In Turkey, Pope Francis got a look at Christianity on the margins

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Ankara and Istanbul were gray and cold, at least compared to Rome, during Pope Francis’ Nov. 28-30 visit to Turkey. And the general reception, outside of the pope’s official meetings, was hardly warmer. There were none of the enthusiastic crowds that usually greet him on his trips, no masses waving signs of welcome along his motorcade route or behind police barriers at the stops.

Pope Francis, who seems to thrive on contact with the public, especially with the young, the aged and the infirm, seemed dispirited by the lack of it this time. Despite his relatively light schedule—six speeches over three days, compared to 14 during his three-day visit to the Holy Land in May—he looked attentive, but increasingly wary at his public appearances.

There was an obvious reason, unrelated to the pope himself, for the general indifference to his presence. An observer did not need to know that Turkey is 99.8 percent Muslim to see that both cities he visited are dotted with the domes and minarets of countless mosques, miniature versions of the great monuments, Hagia Sofia and the Blue Mosque, that he toured in Istanbul.

Even a brief experience of Christianity’s marginality in that part of world makes it easier to understand why Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, whom Pope Francis traveled to Turkey principally to see, is the papacy’s best friend in the Orthodox Church and an eager principal to see, is the papacy’s best friend in the Orthodox Church and an eager one to meet.

Before long, the visitors will start sharing stories about Christmases from their past, focusing on memories of the Nativity sets that their parents and grandparents displayed through the years.

And while Kirschner prefers listening to other people’s stories, the reality is that he has his own heartwarming memories to share. Like the memories from his childhood when he and his mother would make Nativity scenes from boxes and brown paper.

“It was time we spent together when I was little,” recalls the 75-year-old member of Holy Family Parish in Oldenburg. “My mother had a very strong faith. As far as she was concerned, setting up the Nativity was always a focal point of Christmas.”

His stories also include one of the first wooden Nativity stables he ever made—a Christmas gift for his wife Joyce that he gave her shortly after they were married and moved into their first home.

“We used it for about 10 years as the kids came along,” says the father of four grown children who has been married for 54 years. “It was kind of plain, and I replaced it with a new one. My wife didn’t like that I did that. It had all the memories and traditions attached to it. That’s the way it is for a lot of people. Those traditions and memories are important. She still mentions that one from time to time.”

Then there’s the Christmas story involving Nativity stables that just may be his favorite.

“When one of my grandchildren, Alex, was 12, he came over to our house during the summer, and we worked on making them together,” says the grandfather of nine. “He made seven of them. That Christmas, he gave me the first one he ever made. We still put that one up for Christmas every year. He’s almost 21 now. That one will always be special. We had a real good time that summer putting them together. Eventually, we’ll give it back to him when he gets married.”

Sharing the gift of Christmas

Kirschner shares those stories as he sits in The Creche Shop, in the heart of the village of Oldenburg in southeastern Indiana.

Some of his handcrafted Nativity stables are on display in an old ice locker that was once part of a general store. It is for a lot of people. Those traditions and memories that are important. She still mentions that one from time to time.

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TURKEY

continued from page 1

than 4,000 people, fewer than in many American Catholic parishes. Turkish authorities have kept his Church’s only seminary closed for more than 40 years. Just across the border, in Syria and Iraq, Christian minorities are being slaughtered or driven from their homes by militants of the Islamic State.

Under such circumstances, it is no wonder that Patriarch Bartholomew would tell Pope Francis on Nov. 30: “We no longer have the luxury of isolated action. The modern persecutors of Christians do not ask which Church their victims belong to. The unity that concerns us is regrettably already occurring in certain regions of the world through the blood of martyrdom.”

In other words, necessity is the mother not only of invention but ecumenism, which also makes it easier to understand why Patriarch Kirill of Moscow, who leads tens of millions of Russian Orthodox and is closely allied with his nation’s government, can maintain his predecessors’ stance of refusing even to meet with the bishop of Rome. Rome obviously is a far less lonely place than Istanbul to be a Christian. But Pope Francis follows St. John Paul II, whose Nov. 25 visit to the European institutions in Strasbourg, France, where he arrived to find the streets practically empty, was a recent reminder of that reality in the Church’s traditional heartland.

The impressions of Christian culture that the Muslim world encounters through globalization are not the work of missionaries. Leaving Turkey’s Presidency of Religious Affairs in Ankara after the pope’s visit there on Nov. 28, reporters passed a luxury shopping mall decorated with lighted Christmas trees—reminding an American present observer that it was Black Friday in the U.S.

In response to the secularism of Europe and other wealthy societies, Pope Francis has taken a different tack than his two immediate predecessors. The current pope denounces a “throwaway” culture of abortion, euthanasia, unemployment, economic inequality and environmental pollution. But he rarely speaks of secularism, and his teaching focuses less on the failings of contemporary society and more on the Church’s own shortcomings as impediments to evangelization.

Whatever the advantages of this pastoral strategy, Pope Francis clearly does not expect short-term results in Europe, which he described to the politicians in Strasbourg during a prayer service in the patriarchal Church of St. George in Istanbul on Nov. 29. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

Above, Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople embrace during a prayer service in the patriarchal Church of St. George in Istanbul on Nov. 29. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

Right, Pope Francis meets with young refugees from civil wars in Syria and Iraq, a few hours after joining Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople to denounce the plight of Christians there. (CNS/Lo Spurio/Reuters)
Two Indianapolis east side parishes form a ‘union in Christ’

By Sean Gallagher

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—As Pope Francis and leaders of other churches and religious groups signed a declaration pledging to work together to end modern slavery in the world by 2020, he urged governments, businesses and all people of good will to join forces against this “crime against humanity.”

The declaration recognized that any action that fails to respect every person’s freedom and dignity “is a crime against humanity.”

"We pledge ourselves here today to do all in our power, within our faith communities and beyond, to work together for the freedom of all those who are enslaved and trafficked so that their future may be restored,” it said.

"Today we have the opportunity, awareness, wisdom, innovation and technology to achieve this human and moral imperative,” said the joint declaration, which was read in English by a man from Ghana and in Spanish by a woman from Mexico, both of whom had been victims of trafficking and forced labor.

The initiative was organized by the faith-based Global Freedom Network, which was launched in March after a meeting among representatives of the Vatican, Al-Azhar University and the Anglican Communion.

Pope Francis thanked the men and women religious leaders associated with the Vatican, Al-Azhar and the Anglican Communion for working together and a greater detachment from material things will let people “have a lot more time” to work to bring freedom to their world.”

Archbishop Welby said people can avoid the exploitation of others with their “own actions and choices as consumers and users of financial services whose managers can put great pressure on companies in which they invest.”

"Communities can welcome and support those who are freed from traffickers, and businesses worldwide can "ensure robust systems for slave-free supply chains,” he said.

According to the 2014 Global Slavery Index, almost 36 million people are currently caught in some form of modern slavery, the International Labor Organization estimates that some crime networks reap about 150 billion dollars a year from trafficking in persons, about 80 percent of that from prostitution.†

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Pope, religious leaders pledge to work together to end slavery by 2020

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Members of the former St. Bernadette Parish in Indianapolis fill their faith community’s church for Mass on Nov. 23. It was the final parish Mass in the church. Effective on Nov. 30, the parish was merged with nearby Our Lady of Lourdes Parish. The union of the two parishes came about as a result of the Connected in the Spirit planning process. (Submitted photo by Gary Yohler, St. Bernadette Class of 1959)
Advent is the season of hope, Mary is the star

Advent is the season of hope, a time of eager anticipation or longing for Christ. During this blessed season, we have a chance to connect with our deepest desires. Above all else, whether we recognize it or not, we humans long to be united with God, the source and summit of all our aspirations, the joy of our desiring. This inner longing, which we try to hide or suppress most of the year with great success, bubbles to the surface during Advent when we sing, the prayers we say, the readings proclaimed to us in the liturgy, all evoke our heart’s deepest desire, like no other time of year. “O Come, O Come Emmanuel,” we sing, “and ransom captive Israel.” Free us from the slavery of sin and fill us with the ransom captive Israel.” Free us from the insidious power of sin and fill us with the forgiveness and to begin again. “Be joyful. I have overcome the world” (Jn 16:33). We have a chance to connect with God, the source and summit of all our deepest desires. Above all else, above all else, we have a chance to connect with the being of Jesus Christ. We are to share our hope with others.” This is the true meaning of Advent—sharing our hope with others. Pope Francis has been speaking about God’s mercy since he was elected. There is hope without mercy, no chance of experiencing our desire for God unless he forgives us our sins. Mary, who was without sin, gives us hope. She affirms that each one of us has been created by a God who loves each one of us individually, and who invites us to share his life fully. We are not the random result of some evolutionary accident. We are the family of God, and we have a future filled with hope. Mary’s hope is not naive. She stood beneath the cross. As Pope Benedict says, Mary “saw the growing power of hostility and rejection which built up around Jesus until the hour of the cross, when you had to look up to the savior of the world, the heir of David, the Son of God dying like a failure, exposed to the cruel mockery of the world” (Jn 18:33). Mary’s hope is not superficial. It goes to the heart of our longing to break free from the insidious power of sin and death. In Mary, hope never died. Deep down, she listened again and again to the words of the angel, “Do not be afraid, Mary!” (Lk 1:30). How many times has the Lord approached us, his disciples? “Be joyful. I have overcome the world” (Jn 16:33). Advent is the season of hope, and Mary is its star. Let’s look to Mary, Star of Hope. She will show us the way.

—Daniel Conway

Be Our Guest: Sisters of Providence encourage ongoing dialogue

Most Americans could be found glued to a television during the evening of Nov. 24, as a decision by a grand jury in Ferguson, Mo., was announced. That grand jury, through St. Louis County Prosecutors, said it would not indict Ferguson Police Officer Darren Wilson for shooting and killing 18-year-old Michael Brown in August.

The grand jury met for almost a full month, and its decision was not unanimous. About 60 witnesses before reaching a decision. The decision not to indict Officer Wilson sparked peaceful demonstrations—and violent protests. People from all across the nation also protested. The entire process has proven to be both frustrating and disappointing.

It is difficult to imagine the pain the Brown family is suffering as they move forward without their loved one. Members of the Anti-Racism Team of the Sisters of Providence closely watched the situation unfold. And despite having a profound respect for law enforcement and the duty of keeping peace and protecting the citizens of the United States, the team has come to the conclusion that the decision may not have been the correct course of action.

According to 2010 statistics provided by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Indiana, approximately 34 percent of the persons in prisons and jail are African-American. Of the state’s population, African Americans make up only 9 percent.

These statistics are quite disturbing and are also a continuing trend. We do live in a culture of gun violence, ongoing racial profiling and increasing militarization of law enforcement, as well as a criminal justice system rampant with hate and racial violence.

However, there are solutions, and more can be acted upon. More dialogue is needed to further educate ourselves on these issues. Events like “National Night Out” can shine a light on interactions between the police and the community, and are also a continuing trend. We can help further educate not only students, but all people, including law enforcement.

The purpose of the Anti-Racism Team of the Sisters of Providence is to transform the congregation into an open, inclusive and anti-racist congregation. The members of the team work to dismantle systemic racism within the Sisters of Providence, our sponsored institutions, places of ministry and the larger society.

Martin Luther King Jr. once said, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

Ongoing dialogue regarding the statistics mentioned above and more is encouraged. The Anti-Racism Team plans to continue dialogue regarding these ongoing issues and hopes others will join the chorus.

Papal audience photo shares enlightened spirit of ecumenism, reader says

This is to thank the editorial staff of The Criterion for their inclusion of the very inspirational photograph featured on page 14 of the Nov. 28, 2014, issue. The picture captured the participation of Anglican and Episcopal bishops at Pope Francis’ general audience at the Vatican on Nov. 19. It included Bishop Catherine Waynick, leader of the Episcopal diocese of Indianapolis.

I found it a hopeful witness of the bishops’ enlightened spirit of ecumenism, as well as their belief in the truth of Genesis, “So God created humanity in God’s image, in God’s image God created them, male and female God created them” (Gen 1:27).

Helen Weber-McReynolds

Indianapolis

Letters from readers are published in The Criterion as part of the newspaper’s commitment to “the responsible exchange of freely-held and expressed opinion among the People of God” (Communio et Progressio, 1984).

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Letters to the Editor

Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus are depicted in a wooden creche at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Rochester, N.Y., in this Nov. 24 photo. (CNS photo/Mike Crupi, Catholic Courier)

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Indianapolis
Mantengámonos cerca de María, la madre de Jesús, nuestra madre

En el contexto del Evangelio según San Juan ocurren dos poderosos incidentes: el capítulo 2 contiene la esponjadora de bodas de Caná, y el capítulo 19 ofrece la perspectiva de San Juan sobre la crucifixión de Jesús. En ambos incidentes se encuentra presente María, la madre de Jesús y nuestra madre. Las bodas de Caná es una situación que la cosa todos nos podemos sentir identificados. María y su hijo adulto están en desacuerdo; hay un problema puesto que no hay suficiente vino, y María desea que Jesús intervenga. Él se opone: “—Mujer, ¿es que tiene que ver conmigo? —respondió Jesús. —Todavía no ha llegado mi hora” (Jn 2:4). María no le hace caso y les dice a los invitados: “—Hagan lo que él ordene” (Jn 2:5). Como resultado, ocurre un milagro doméstico: los invitados de la boda disponen de suficiente vino (¡y no cualquier vino, sino del mejor!).

En el mes de diciembre, la Iglesia nos da dos estupendas festividades para celebrar estos maravillosos obsequios. El día 8 de diciembre celebramos la Solemnidad de la Inmaculada Concepción, el misterio de la gracia de Dios que permitió que María se encarnara en este mundo sin la carga del pecado. El día 12 de diciembre festejamos a Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, el símbolo de la unidad de nuestra Santa Madre de los pueblos de toda América. La Solemnidad de la Inmaculada Concepción resalta el hecho de que María, concebida sin pecado original, es distinta de nosotros. Tal como señala el papa emérito, Benedicto XVI: “Este privilegio otorgado a María, que la distingue de nuestra condición ordinaria, no nos distancia sino que, al contrario, nos acerca a ella. Si bien el pecado divide y nos separa, la pureza de María la coloca infinitamente cerca de nuestros corazones, atenta a cada uno de nosotros y deseosa de que alcancemos el verdadero bien.”

Lo que distingue a María no la separa de nosotros, su pureza la predispone y la hace más accesible a nosotros, sus hijos. La festividad de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe hace énfasis en la cercanía de María con los pueblos de América. En 1513 una “Señora del cielo” se le apareció a San Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin, un humilde indígena en Tepeyac, en una colina al noreste de lo que hoy en día es la Ciudad de México, Vestía un traje típico y hablaba en su idioma, para que tanto él como todos sepamos que ella es una con nosotros. “No temas,” le dijo la hermosa Señora a Juan Diego. “¿No estoy yo aquí que soy tu madre?”

Durante esta temporada tan especial, mientras comenzamos un nuevo año litúrgico y nos preparamos para la Navidad, se nos invita a mantenernos cerca de María, la madre de Jesús y nuestra madre. María señala el camino hacia su hijo. Ella nos recuerda los milagros que obra Jesús en nuestra vida cotidiana y nos invita a responder con corazones abiertos: “Hágase en mí según tu palabra” (Lc 1:38).

¿Qué obsesiones tan maravilloso, innecesario e inesperado! [La madre de nuestro Señor se convierte en nuestra madre y comparte su vida con nosotros! Que siempre estemos cerca de María, pues ella es una con nosotros.]

Traducido por: Daniela Guanipa

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La presencia de María durante la crucifixión de su hijo es uno de los momentos más tristes de toda la literatura bíblica. Ella lo sigue en el Vía Crucis, la Via Dolorosa, sin poder hacer nada para ayudarlo o aliviarlo. Entonces, se para frente a la cruz y, sujetándose de Juan –el discípulo amado de Jesús–, observa y aguarda.

“—Mujer, ahí tienes a tu hijo,” le dice Jesús y luego, al discípulo: “—Ahí tienes a tu madre” (Jn 19:26-27).

Y a partir de ese momento, María se convierte en nuestra madre, la que intercede por nosotros ante el trono de Dios. Es ella quien compeare con nosotros su esperanza llena de confianza de que las promesas de Dios se cumplirán.

Tal como lo expresó el papa Francisco: “En silencio, al pie de la cruz, María nos dice ahora: “Hagan lo que él ordene” (Lk 1:38). Nosotros, sus hijos, somos quienes cumpliremos las promesas del Señor. ”

As Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI observes, “This privilege given to Mary, which sets her apart from our common condition, does not distance her from us, but on the contrary, brings her closer. While sin divides, separating us from our mother, Mary’s purity makes her infinitely close to our hearts, attentive to each of us and desirous of our true good.”

Mary’s difference does not separate her from us; her purity makes her more open and accessible to all of us, her children.

The feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe emphasizes Mary’s closeness to us. In 1513, a ‘Lady from Heaven’ appeared to St. Juan Diego Cuauhtlatotzin, a humble Native American at Tepeyac, a hill northwest of what is now Mexico City. She wore native dress, and she spoke his language—letting it be known to him, and to all of us, that she is one-with-us. “Do not be afraid,” the beautiful Lady said to Juan Diego. “Am I not here, your Mother?”

During this special time, as we begin a new Church year and prepare for Christmas, we are invited to stay close to Mary, the mother of Jesus and our mother. Mary points the way to her son. She reminds us of the miracles Jesus works in our daily lives, and she invites us to respond with open hearts: “May it be done to according to your word” (Lk 1:38).

What a marvelous, undeserved and unexpected gift! The mother of our Lord becomes our mother and shares her life with us! May we always be close to Mary—as she is one-with-us.†
Sisters of Providence announce Advent prayer service times

The Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in Saint Mary-of-the-Woods have announced a schedule of Advent services as a prelude to the Christmas season. All liturgies and devotional services are open to the public, and to people of all faith traditions.

Eucharistic Liturgies on the remaining Sundays of Advent—Dec. 7, Dec. 14 and Dec. 21—are at 11 a.m. in the Church of the Immaculate Conception. Advent Vespers are scheduled at 4:30 p.m. on Dec. 14 and 21.

At 3 p.m. on Dec. 7, the Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College Chorale and Margaretta Connick will present the Christmas concert, “An American Noel,” in the church, beginning at 3 p.m. The regularly scheduled Sunday Brunch at the O’Shaughnessy Dining Hall will not take place on Dec. 21. Linden Leaf Gifts, located in the Providence Spirituality and Conference Center, will be open from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. for the remaining three Sundays of Advent.

December 27-January 1

December 29
Mount Saint Francis Retreat Center, 101 Mt. St. Francis Dr., Mt. St. Francis. Monthly Men’s Renewal Program: Francis Brother Bob Baxter, 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. Information: 812-923-8817 or retrats@mountsaintfrancis.org.

December 31-January 1
Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish, 5535 E. 65th St., Indianapolis.

“A Journey of Gratitude,” Father Keith Hoosey and Sister Mo Mangen, presenters, $138 per person or $256 per couple, includes elegant dinner, champagne toast at midnight, overnight accommodations, breakfasts and 7 p.m. Mass. Information: 317-545-7661 or archdiocese@indy.net.

January 2
Mount Saint Francis Retreat Center, 101 Mt. St. Francis Dr., Mt. St. Francis. First Friday devotions and lunches, 11:45 a.m. Information: 812-923-8817 or retrats@mountsaintfrancis.org.

Seminarians from Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in Saint Meinrad will present an Advent Lesson and Carols service at St. Thomas Aquinas Chapel, 200 Hill Drive in St. Meinrad, on Dec. 7, central time on Dec. 7.

The service, titled “From Eden to Heaven: The Story of Salvation,’ tells the story of Christ through alternating Scripture readings and singing hymns and carols. The service is expected to last an hour and 15 minutes and is free and open to the public.

Parking is available in the Guest House and student parking lots. For more information, contact Mary Jeanne Schumacher at 812-357-6501. For more information on the day of the performance, call 812-357-6611.

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in New Albany will hold Mass of Consolation on Dec. 9

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish, 1752 Scheller Lane in New Albany, will host The Longest Night: A Mass of Consolation at 7:30 p.m. on Dec. 19.

While Christmas and the holiday season is generally a time of merriment and good cheer, many people struggle with loss and stress.

The Longest Night: A Mass of Consolation provides spiritual comfort to those who find themselves experiencing loss or significant stress at this time of their life.

The Mass allows for reflection on the mysteries of the faith, and offers a consoling message while respecting one’s need to sit or wrestle with the grief of their life. This Mass is open to all. For questions or more information, contact Tom Yost at tyost@olphna.org or 812-945-2374.

Saint Meinrad Seminary hosting Advent Lessons and Carols service in chapel on Dec. 7

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Archdiocesan parishes to host Our Lady of Guadalupe celebrations

Masses and special events for the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe are scheduled at the following parishes in central and southern Indiana:

Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin will be the principal celebrant for a Spanish Mass at midnight on Dec. 11 at St. Mary Parish, 317 N. New Jersey St., in Indianapolis.

On the day before Thanksgiving that first year, seven men took a day off from work to cook for others. Within six hours, 18 fried turkeys had been delivered to Bread of Life for their annual Thanksgiving meal.

This year’s effort began two days before Thanksgiving when the men put the turkeys in a brine to make sure they were thawed, and to help moisten the birds. The next morning, the 46 turkeys were ready to be cooked in 12 fryers. By 3 p.m., the turkeys were ready for Bread of Life.

The cooking crew has changed through the years to include members from other CRHP groups, confirmation students earning hours and even second generation members.

This year’s team included original members Mike Mcentz, Monty Shields, Ernie Stephens, and Glenn Tebbe. Their efforts were supported by Brandon Butz, Larry Bishop, Jeremy Efling, Isaiah Kuntz, Josh Shields, Jake Stephens and Jeremiah Westerfeld.

The Decatur County Bread of Life was able to feed 350 people in need this Thanksgiving. And yes, they even had some leftovers.

(Monty Shields is a member of St. Mary Parish of Greensburg.)

Parish men’s group uses flair for frying to feed people in need

By Monty Shields

GREENSBURG—For a men’s group at St. Mary Parish in Greensburg, Thanksgiving wasn’t just an opportunity to count their blessings, it was a day to share their blessings with others.

And being men who like to cook as much as they like to eat—well, almost—they once again took a day off from work to fry, wrap and deliver 46 turkeys that would contribute to a Thanksgiving feast for people in need in Decatur County.

This year’s contribution marked the 10th straight year that the men of Christ Renews His Parish (CRHP) team 4 at St. Mary’s came together to assist Bread of Life, a community effort to feed the hungry.

The men’s group first tapped into their flair for frying in 2005 when Bread of Life faced the challenge of providing enough turkeys for families in need.

That same year, the men of CRHP team 4 had just completed their year of formation. They were in need.

So the connection was made.

If you, too, are looking for a way to make a difference, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul certainly had it. So did Blessed Frederic Ozanam and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton. Maybe you do, too.

Volunteer your time and talents at the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Jobs available: Food sorters, truck drivers, home delivery drivers, home visitors, help line responders, grocery baggers, warehouse workers, clothing sorters and many others.

To make a donation, become a volunteer or schedule pickup of appliances, furniture and household items. Call 317-687-1006.

THE INNER DESIRE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

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Jobs available: Food sorters, truck drivers, home delivery drivers, home visitors, help line responders, grocery baggers, warehouse workers, clothing sorters and many others.

Requirements: A little spare time and a big heart.

Dec. Gratitude of those least fortunate whom you might never meet.

Use our website svdpindy.org to make a donation, become a volunteer, or schedule pickup of appliances, furniture and household items. Or call 317-687-1006.

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In letters to pope, young women share joys and hopes, grief and sorrows

FORT WAYNE, Ind. (CNS)—Even cloudy skies and showers could not dampen the spirits of a senior from St. Mary’s College in Indiana who attended a Kairos retreat that renewed her faith.

The 2014 alumna of the school, its president, and her husband, George Efta, to the pope’s general audience to make the presentation.

On Nov. 26, Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend accompanied St. Mary’s senior Kristen Millar of Dillsburg, Penn., recent graduate, and her husband, George Efta, to the pope’s general audience to make the presentation.

Students, supported by St. Mary’s Center for Spirituality and the college’s Campus Ministry, organized a national letter-writing response to Pope Francis’ outreach to young people to encourage the millennial generation—those born between 1981 and 1995—to write to the pope about their love for Catholic tradition and offer ideas how the Church might better reach their demographic.

The Center for Spirituality advertised the project in America magazine, and sent letters and posters to campus ministry offices at colleges and universities across the U.S.

The women who took part in the project were instructed to send letters, prayers, poetry, art and other forms of creative expression to the center at St. Mary’s in Indiana.

Both Millar and Unranked worked on the Voices project.

Mooney described how she and Millar had reserved seats for those who would be able to speak with Pope Francis. The others had close seats and could see very well, she said.

Today’s Catholic, the Fort Wayne-South Bend diocesan newspaper, “Bishop Rhodes was able to join us when Pope Francis approached us,” Mooney related, “and the bishop introduced us. Kristen and I presented the stoles and the letters.

“We told Pope Francis that the letters contained the joys and hope, grief and sorrows of our young women,” Millar said. “The interchange was brief, but truly moving. He asked us to pray for him, he said he needed our prayers.

Millar said, “I am honored to be able to advocate on behalf of the women of the millennial generation and am hopeful that the pope will hear our message. It is truly wonderful to be an outstanding and truly inspired St. Mary’s woman.

“I am very blessed to be a part of a project as wonderful as this,” she added.

This is not about me, but is truly about the Church and for all women struggling to maintain their Catholic identity in a time when religion is not deemed as necessary. I am here to give a voice.

Millar said she was thankful for all of the support in the project. “It has been much appreciated and it’s awesome to see everyone at home as excited as we are.”

Unranked said, “It was really incredible to be in St. Peter’s Square and so close to the pope himself. I’m sure anyone who goes to an audience would say this, but it was such a testament to the universal Church.

“Pilgrims from all over the world were present, and the pope’s reflection was summarized in at least 10 languages after he read it in Italian.” Unranked added.

“I was really struck by what a small group we were in the presence of so many, but I had to focus on all the women we were representing,” she emphasized. “I really hope the pope reads our letters and takes the concerns of young American Catholic women to heart.”

Elizabeth Groppe, director of St. Mary’s Center for Spirituality, reported 225 contributions to the project, including 10 students and three alumnae from St. Mary’s, Fifty other Catholic-affiliated organizations, including Catholic and secular colleges and universities and Newman Catholic communities from across the country, participated.

There also were some letters from women with no affiliation with any particular school.

One St. Mary’s alumna sent a poem, “My Church, My Home.” She gave advice to the caring relationships and bonds of communion that flow from the worship of God and sharing of the sacrament of the Eucharist.

According to Groppe, another woman had shared that she was sexually abused in high school and developed an eating disorder. In the aftermath of this, she attended a Kairos retreat that allowed her relationship with God and enabled her to discover her leadership abilities.

Through the community of women in the Catholic campus ministry program at her college, she found hope, focus, meaning and direction, she said.

The Catholic Church provide all young women in parishes, including teens, with a mentor. †

The pope’s letter and video messages he sent for a Nov. 29 prayer vigil in Rome and the year’s opening Mass the next day in St. Peter’s Basilica were addressed specifically to the world’s more than 900,000 Catholic religious priests, brothers, sisters and consecrated virgins.

“Leave your nests and go out to the peripheries,” he told those at the vigil in the Basilica of St. Mary Major. “Live on the frontiers where people are waiting to hear and understand the Gospel.

“Wake up the world, enlightening it with your prophetic and counter-cultural witness,” he said in the message to those at Mass in St. Peter’s the next morning.

Being joyful,” he said in the message, “being courageous” and “being men and women of communion” are the common traits of the founders of religious orders and are the key to their future.

The pope’s letter for the year explained that while he was writing as pope, he was also writing as a Jesuit, “a brother who, like yourselves, is consecrated to the Lord.”

Knowing the gifts and challenges of religious life from the inside, Pope Francis urged religious to “look to the past with gratitude,” rediscovering the way their predecessors “read the signs of the times” and “devised with creativity. However, it also involves recognizing the difficulties and inconsistencies resulting from human weaknesses and sinning from them.

Religious are called “to live the present with passion” and “embrace the future with hope,” he said, knowing that the Holy Spirit continues to inspire new responses to the needs of the Church and the world and to give religious the strength to be faithful servants of God.” †

75 years of faith

Mary, Queen of Peace Parish in Danville celebrated its 75th anniversary on Sept. 14, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin and Father Michael Frithsch, pastor, concelebrated the liturgy. Pictured with them are master of ceremonies Loral Tansy. In his homily during the Mass, Archbishop Tobin noted the faithful members, past and present, who have enabled the parish to grow and prosper. (Submitted photo)
CARE CENTER
continued from page 1

pregnancy

The facility in Indianapolis is new. As of the open house on Nov. 20, there were already four counseling appointments scheduled for the center’s first official day of business on Nov. 20.

"It’s about taking care of the family" Lisa Lance, a counselor at the center and a member of Trader’s Point Christian Church in Indianapolis, compared the building with the Planned Parenthood building next door.

"You look over there, and it’s like the hinging," she said. "They have these tall trees in the front so you can’t see the building, and they have an iron fence around the building.

"But then you look over here and we’re open, we’re inviting. The contrast is pretty stark," she added.

Bardol, who is a member at St. Luke the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis with her husband and five children, explained the reason for the difference.

"We function under a Mother Teresa model of loving unconditionally and serving without judging," she said.

The home-like look and feel of the building extend beyond the interior.

"The counseling rooms are very nice, warm and inviting, non-threatening," Bardol said, pointing to a room painted in soft colors with large, overstuffed couches and chairs. "The women meet with one of our counselors to gauge where the person is—pregnant, not pregnant, in a relationship—then we know what kind of literature to give them."

Even the ultrasound room is cozy, with all attention focused around a large screen where the ultrasound image is displayed.

"It really makes it real for them, seeing their baby and hearing the whoosh-whosh of the heartbeat," said Bardol. According to the Women’s Care Center website, 97 percent of women who receive counseling and an ultrasound choose life for their unborn children.

Help for women does not stop after the baby is born, said Bardol.

"We offer parenting classes from baby basics, like bathing and diapering, to discipline, nutrition, budgeting, relationships, goal-setting," Bardol said. "It’s not just about taking care of the baby, it’s about taking care of the family."

The class offerings will begin in January. Each time they attend a session, women can earn coupons to purchase new items for their babies.

"The Crib Club baby store at the new Women’s Care Center in Indianapolis allows mothers to earn coupons to purchase new items for their babies," said Bardol.

"Hope has come to town"

Just how effective is this "Mother Teresa" model?

Quite effective, according to Bobby Williams of South Bend, president of the Women’s Care Center Foundation.

"In Fort Wayne, within 10 years of the opening of the Women’s Care Center, abortion was actually higher than it was before the center arrived," said Williams.

"We went to Peruia, Ill., just a year ago, and within the first six months abortions dropped over 24 percent."

"In Milwaukee, about the same size city as Indianapolis, within our first two years of being there, abortion dropped 23 percent."

"So what’s 23 percent? That’s over 1,000 babies a year saved from abortion."

"That’s a huge number," said Bardol. "The new Women’s Care Center means that "hope has come to town.""

"If we can save even as little as one percent of the babies, that’s a win."

That is why the location for the new Women’s Care Center is so crucial.

Prior to construction, the vacant lot looked to have been a gas station at one time. That the lot was still vacant when the Planned Parenthood facility opened in June 2006 is the work of an anonymous donor in Lafayette, Ind.

["He] just bought it to hold for some good purpose, knowing that something like [Women’s Care Center] might come along," said foundation board member John Tippmann of South Bend.

Since the Women’s Care Center Foundation funds were restricted, Tippmann loaned the organization the money to purchase the property.

"I told them whenever they raise the funds for the whole facility, then they can pay me back if they want."

In a little over a year, Williams has raised most of the funds for the $2 million building project.

"A complement to existing organizations"

Before the property was acquired, the Women’s Care Center board approached Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin for permission to build within his archdiocese.

"Women’s Care Center will not come in without the approval of the bishop," the archbishop said. "In fact, they prefer to have the bishop as sort of the honorary chairman of the board," which is a role he now serves for the new Indianapolis facility.

Archbishop Tobin visited the facility in South Bend and was impressed by what he saw.

"Part of [their] ethos is not to be a violent presence, but to say [to women considering an abortion], "There’s an alternative to what you are going to do,"" the archbishop explained.

"After several meetings with officials from the Women’s Care Center and his own advisors, Archbishop Tobin offered his support of the project."

"I think this is a very good way of channeling [the community’s] enthusiasm for respecting life without in any way denigrating all the other efforts that already happen, especially the sidewalk ministry here at 86th and Georgetown," he said.

"Before I gave final permission, I made an effort to make sure the Gabriel Project understood that this was in no way disrespect for their work, but rather a compliment, and I think the good people that have been doing that work for so long understand it that way," Archbishop Tobin said.

He was referring in part to 1st Choice for Women, a crisis pregnancy center operated by the Great Lakes Gabriel Project located less than a mile away from the Women’s Care Center.

"How can you not be supporting of something about women?" asked Eileen Hartman, executive director for Great Lakes Gabriel Project. "I don’t like feel like it’s competition. It’s like an emergency room. Sometimes the ER needs to refer someone to another place that can better meet their specific needs.

During the open house, Hartman met Sarah Lattire, an ultrasound tech at the new Women’s Care Center facility.

"I told her, if it turns out you need anyone in the evening or on Sunday, we’ll do ultrasounds on any day of week." She said that "so far, every woman has been very excited," said Hartman, a member of St. Bartholomew Parish in Columbus.

"Choose life"

Lattire, a member of St. Jean of Arc Parish in Indianapolis, is also excited about the Catholic Church environment she’ll be working in.

"I’ve been here before, so close to the Planned Parenthood—God is present here, which is such a blessing," she said.

"But faith is not a requirement for employees or clients, said Bardol.

"It’s not that we’re taking [their] faith, but that we’re welcoming," she explained. "We don’t preach the Gospel, we meet [the women] where they’re at, discuss what they’re feeling. If they bring [religion] up, then we will discuss it."

"But the Catholic presence was strong on the day of the facility’s blessing by Archbishop Tobin."

In a short homily he offered during the service, the archbishop spoke of choices.

"There are choices that are life and death," he said. "Here, the location of this wonderful home very graphically makes that choice clear."

Those women and men considering abortion are not the only ones with choices to make, the archbishop said.

"I think we who support life in all of its dignity from conception to natural death, we make choices, too," he said. "I think it’s an important for us to eschew any choice for violence—for violent words, hateful words, hateful actions."

"What attracted me to the Women’s Care Center, from the first time I visited it in South Bend, was the life-affirming gentleness and respect that underlies everything that will be done here. We realize that poor people are faced with sometimes overwhelming encouragement to choose death."

One Scripture read during the blessing service, which was held in the chapel at Women’s Care Center, summed up the choice now so clearly presented to women considering abortion at the Planned Parenthood facility next door.

"Here, then, I have today set before you life and prosperity, death and doom. … Choose life!" (De 30:15, 19b)

Above, this photo of one of several counseling rooms in the new Women’s Care Center in Indianapolis shows the warm environment where women considering abortion receive counseling.

Left, Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin listens to Dolores Clarke, a member of St. Maria Goretti Parish in Westfield, Ind., in the Lafayette Diocese, in the chapel named for her and her deceased husband, Paul, after the blessing ceremony on Nov. 19 at the new Women’s Care Center. The Women’s Care Center in Indianapolis, with a chapel in the pentagonal room at the front and landscaping set to be completed in the spring, was designed to look like a home—warm and inviting—compared to the fenced-in Planned Parenthood abortion facility just yards away on the left. The Women’s Care Center held its open house on Nov. 19 and officially opened on Nov. 20.

(Photos by Natalie Hunter)
The Nativity scene is an important part of their Christmas story. It’s part of the whole narrative.”

Kirschner also strives to make each Nativity stable different—in a way reflecting the variety of people from across the country and around the world who have stopped by his small shop.

Visitors have come from many of the United States, including Alaska and Hawaii. They have also hailed from Spain, France, Italy, Germany, Canada, Mexico, Ireland and Venezuela.

“My wife loves the stories of people who come in, and I really enjoy them, too,” says Kirschner who works year-round in the shop, averaging about 40 to 50 hours a week there. “I feel very blessed at my age that I have something to do, that I enjoy doing it, and I get to meet a lot of people and hear their stories.”

One of Kirschner’s favorite stories involves an elderly man who kept eyeing one of his Nativity stables at a craft fair.

“He kept coming up to my booth, and then he’d go away and come back again,” he recalls. “He told me his family left Germany when Hitler was coming into power. He remembered having a stable when he was a little boy in Germany, and he said that one reminded him of it. He was close to 80.”

Keeping the tradition alive

Visitors also share their traditions, including how they display the Nativity figures that some of their immigrant parents and grandparents brought with them when they came to America.

Kirschner and his wife have had their own traditions through the years.

“Since we were married, the Nativity has always been a focal point of Christmas for our children and grandchildren,” he says. “The kids would always get around the crèche and have a little parade singing ‘Silent Night’ as they put the baby Jesus into the crèche. That’s the way we always ended Christmas Eve.

Now, the Christmas Eve celebration is held at the home of one of their sons. And the couple still makes sure to attend midnight Mass on Christmas.

“I’ve been going to it since I was a little boy,” Kirschner says. “It’s a tradition.

So is remembering the woman who started his love of the Nativity scene.

“My mother’s faith was yearlong,” he says. “It wasn’t just one day of Christmas. She was a very religious woman. Advent and everything associated with the Church was important to her.”

He looks around his shop and adds, “I think she would like that I’m doing this. I think she would be pleased.”
Partnership help Morris parish build community in Haiti

By Mike Krokos

25 midwives.

rate, the parish also funded the training for

Because there is a high infant mortality

five full-time local health workers, too. Like doctors and nurses, they see

malnutrition of kids, that’s something I

I think that was the thing that struck me the

Many people in the area suffer needlessly—

Sponsoring children in a school of faith

Addressing educational needs is also a

Through its outreach, St. Anthony sponsors 155 of the 280 students who

Seventy-five dollars pays for tuition, books and for the uniform for one child,”

Ed King added.

The situation in Gandou only got worse

The cost to repair the church is

This church is extremely important to

“Family is everything to them,” Ed King added. “Their trust in God is far beyond ours.”

“It is amazing how hard-working the

Partnership help Morris parish build community in Haiti

Above, pictured is St. Francis Xavier Church in Gandou, Haiti, in late June. Members of St. Anthony of Padua Parish are raising funds to rebuild the church after a 2010 earthquake severely damaged it.

Left, nurse Valarie Hoff and her 17-year-old daughter Michaela, both members of St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Morris, are pictured in June with Gefte, a young resident of Gandou. Gefte’s mother died when he was 2 months old, and he lived on sugar water for a year because there was no breast milk to give him. He didn’t have the strength to raise his head when he came into the clinic, but after the team worked with him for a week, he was looking much healthier.

St. Francis Xavier Parish in Milan, made his first mission trip to Gandou in March of 2010.

A retired educator, he said the journeys

“God gives abundantly, but he doesn’t share”

It is commonplace to see women and children walking up and down steep hills with five-gallon water buckets on their heads to bring back to their families.

Farmers do their best but struggle to feed their families because of the poor, eroded soil on the mountains.

“It is amazing how hard-working the people are,” Jennifer Rennekamp said.

The cost to repair the church is $230,000. St. Anthony has raised $100,000 and hired local people in Gandou to begin to rehabilitate it.

Nearly five years after the earthquake, there is still no new roof on the damaged church, but St. Anthony members are hopeful donors will help with fundraising efforts to complete the repairs.

“This church is extremely important to them,” Joe Rennekamp said. “The church is the center of education for their kids, for their spiritual worship, for their social gatherings, for everything. Their whole life is built around the church, as it should be.”

The people of Gandou will walk in the dark on Sunday morning for two hours to get to church, carrying a chair with them to sit on during the two-and-a-half hour liturgy.

They come to Mass every week,” Joe Rennekamp added.

“We come to Mass every week,” Ed King added. “It’s hard to make sense of the suffering there,” Joe Rennekamp added.

“They come to Mass every week,” Joe Rennekamp added.

“Family is everything to them.”

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You may be eligible for a FULL TUITION SCHOLARSHIP!

APPLICATIONS FOR THE SAINT MOTHER THEODORE GUERIN SCHOLARSHIP COMPETITION ARE NOW BEING ACCEPTED.

Two Full Tuition Scholarships
Five $17,000 Scholarships

Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College’s most prestigious scholarship highlights students who embody the principles by which the College’s foundress, Saint Mother Theodore Guerin, lived and served. The College will award seven Saint Mother Theodore Guerin Scholarships to aspiring students nationwide who have used their unique experiences, aptitudes and abilities to make a difference in their local communities and beyond.

Ranked in the top 25% of the best regional colleges in the Midwest by U.S. News & World Report, SMWC challenges its students to aspire higher. Applications are now being accepted from female seniors for the Saint Mother Theodore Guerin Scholarship Competition. For application guidelines, visit our website. Deadline - December 31, 2014.

www.smwc.edu/smtg
Advent penance services are scheduled at archdiocesan parishes

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. 9, 6-7 p.m. at St. Michael, Brookville
- Dec. 10, 6:30 p.m. at St. Peter, Franklin County
- Dec. 11, 7 p.m. at St. Mary, Greensburg
- Dec. 14, 1:30 p.m. for Immaculate Conception, Millhousen; St. Charles Borromeo, Milan, St. Maurice, Napoleon; and at St. John, Osgood, at St. John, Osgood
- Dec. 16, 6-8 p.m. at St. Michael, Brookville
- Dec. 17, 6:30 p.m. at St. Louis, Batesville
- Dec. 18, 6:30 p.m. at St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, Brighton
- Dec. 18, 6:30 p.m. at St. Catherine of Siena, Decatur County, at the Enochsburg campus

**Bloomington Deanery**
- Dec. 6, 6:30 p.m. at Our Lady of the Springs, French Lick
- Dec. 9, 6 p.m. at St. Paul Catholic Center, Bloomington
- Dec. 10, 7 p.m. at St. Martin of Tours, Martinsville
- Dec. 11, 7 p.m. at St. Vincent de Paul, Bedford
- Dec. 16, 7 p.m. at St. Agnes, Nashville
- Dec. 17, 6:30 p.m. at St. Jude, Spencer
- Dec. 18, 6 p.m. at St. John the Apostle, Bloomington

**Connersville Deanery**
- Dec. 10, 6:30 p.m. at St. Gabriel, Connersville
- Dec. 11, 6:30 p.m. at St. Mary, Rushville
- Dec. 16, 6:30 p.m., following 5:15 p.m. Mass for Richmond Catholic Community at St. Mary, Richmond

**Indianapolis East Deanery**
- Dec. 11, 6:30 p.m. for Holy Angels and St. Rita at St. Rita
- Dec. 10, 7 p.m. at St. Michael, Brookville
- Dec. 10, 6:30 p.m. at St. Peter, Franklin County
- Dec. 11, 7 p.m. at St. Mary, Greensburg
- Dec. 14, 2 p.m. deeneyr service at St. Simon the Apostle
- Dec. 15, 7 p.m. deeneyr service at St. Luke the Evangelist
- Dec. 16, 7 p.m. deeneyr service at St. Luke the Evangelist

**Indianapolis North Deanery**
- Dec. 6, 6:30 p.m. at Our Lady of the Springs, French Lick
- Dec. 7, 2 p.m. at Good Shepherd
- Dec. 10, 7 p.m. at St. Roch
- Dec. 15, 6:30 p.m. at Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ
- Dec. 16, 7 p.m. at St. Jude
- Dec. 17, 7 p.m. at St. Mark the Evangelist
- Dec. 18, 6 p.m. at St. Barnabas
- Dec. 22, 7 p.m. at Our Lady of the Greenwood, Greenwood

**Indianapolis South Deanery**
- Dec. 10, 7 p.m. at Mary, Queen of Peace, Danville
- Dec. 10, 7 p.m. at St. Michael the Archangel
- Dec. 11, 7 p.m. at St. Malachy, Brownsburg
- Dec. 17, 7 p.m. at St. Gabriel the Archangel
- Dec. 18, 6:30 p.m. at St. Susanna, Plainfield

**Indianapolis West Deanery**
- Dec. 10, 7 p.m. at St. John of the Baptist, Starlight

**New Albany Deanery**
- Dec. 10, 7 p.m. at St. Mary-of-the-Knobs, Floyd County
- Dec. 10, 7 p.m. at St. Michael, Charlestown
- Dec. 11, 7 p.m. at St. Michael, Bedford
- Dec. 14, 3 p.m. at Holy Family, New Albany
- Dec. 16, 7 p.m. at Our Lady of Perpetual Help, New Albany
- Dec. 17, 6:30 p.m. at St. John Paul II, Sellersburg
- Dec. 17, 7 p.m. at St. Anthony of Padua, Clarksville
- Dec. 17, 7 p.m. at St. Mary, Navillenton
- Dec. 21, 4 p.m. at St. John the Baptist, Starlight

**Seymour Deanery**
- Dec. 9, 7 p.m. at St. Bartholomew, Columbus
- Dec. 11, 6:30 p.m. for St. Ann, Jennings County; St. Mary, North Vernon; and

Each Friday:
- Dec. 15, 7 p.m. for Our Lady of Lourdes and St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) at St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower)
- Dec. 18, 7 p.m. at St. Mary

**Terre Haute Deanery**
- Dec. 10, 7 p.m., deanery service at Sacred Heart, Terre Haute
- Dec. 14, 2 p.m. for Holy Trinity, Edinburgh, and St. Rose of Lima, Franklin
- Dec. 17, 7 p.m. for Our Lady of Providence, Brownsstown, and St. Ambrose, Seymour, at St. Ambrose, Seymour
- Dec. 21, 4 p.m. for American Martyrs, Scottsburg and St. Patrick, Salem at American Martyrs, Scottsburg

**French Lick**
- Dec. 9, 7 p.m. at St. Michael of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower)
- Dec. 10, 7 p.m. at St. Jude
- Dec. 14, 1:30 p.m. at Holy Family, New Albany
- Dec. 15, 7 p.m. at Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ
- Dec. 16, 7 p.m. at St. Jude
- Dec. 17, 7 p.m. at St. Mark the Evangelist
- Dec. 18, 6 p.m. at St. Barnabas
- Dec. 22, 7 p.m. at Our Lady of the Greenwood, Greenwood

**St. Joseph, Jennings County, at St. Joseph, Jennings County**
- Dec. 14, 7 p.m. for Holy Trinity, Edinburgh, and at St. Rose of Lima, Franklin

**St. Michael of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower)**
- Dec. 15, 7 p.m. at Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ
- Dec. 16, 7 p.m. at St. Jude
- Dec. 17, 7 p.m. at St. Mark the Evangelist
- Dec. 18, 6 p.m. at St. Barnabas
- Dec. 22, 7 p.m. at Our Lady of the Greenwood, Greenwood

**St. Michael the Archangel**
- Dec. 10, 7 p.m. at St. Michael, Bedford
- Dec. 14, 3 p.m. at Holy Family, New Albany
- Dec. 16, 7 p.m. at Our Lady of Perpetual Help, New Albany
- Dec. 17, 6:30 p.m. at St. John Paul II, Sellersburg
- Dec. 17, 7 p.m. at St. Anthony of Padua, Clarksville
- Dec. 17, 7 p.m. at St. Mary, Navillenton
- Dec. 21, 4 p.m. at St. John the Baptist, Starlight

**St. Simon the Apostle**
- Dec. 14, 2 p.m. deanery service at St. Simon the Apostle, Terre Haute

**St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower)**
- Dec. 15, 7 p.m. at Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ
- Dec. 16, 7 p.m. at St. Jude
- Dec. 17, 7 p.m. at St. Mark the Evangelist
- Dec. 18, 6 p.m. at St. Barnabas
- Dec. 22, 7 p.m. at Our Lady of the Greenwood, Greenwood

**St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) at St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower)**
- Dec. 15, 7 p.m. for Our Lady of Lourdes and St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower)
- Dec. 18, 7 p.m. at St. Mary

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- Dec. 18, 7 p.m. at St. Mary

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- Dec. 18, 7 p.m. at St. Mary

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

A priest hears the confession of a pilgrim on April 28 before a Mass of thanksgiving for the canonizations of St. John XXIII and John Paul II in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

Sisters Elizabeth Mary (left), 79, Carolyn (center), 99, and Bridget, 96, have together devoted more than 200 years to religious life. They and some 35,000 senior Catholic sisters, brothers, and religious order priests benefit from the Retirement Fund for Religious. Your gift helps furnish medications, nursing care, and more.

Retirement Fund for Religious

www.retiredreligious.org

Over 93 percent of donations aid senior religious.

To donate:
Archdiocese of Indianapolis
Mission Office
1400 North Meridian Street
Indianapolis IN 46202
Make check payable to Mission Office with Religious Retirement on memo line.
Or give at your local parish December 13–14.
Religious in Formation 2014-2015

“Religious should be men and women who are able to wake up the world.” - Pope Francis

WOMEN’S COMMUNITIES

Sisters of Providence of Saint-Mary-of-the-Woods
www.scheme.org

Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration
www.l omdat.org

Order of Friars Minor, Detroit Province
www.franciscan.org

Order of Friars Minor, Cincinnati Province
www.franciscan.org

Little Sisters of the Poor
www.littlesistersofthepoor.org

Missionaries of Charity
www.motherteresa.org

Sisters of St. Francis – Dayton, OH
www.sistersofstfrancissociety.org

Discalced Carmelite Nuns, Cistercian Order
www.discalcedcarmelites.org

Men’s Communities

INDY Vocations

Saint Meinrad Archabbey – Order of St. Benedict
www.saintmeinrad.org

Conventual Franciscan Friars
www.franciscanusa.org

Marian Friars – Franciscans of the Immaculate
www.marychildren.org

Conception Abbey, Conception, MO
www.conceptionabbey.org

Our Lady of Mount Carmel
www.ourladyofmountcarmel.org

The Catholic University of America
www.dcu.edu

University of Notre Dame
www.nd.edu

University of Chicago
www.uchicago.edu

University of St. Thomas
www.thomas.edu

Diana Querelle
www.dianaquerelle.com

Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota
www.smu.edu

University of Dayton
www.udayton.edu

Women of the Poor
www.womenofthepoor.org

St. John’s University
www.stjohns.edu

Union Theological Seminary
www.uts.edu

Union Presbyterian Seminary
www.upseminary.org

University of Mary
www.ourmary.edu

University of Mary Washington
www.umw.edu

St. Mary’s University of Minnesota
www.stmarys.edu

Women’s Communities

Sisters of St. Benedict
www.sistersofstbenedict.org

Sisters of St. Francis
www.sistersofstfrancissociety.org

Sisters of Providence
www.providence.org

Not Pictured
St. Mary Joseph of Jesus
www.stmaryofjesus.org

Sister of the Third Order
www.sistersofstfrancissociety.org

Franciscans of Oldenburg
www.oldenburgfranciscans.org

Discalced Carmelite Nuns, Terce Haute
www.discalved.org

Order of Friars Minor, Cincinnati Province
www.franciscan.org

Order of Friars Minor, Detroit Province
www.franciscan.org

Society of Jesus, Chicago-Detroit Province
www.jesuits-chicago.org

The Criterion Friday, December 5, 2014

Page 14
Faith

By Daniel S. Mulhall

Prophets played unique and essential roles in the history of the Jewish people. They served as God’s messengers, bringing words of wisdom, wonder and especially warning at auspicious times. We know many of their names because their stories and messages were saved for us in the Hebrew Scriptures, what Christians know as the Old Testament.

So we know the name Hosea, who described richly the nuptial relationship between God and his people. Jeremiah counseled faithfulness to God rather than political alliances. Isaiah foretold a bright future for an enslaved people if they would but put their trust wholeheartedly in God.

At the end of this long and distinguished list, we find the name of John, who was known as the Baptist, too, was one of God’s prophets. John the Baptist accompanies us during Advent in our readings, exhorting us to prepare the way for the Lord. From God’s point of view, as revealed in Scripture, preparedness is important, and John the Baptist offers us food for thought as we prepare to welcome Christ.

While the Old Testament prophets have books that bear their names, what little we know about John the Baptist comes from the synoptic Gospels: Matthew, Mark and Luke. Mark begins his Gospel account with the story of John the Baptist, the messenger of God: “As is written in Isaiah the prophet: ‘Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way. A voice of one crying out in the desert: “Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.”’” (Mk 1:2-3).

This is a call to prepare the way for the Lord in our own lives and through our lives to prepare people to prepare the way of the Lord. “For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance; but from everyone who has not, even what he has will be taken away” (Mk 4:28). This is a key dimension of preparing the way for the Lord.

John the Baptist was the last of a long line of prophets

Conversion is at the heart of the message of John the Baptist

By Fr. Lawrence E. Mick

Every year, on the second and third Sundays of Advent, we hear from the last of the Old Testament prophets: John the Baptist. He stands as a fulcrum at the junction of the Jewish covenant and the Christian era.

John’s role is to be a forerunner. His message calls people to prepare the way of the Lord. That message reminds us that God does not force his gifts upon us. We have to be open to God’s gifts, and be willing to welcome him into our heart and lives. The season of Advent reminds us every year of the importance of examining our lives to see what might be blocking the way of the Lord who comes to us, or perhaps more accurately, what is blocking us from coming to the Lord.

Describing himself in St. John’s Gospel, John the Baptist quotes Isaiah, saying, “I am the voice of one crying out in the desert, ‘make straight the way of the Lord.’” (Jn 1:23). We hear that passage this year on the Third Sunday of Advent.

The text from Isaiah that he quotes is heard on the Second Sunday of Advent, and it makes clear what preparing the way means: “Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill shall be made low; the rugged land shall be made a plain, the rough country, a broad valley” (Is 40:4). It means removing whatever obstacles stand in the way of a clear path between the Lord and our hearts.

St. Mark’s Gospel on the second Sunday tells us that John “appeared in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” (Mk 1:4). This is a key dimension of preparing the way for the Lord.

Sin, above all, prevents us from welcoming Christ fully. Most of our sins may seem minor, but even those sins keep us from opening our hearts completely to the Lord. While we may wish to welcome Christ, attachment to sinful behavior often stands in the way. That’s why parishes usually offer additional opportunities for confession as we move toward Christmas. Facing and changing our sinful habits is essential to welcoming Christ, just as it was for those who heard John the Baptist preach.

The Baptist might seem like a harsh and fearsome person, but it is important to remember that he was inviting people to turn their lives around to share in the kingdom of God and the joys that it offers. He was a key figure in God’s long-term plan to bring all people into the realm of his love and mercy.

On the Third Sunday of Advent, we also hear Isaiah proclaim, “He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the captive and release to the prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the Lord” (Is 61:1-2a). That’s a promise that underlies John the Baptist’s call to repent and prepare the way for the Lord.

(Edward Lawrence Mick is a priest of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.)†
**From the Editor Emeritus/John F. Fink**

Old Testament: Suffering is not a sign of wickedness

*(Forty-eighth in a series of columns)*

The Book of Job is the first of seven Wisdom books of the Testament. These books, which date back to the 10th century B.C., were written as an answer to some of the fundamental questions of life. Job is a story of the patient of Job is widely regarded as one of the literary masterpieces of all time.

Sometimes we hear our Lord speak of the “patience of Job” meaning that she or he is an extremely patient person. I wonder if, when we hear that expression ever past read the second chapter of the Book of Job.

In the first two chapters of this folklore, Job indeed is patient. After God permits Satan to afflict him severely, Job says merely: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I go back again. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; and there cannot be a time of incompleteness. It can be a time of complete numbness. It can be a time of incompleteness.

We accept good things as proof that suffering is not a sign of wickedness. It may be just what the widowhood is that life becomes like a list; mortgage-free home, and on and on. The years that follow, no matter how much a widow might or text at the last minute to tell you to be able to come. Accept the fact that the person’s love is gone and feel it.

I get upset over the story of how it came to pass that mom and grandmother were not raising the children, but I suspect it was a story of hopelessness. Martha told me that she would not make it without Ryves to care for her two great-granddaughters after the school and provide a meal each night during the week. Martha finds hope there at 14th and Locust.

I met Martha’s two great-granddaughters, who I believe were 16 and 17. I endeared her great-grandson has cerebral palsy, and isn’t able to get out much. The girls had just met me, but one of them wanted to give me a hug. I think that they could do that because they feel safe and loved there at Ryves.

Just like the Grinch’s heart which grew 10 sizes, mine expanded that day—mostly because of meeting this amazing woman who is grocery shopping rather than baby-sitting her great-grandmother. If I ever lose hope, I’ll think of Martha.

**Your Family/Bill Dodds**

Widowhood: the joys and sorrows of Christmas

As I head toward my second Christmas as a widow, I now know the challenges begin with Halloween.

Yes, Halloween. I know this sounds like a happy “couple” memories, it’s simply because it’s a lot of widows and widowers. The month of November is followed by Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year’s, one blow after another, in overlapping, unrelenting succession, pummeling an already broken heart.

There’s the realization that, on Earth, the best is not yet to come. The best has come and gone. For a widowed, no matter how happy the occasion, the gathering, the event, can be an uncomfortable fact that it was so much happier if our loved one had lived.

My first few days and weeks after the death of a spouse can be a time of complete numbness. She was gone, almost immediately.

And the years that follow, no matter how many years may follow, can be a time of incompleteness. It still astounds me how little I knew about widowhood before my wife died of uterine cancer in February 2013. Just as she had time to prepare for her death, I had time to prepare for her dying. But for how long could I simply didn’t know what it was like to have her gone. I didn’t know to God, I have a loving and supporting family, work, I value, health, financial stability, a mortgage-free home, and on and on. But one description I’ve heard of widowhood is that life becomes like a “list” of what you no longer have to do; spice or like a can of pop, soda, that has lost its fizz.

My weary world encounter the “miracle” Christmas. This is a time for the widowed, no matter how many years may follow, can be a time of incompleteness. It still astounds me how little I knew about widowhood before my wife died of uterine cancer in February 2013. Just as she had time to prepare for her death, I had time to prepare for her dying. But for how long could I simply didn’t know what it was like to have her gone.

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We accept good things as proof that suffering is not a sign of wickedness. It may be just what the widowhood is that life becomes like a list; mortgage-free home, and on and on. The years that follow, no matter how much a widow might or text at the last minute to tell you to be able to come. Accept the fact that the person’s love is gone and feel it.

I get upset over the story of how it came to pass that mom and grandmother were not raising the children, but I suspect it was a story of hopelessness. Martha told me that she would not make it without Ryves to care for her two great-granddaughters after the school and provide a meal each night during the week. Martha finds hope there at 14th and Locust.

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Just like the Grinch’s heart which grew 10 sizes, mine expanded that day—mostly because of meeting this amazing woman who is grocery shopping rather than baby-sitting her great-grandmother. If I ever lose hope, I’ll think of Martha.

**Faith, Hope and Charity/David Siler**

Look around: Does hope have an address near you?

John Etting, agency director of Catholic Charities in Terre Haute, likes to say that “hope has an address.” He will explain that he means the corner of 14th and Locust streets—where all of the programs of the Terre Haute agency can be found. For those who have lost everything, including hope, there is a gift available there.

There are many ways to describe poverty, but perhaps the best is that one of hope is the most devastating. All of us will, at one time or another, lose a job, our health or a loved one, but when hope is gone, there is really nothing left.

While recently visiting one of Catholic Charities programs in the archdiocese, Ryves Youth Program in Terre Haute, I met a woman named “Martha.” Martha is the great-grandmother of three special needs children, who is raising herself. She doesn’t get upset over the story of how it came to pass that mom and grandmother were not raising the children, but I suspect it was a story of hopelessness. Martha told me that she would not make it without Ryves to care for her two great-granddaughters after the school and provide a meal each night during the week. Martha finds hope there at 14th and Locust.

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He showed us with his very life that even in the midst of death, even the most brutal death, that there is hope—that life will always win over death, and God’s love will always remain.

Later this month, we will celebrate the birth of hope for all of humankind in the person of Jesus, who came to Earth to make us understand that we would never lose hope. He came to remind us that God loves us, and wants to be in a relationship with us. He showed us with his very life that even in the midst of death, even the most brutal death, that there is hope—that life will always win over death, and God’s love will always remain.

In a world that can often seem short on what are tangible gifts, how do we find that gift? Can hope be found at your workplace and in your home? (David Siler is executive director of the archdiocesan Secretariat for Catholic Charities and Family Ministries. E-mail him at diler@archindy.org)
Second Sunday of Advent/Msgr. Owen F Campion

Sunday Readings
Sunday, December 7, 2014

• Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11
• 2 Peter 3:18-14
• Mark 1:1-8

The second part of the Book of Isaiah provides the first reading for this Second Sunday of Advent. When this book was written, God’s people were very happy. Their long, dreary exile of four generations in Babylon was about to end. They were looking forward to returning to their homeland. This section of Isaiah captures well the joy and relief the people felt and their longing to return to their homeland. This passage also conveys well the important understanding that this happy circumstance has occurred as a result of God’s mercy and faithfulness to the covenant he had made with his people. It was not as if the people had earned God’s munificence in this regard, or that they had been unusually loyal to the covenant he had made with his people. Nevertheless, God’s mercy lives! So, the prophet insists that upon returning to their homeland, the people must go to Jerusalem, to the holy mountain where the temple once stood and proclaim there the goodness of God.

To any who doubt, this release from exile is proof of God’s existence and God’s love.

For its second reading this weekend, the Church presents a passage from the Second Epistle of St. Peter. Its theme differs from that of the first reading. The first reading was wonderfully optimistic. This reading is grim in its predictions of dark days and gloom.

However, it is not predicting everlasting death. Bad things will happen. Difficult times will come. But God will protect the faithful. In this last reassurance, the reading parallels the message of the first reading.

St. Mark’s Gospel furnishes the last reading.

It is the beginning of the Gospel, as the first verse of the reading states. And the opening verse indicates the purpose of this Scripture. It is the “Good News” about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. In these relatively few words, the entire reality of salvation is revealed. Something new is being proclaimed, utterly different from the sad moods and dreariness of human life, unbound by the variances of earthly existence.

The news, furthermore, is good! Jesus, the Son of God, both conveys this Good News and brings its effectiveness into human life.

This reading quotes Isaiah’s prophecy that God will send a representative to guide the people from death to life, from the deadly effects of their sins to the bright realms of God’s forgiveness. God has been true to this pledge. He gives us Jesus.

The Gospel then tells of John the Baptist, who went throughout Judea calling people to repentance. John recognized Jesus. Anyone can recognize Jesus, the Son of God. Too many, however, create an unrealistic image, an invention to confirm the easy way out or an excuse from the task of genuine conversion.

Reflection

In Advent, the Church clearly and frankly calls people to remember who they are and to recognize the devastating results of sin. Such was the message of John the Baptist.

These steps require frankness and humility. First, we must admit our sinfulness and human limitations. We must see what sin actually is—total estrangement from and rejection of God. It is the cause of eternal death, and often of misery in earthly existence.

The ultimate message, nevertheless, is not doom and gloom. While we are limited and have sinned, while we may have made quite a mess for ourselves and for others, all of this week’s readings remind us that God’s mercy is overwhelming and unending. So we have reason to hope. God will forgive us. He will strengthen us.

The key to obtaining this mercy is in admitting our personal sins and repenting. God does not drag us kicking and screaming into heaven, so we must wholeheartedly turn to God.

Daily Readings

Monday, December 8
The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Genesis 3:9-15, 20
Psalm 98:1-4, 6-9
Ephesians 3:16-11, 12-16
Luke 1:26-38

Tuesday, December 9
St. Juan Diego Cuauhtlatocztin
Isaiah 40:1-11
Psalm 96:1-3, 10-11, 13
Matthew 18:12-14

Wednesday, December 10
Isaiah 40:25-31
Psalm 103:1-4, 8, 10
Matthew 11:28-30

Thursday, December 11
St. Damasus I, pope
Isaiah 41:13-20
Psalm 145:1-5, 9-13b
Matthew 11:11-15

Friday, December 12
Our Lady of Guadalupe
Zechariah 2:14-17
Psalm 109:24-27, 28-31
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
John 1:6-8, 19-28

Question Corner/Fr. Kenneth Doyle

The beliefs people have about God can make a difference in their lives

Please help me to know how to answer people who say, “It doesn’t matter what religion or beliefs you have, since we’re all going to the same place anyway.”

A quote you recently struck me as a species of what the Second Vatican Council called “false irenicism.” That is a fancy expression to describe the habit of playing down doctrinal differences for the sake of keeping the peace. (It comes from the Greek word “eirene,” meaning “peace.”) The council’s “Decree on Ecumenism,” said: “Nothing is so foreign to the spirit of ecumenism as a false irenicism, in which the purity of Catholic doctrine suffers loss and its genuine and certain meaning is clouded” (#11).

Simply put, what people believe matters. If I believe that God revealed himself by coming to Earth in the person of Jesus, then I consider myself obligated to examine seriously what Jesus had to say and to align myself with whatever religious institution carries that teaching forward most faithfully.

At the same time, we acknowledge that God, through mysterious means known only to himself, can act outside the Church, even non-Christians, through the grace of Christ.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church explicitly affirms this belief, referencing Vatican II’s “Dogmatic Constitution on the Church,” where it says: “Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart and moved, by grace, in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience—those too may achieve eternal salvation” (#847).

I, along with the Church, believe that Catholicism is the fulcrum of the help along the way to heaven that God intends for all humanity to have. This especially includes the teaching and liturgy of the Church teaching, since the truth of its fundamental doctrines is guaranteed by Christ. I, for one, am supremely grateful to be a Catholic and, to me, it makes a very big difference indeed. Sometimes things happen in life that we have no control over. You marry and your partner is unfaithful or cruel, or he

Readers may submit prose or poetry for faith column

The Criterion invites readers to submit original prose or poetry relating to faith or experiences of prayer for possible publication in the “My Journey to God” column.

Seasonal reflections also are appreciated. Please include name, address, parish and telephone number with submission.

Send material for consideration to “My Journey to God,” The Criterion, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202 or e-mail to theodore@archindy.org

My Journey to God

Where is the Crowd Waiting for Jesus?

By Thomas J. Rillo

A little boy holding his mother’s hand has anxiety eyes searching
They move through the dense crowds in a busy shopping mall
He asked her if the crowd was waiting for the coming of Jesus
Why are they not waiting in line for baby Jesus?
No, my son there are a tense materialistic quest
For them there is no spiritual reprieve or grace
No, Jesus will not be in the mall
this is not his thing
The place where we will find Jesus is not this way
Let’s go out to the little church it is not far away
You know the one with the manger we will find Jesus there
There will be no crowd waiting just a few simple people
They wait to welcome the child we will see Jesus there
In the hearts and faces of the people we will see Jesus imitated in them
The crowds that waited for Jesus existed long ago
We will meet Jesus inside the church there we will kneel and pray
For you see my son Jesus is the light and the way.

Question Corner

Fr. Kenneth Doyle

The technical answer to your question is this: Sins are forgiven in confession when a person is sorry for them and has a “firm purpose of amendment.” In other words, the person has the sincere intention of changing the behavior being confessed. When a person is divorced and has remarried outside the Church, they may be sorry for the circumstances which led to this, but rarely do they intend to change their status by leaving the second marriage.

But you deserve much more than a technical answer. I have deep sympathy for the situation you describe, and pray that the Church will find a way to deal appropriately with such complex circumstances. There is strong evidence that the bishops gathered at the October 2014 synod were aware of your pain and that experienced many Catholics in the situation you described.

(Questions may be sent to Father Kenneth Doyle or askfatherdoyle@gmail.com and 40 Hopewell St., Albany, N.Y. 12208)
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.


**NOONE, John E., 87.** Christ the King, Indianapolis, Nov. 24. Husband of Carolyn Noone. Father of Barry and Brian Sweeney. Uncle of several.


**WILLETT, Mary Ruth (Beckham), 74.** Prince of Peace, Madison, Nov. 21. Wife of James Willett. Mother of April Chilton and Karen Lewis. Sister of Martha Floyd, John and Martin Beckham. Grandmother of one.†

Praying for peace

Pope Francis releases doves prior to celebrating Mass at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit in Istanbul on Nov. 29.

Franciscan Sister Laurencia Listerman ministered for 50 years in Catholic schools

Franciscan Sister Laurencia Listerman died on Nov. 20, 2014, at the motherhouse of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis in Oldenburg. She was 101.

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

Sister Laurencia Listerman was born on April 25, 1913, in St. Bernard, Ohio. She entered the Sisters of St. Francis on Sept. 7, 1931, and professed final vows on July 2, 1937.

During 83 years as a Sister of St. Francis, Sister Laurencia ministered as an educator for 50 years in Catholic schools in Indiana, Missouri and Ohio. In the archdiocese, she served at St. Mary School in North Vernon, Oldenburg Academy of the Immaculate Conception in Oldenburg, the former St. Mary Academy and Father Thomas Scrinca Memorial High School, both in Indianapolis.

Beginning in 1984, she returned to the motherhouse and ministered to the retired sisters there. She dedicated herself to prayer beginning in 1996.

Sister Laurencia is survived by several nieces and nephews. Memorial gifts may be sent to the Sisters of St. Francis, Oldenburg, IN 47038-0100.†

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House

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New Year’s Eve Retreat

“A Journey of Gratitude” with Fr. Keith Hosey and Sr. Mo Mangen

December 31, 2014 – January 1, 2015

Join us for this special evening of reflection, worship and prayer to bring in the New Year!

Life is a journey of joy and sorrow, of life and death, and rebirth. Fr. Keith and Sr. Moore will lead us through a reflection on our life experiences in 2014 with a focus on all that God has blessed us with. Giving special attention to these seasons of our life can help us to better grasp the beauty that we behold.

Cost: $118/person $256/couple

Includes snacks, a festive dinner, a complimentary champagne toast at midnight, overnight accommodations, brunch, the program and materials.

To register or find out more about this program, visit us at: www.archindy.org/fatima or call us at 317-545-7681.
Francisco Carbonell, left, was the first-place winner in a prestigious international competition for music composers earlier this year—another moment of joy in the life of the native of Spain who is the director of music at St. John the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis. (Submitted photo by Megan Fish)
Students aim high in leading village’s special Christmas event

By John Shaughnessy

Jonathon Maple wanted a challenge for his high school students. He also wanted a way for his students to help the small Indiana community that has always been generous to their school. Both dreams will blend in a special way on Dec. 6 when the village of Oldenburg will host its annual “Holidays Under the Spires”—a town-wide Christmas celebration featuring carolers, roving musicians, an Advent Mass, a children’s area and a performance by a German folk choir befitting the community’s ethnic heritage.

And it’s all being planned by the 19 students who form the National Business Honor Society chapter at Oldenburg Academy of the Immaculate Conception.

“We were looking for a service project to benefit the community,” says Maple, a teacher at the private Catholic school and the moderator of the business honor group. “I was talking with a few local businesspersons, and they suggested this event. Mary Beth Kerker, who normally does it, has had a very busy year. The kids have provided a new outlook, a new energy and a focus on making it a great event.

The student business group has been planning “Holidays Under the Spires” for months, all the time thinking of new festivities for the event while promoting it in every way possible—from creating a website to carrying signs and handing out candy canes while marching in Batesville’s recent holiday parade.

“It’s very reassuring that the town of Oldenburg is happy to have us plan the event,” says Kirsten Ricke, a senior from St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Decatur County. “This event means a lot to them, so it says a lot about how they think of us to let us do this. With everything we’ve added, it’s going to be a lot of fun.”

Children will be able to make ornaments, decorate a gingerbread house and have breakfast with Santa. “We’re having a mailbox where little kids can write letters to Santa, and members of our group will respond to the children as elves,” says Ella Lamping, a senior from St. Louis Parish in Batesville.

“We also hope people will get the feel of the German heritage of the town.”

Working toward that goal, the group has lined up a German folk choir from Cincinnati—the Kolping Society Sangenchor. The choir will be part of the celebration of Mass at 5:30 p.m. on Dec. 6 in Holy Family Church in Oldenburg. The singers will also perform at 7 p.m. in the Sisters of St. Francis Chapel.

A year ago, Sarah Wilder was one of the Oldenburg Academy musicians playing “Jingle Bells” and “The First Noel” as they roamed through the streets entertaining visitors. This year, the senior violinist from St. Louis Parish in Batesville has been busy creating the Facebook account for the celebration.

“It’s fun to see people around the area come to enjoy something like this,” Sarah says. “Planning the event has definitely been a challenge, but I think we’re all up for the challenge.”

Senior Ryne Domingo wants to see how people respond to the fresh approach. “There’s been a lot of interest from people inside of Oldenburg and outside of Oldenburg,” says Ryne, a member of St. Mary Parish in Greensburg. “People are looking forward to it.”

For more information, visit www.holidaysunderthespires.com.

Holidays Under December First Saturday in December www.holidaysunderthespires.com

And when Bill Hicks recently became the third person to be honored with the award from the National Speech and Debate Association, the longtime teacher at Brebeuf Jesuit Preparatory School in Indianapolis was perfectly pleased. Yet, the real thrill came when the news spread to his former students who used Facebook and Twitter to congratulate him and thank him for his influence on their lives.

“Knowing they’re being successful is a bigger thrill for me than a nice plaque,” said Hicks, a 70-year-old teacher who has been teaching speech and debate for 48 years, including the past 31 at Brebeuf. Hicks received the National Speech and Debate Association’s “Distinguished Service Plaque—Eleventh Honors.”

“The award recognizes coaches who have helped serve the association by sponsoring new chapters, serving as a district or national officer, hosting and/or managing tournaments, and speaking or writing about speech and debate education,” stated J. Scott Wunn, the association’s executive director.

On Dec. 6, for the 31st year in a row, Hicks will direct the Brebeuf Speech Tournament for sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade students from across the state. Students from the Indianapolis schools of St. Jude, St. Luke the Evangelist and St. Thomas Aquinas have traditionally excelled at the event.

Hicks has his own measure of success for the 20-30 Brebeuf students who take his speech and debate class each year.

“The number one fear for people is speaking in public. My goal in my classes is to get every student up and talking as much as possible—and improving. Communication skills are what I’m working at, especially in this age of social media when people don’t look at each other eye to eye.”

(Send short summaries of your school’s success stories to assistant editor John Shaughnessy by e-mail to jshaughnessy@archindy.org or by mail in care of The Criterion, 1400 V. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202. Please include a contact person for your school’s story and a phone number where he or she can be reached.)