation to sing (and respect the choir) by not moving too soon.

In any case, perhaps the pastor and the parish music director could work together to come to a good common understanding of the matter. †
Rest in peace

Seal of confession is absolute, even after penitent dies, officials say

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—The secrecy of a confession is maintained so seriously by the Catholic Church that a priest would be excommunicated if he were dispensed the contents of a confession in order to record, broadcast or otherwise share them, Msgr. Krzysztof Nykiel said.

The penitentiary sponsored a conference at the Vatican on Nov. 12-13 on “the exception of additional protections. One of those additions, the newspaper said, was a 1988 Church law explicitly stating that an “electronic apparatus” to record, broadcast or otherwise share the contents of a confession also is an exception of additional protections.

Cardinal Mauro Piacenza, head of the Apostolic Penitentiary, told conference participants it is important “to remove any suspicion” that the Church’s commitment to the confessional seal and pastoral privacy, according to the Vatican newspaper, “L’Osservatore Romano,” is being compromised.

The seal, he said, is intended to protect the most intimate part of the human person, “that is, to safeguard the presence of God within each man.” The effect of the secret, he said, is that it also protects a person’s reputation and right to privacy. The confessional seal, Msgr. Nykiel said, “is binding not only on the confessor, but also on the interpreter, if present, and anyone who in any way, even casually, comes to know of the sins confessed.”

The Church, he said, takes the seal so seriously that it forbids, on the pain of excommunication, a priest from testifying in court about what he heard in the confessional, “even if the penitent requests it.”

Not even the death of the penitent can absolve the confessor from the obligation to maintain the seal, Msgr. Nykiel said.

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Pope says defending traditional marriage is matter of ‘human ecology’

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Francis called for preserving the family as an institution based on marriage between a man and a woman, which he said is not a political cause but a matter of “human ecology.”

“Abuse of religion,” said a statement from the council, which represents Israel’s chief rabbinate, the Palestinian Authority Shariah courts, and local Christian leaders. “We call on all political and civic leaders to do their utmost to prevent the local political conflict from being turned into a religious war, the consequences of which will be disastrous for all.”

“The complementarity will take many forms as stereotypical gender roles,” he said. “The family is not a political cause but a matter of ideology.”

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.

What was in the news on November 20, 1964? Editorials discuss the early arrival of Christmas, and the remembrance of a sad anniversary.

HOLY LAND

condemn the violence and assure the families who have lost loved ones of our prayers,” he added. “It is very sad.”

The Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land expressed “shock and horror” at the attack, calling it “humanitarian.”

“Such murderous deeds, especially in a house of worship, are the ultimate abuse of religion,” said a statement from the council, which represents the chief rabbinate, the Palestinian Authority Shariah courts, and local Christian leaders. “We call on all political and civic leaders to do their utmost to prevent the local political conflict from being turned into a religious war, the consequences of which will be disastrous for all.”

The Rev. Olav Fykse Tveit, World Council of Churches general secretary, expressed concern and sadness over the attack.

“There is a particular horror in any sort of attack which takes place at a place of worship. I condemn this violence unequivocally, as I do all violence between the peoples and communities of this region which has seen so much bloodshed in the name of religion,” he said. “Violence, collective punishments and communal attacks can only further damage the prospects of peace and justice for all.”

Pope Francis said Christians find the meaning of complementarity in St. Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians, “where the Apostle tells us that the Spirit endowed each of us with different spiritual gifts so that—just as the human body’s members work together for the good of the whole—everyone’s gifts can work together for the benefit of each.”

“Let us not confuse [complementarity] with the simplistic idea that all the roles and relations of the two sexes are fixed in a single pattern,” the pope said. “Complementarity will take many forms as each man and woman brings his or her distinctive contributions to their marriage and to the education of their children.”

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“The complementarity between male and female does not necessarily entail stereotypical gender roles.”

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Band salutes a favorite priest, students excel and educator is honored

Marta Belt became overwhelmed with emotion as she watched nearly 100-year-old Father Halory Meny react to the special performance by the band, his joy was evident.

Father Meny conducted the marching band. "You came a long way to say thank you. That you did this for me is wonderful," he smiled and said, "I was so proud of the kids. It was amazing. It is a memory that will be with me for many years to come."

The Shave Band of Gold has 45 members, with over a quarter of the student body participating in the band. Father Meny has been a longtime supporter of Shawe’s band, which also became a marching band for the first time this school year.

"We wanted to thank him the best way we knew how," noted Colleen Burdette, a board member of the school. "He has been a gift to all who care about young people’s everyday activities.

"It specifically reviewed and discussed the utilization of electrical currents, coils and magnets to explain the function of transformers, the generation of electrical power, and the operation of electrical motors," Rebekah said.

"Without an understanding of these principles, we could not have electricity generated and brought into our homes, could not charge our cell phones, use most kitchen appliances, vacuum or do many of the daily activities that we often take for granted."

"Passionate commitment!" Chuck Weisenbach recently received the 2014 Outstanding Leadership Award from the Indiana Non-Public Education Association (INPEA).

Weisenbach was saluted for his 20 years as the principal of Roncalli High School in Indianapolis, and for his contributions to the INPEA Board of Directors, which he has served for 10 years, including two years as its president.

"Chuck Weisenbach has not only served Roncalli in extraordinary fashion for the past 20 years, he has served the entire state of Indiana with his passionate commitment to providing the best possible learning environment for all students," said Roncalli president Joe Hollowell.

"Chuck’s dedication to student learning, his incredible work ethic and his support for the development of great teachers has been a gift to all who care about young people in our state."

(Band members of Father Michael Shawe Memorial Jr./Sr. High School in Madison pose on Oct. 17 with Father Hilary Meny outside SS. Peter and Paul Church in Hauibstadt, Ind., in the Evansville Diocese. Father Meny has been a longtime supporter of Shawe’s band, which also became a marching band for the first time this school year. (Submitted photo))