Cardinal calls youths to extend Christ’s kingdom during NCYC’s closing Mass

By Sean Gallagher

As 23,000 youths from across the country worshipped together during the closing Mass of the National Catholic Conference (NCYC) in Indianapolis, Leanna Long felt “amazingly overwhelmed” to be in the midst of so many people who shared her faith.

She attended the conference from her home in North Carolina, where Catholics are a small minority of the overall population.

“We know the Church is large,” said Leanna, a member of St. Thomas More Parish in Chapel Hill, N.C., in the Raleigh Diocese. “But to be able to see it and know that I’m not alone [is helpful].”

“We’re told that where two or three are gathered, [Jesus] is in your presence. Well, I’m one of one in my school. Is God with me still? The answer is, ‘Yes.’ Even though I’m in North Carolina and someone else is in New Hampshire, we’re still praying together. We’re still gathered together, and he’s there.”

In her words, Leanna captured the Church’s youthful vitality and diverse universality. Both were on display on Nov. 21 as conference attendees were led in worship on the feast of Christ the King by Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga of Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

During his opening remarks at the bilingual Mass celebrated in English and Spanish, Cardinal Rodriguez shared with his young listeners the mission they were being given as they returned to the Church’s youth ministry.

See related stories and photos, pages 3, 7-14 and 20.
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. 4, 10 a.m.-10 p.m. at All Saints, Dearborn County, at the Yorkville campus
- Dec. 6, 1-3 p.m. at Immaculate Conception, Millhousen
- Dec. 9, 7 p.m. at St. Peter, Franklin County
- Dec. 9, 7 p.m. at St. Mary, Greensburg
- Dec. 10, 7 p.m. at St. Louis, Batesville
- Dec. 16, 7 p.m. at St. Michael the Archangel, Brookville
- Dec. 17, 7 p.m. at St. Catherine of Siena, Decatur County, at the Enoshoo campus

Bloomington Deanery
- Dec. 9, 6:30 p.m. at St. Paul Catholic Center, Bloomington
- Dec. 10, 7 p.m. at St. Vincent de Paul, Bedford
- Dec. 14, 7 p.m. at St. Martin of Tours, Martinsville
- Dec. 15, 7 p.m. at St. Agnes, Nashville
- Dec. 16, 6:30 p.m. at St. Jude, Spencer
- Dec. 17, 6 p.m. at the John the Apostle, Bloomington
- Dec. 20, 1:30 p.m. at St. Charles Borromeo, Bloomington

Connersville Deanery
- Dec. 10, 6:30 p.m. at St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Rushville
- Dec. 14, 7 p.m. at St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Cambridge City
- Dec. 16, 6:30 p.m. at St. Gabriel, Connersville
- Dec. 22, 6 p.m., following 5:15 p.m. Mass for Richmond Catholic Community at St. Mary, Richmond
- Dec. 23, 7 p.m. at St. Rose, Knightstown

Indianapolis East Deanery
- Nov. 30, 7 p.m. for Our Lady of Lourdes and St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) at Our Lady of Lourdes
- Dec. 1, 7 p.m. at St. Thomas the Apostle, Fortville
- Dec. 2, 7:30 p.m. at Holy Spirit
- Dec. 3, 7 p.m. at St. Philip Neri
- Dec. 10, 6:30 p.m. at St. Michael, Greenwood
- Dec. 14, 7 p.m. for Holy Angels and St. Rita at St. Rita
- Dec. 16, 7 p.m. at St. Mary

Indianapolis North Deanery
- Dec. 13, 2 p.m. at St. Luke the Evangelist
- Dec. 14, 7 p.m. at St. Luke the Evangelist
- Dec. 15, 7 p.m. at St. Luke the Evangelist

Indianapolis South Deanery
- Dec. 7, 2 p.m. at Good Shepherd
- Dec. 9, 6 p.m. at St. Barnabas
- Dec. 10, 7 p.m. at St. Mark the Evangelist, and St. Roch at St. Roch
- Dec. 14, 6:30 p.m. at Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ
- Dec. 15, 7 p.m. at St. Jude
- Dec. 15, 7 p.m., for St. Joseph and St. Ann at St. Ann
- Dec. 19, 9 a.m. at SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi, Greenwood
- Dec. 21, 7 p.m. at Our Lady of the Greenwood, Greenwood

Indianapolis West Deanery
- Dec. 4, 7 p.m. at Holy Angels
- Dec. 9, 7 p.m. at Mary, Queen of Peace, Danville
- Dec. 9, 7 p.m. at St. Michael the Archangel
- Dec. 10, 7 p.m. at St. Susanna, Plainfield
- Dec. 15, 7 p.m. at St. Joseph
- Dec. 16, 7 p.m. at St. Gabriel the Archangel
- Dec. 21, 7 p.m. at St. Thomas More, Mooresville
- Dec. 22, 7 p.m. at St. Monica

New Albany Deanery
- Dec. 3, 7 p.m. at St. Augustine, Jeffersonville
- Dec. 9, 7 p.m. at St. Mary, Navollet
- Dec. 9, 7 p.m. at St. Michael, Charlestown
- Dec. 10, 7 p.m. at St. Mary, Lanesville
- Dec. 15, 7 p.m. at Our Lady of Perpetual Help, New Albany
- Dec. 16, 6:30 p.m. for St. John Paul II, Sellersburg, at St. Paul Chapel, Sellersburg
- Dec. 17, 7 p.m. at Holy Family, New Albany
- Dec. 20, 4 p.m. at St. John the Baptist, Starlight

Seymour Deanery
- Dec. 10, 6:30 p.m. for St. Ann, Jennings County, St. Mary, North Vernon; and St. Joseph, Jennings County, at St. Joseph, Jennings County
- Dec. 13, 2 p.m. for Holy Trinity, Edinburgh, and St. Rose of Lima, Franklin
- Dec. 16, 7 p.m. for Our Lady of Providence, Brownstown, and St. Ambrose, Seymour, at St. Ambrose, Seymour
- Dec. 17, 7 p.m. at St. Bartholomew, Columbus
- Dec. 20, 4 p.m. for American Martyrs, Scottsburg, and St. Patrick, Salem, at American Martyrs, Scottsburg

Tell City Deanery
- Dec. 9, 6:30 p.m. at St. Meinrad, Tell City
- Dec. 13, 2 p.m. at St. Paul, Tell City

Terre Haute Deanery
- Dec. 9, 1:30 p.m., deanery service at St. Margaret Mary, Terre Haute
- Dec. 9, 7:30 p.m., deanery service at St. Joseph University, Terre Haute
- Dec. 16, 7 p.m., deanery service at Sacred Heart, Clinton

Advent resources are available on archdiocesan Web site

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 covers, and links of interest to other Advent websites.

Tell us how mercy and forgiveness have made a difference in your life

Readers are invited to share favorite Christmas memories

The Criterion invites readers to submit a brief story about a special holiday memory for possible inclusion in our annual Christmas issue, which will be published on Dec. 18.

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

Submissions should include the writer’s name, address, parish and telephone number.

Send your story to The Criterion, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202. Please include your parish and a daytime phone number where you can be reached.

We are also seeking stories from our readers who have shown mercy and forgiveness to others—and how that act of mercy and forgiveness has made a difference to the person offering it.

Please send your stories and responses to assistant editor John Shaughnessy by e-mail at jshaughnessy@archindy.org or by mail in care of The Criterion, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202. Please include your parish and a daytime phone number where you can be reached.

Pope Francis has declared a “Holy Year of Mercy” in the Church, starting on Dec. 8 and continuing through Nov. 20, 2016. As part of the “Year of Mercy,” The Criterion is inviting our readers to share their stories of how their lives have been graced by the mercy and forgiveness of God and other people—and how that mercy and forgiveness have made a difference in your life.

(The to see Pope Francis’ monthly intentions, go to www ewtn.com/faith/papalPrayer.htm)
NCYC helps ‘young people have an encounter with Christ,’ organizer says

By John Shaughnessy

The scene moved Kay Scoville to tears—a moment she regards as one of the many blessings from all her work and planning for the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) in Indianapolis on Nov. 19-21. The scene unfolded in the early evening of Nov. 19 as Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin lifted the Blessed Sacrament during the closing Mass of the National Catholic Youth Conference on Nov. 21 while Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin prays with him. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

In addition to the 23,000 youths participating in the Mass, approximately 250 priests celebrated. The liturgy also featured 18 bishops, 50 deacons and 50 seminarians.

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis has hosted the last three conferences, which were held every two years. It is scheduled to host the next one in 2017. NCYC is sponsored by the National Federation of Catholic Youth Ministry.

While many Catholic youths traveled thousands of miles to attend NCYC, Frankie Auriemma’s trip to the conference only took about 20 minutes. A member of St. Susanna Parish in Plainfield, Frankie was proud that the archdiocese was his hometown. His family brought him to the conference which began on Nov. 19, and took place in the Indiana Convention Center and Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis. And when you see young people embracing a devotion that’s been around for thousands of years, that just re-energizes your own faith, knowing we’re passing along the faith to them.

Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga of Tegucigalpa, Honduras, left, holds up the Eucharist during the closing Mass of the National Catholic Youth Conference on Nov. 21 while Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin prays with him. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

Cardinal Rodriguez later exhorted his “young brothers and sisters … to spread the reign of love, with all the values of the Kingdom. The kingdom of Christ, he said, is “the salt of the Earth, the light of the world, the leaven of the dough, a sign of salvation in order to build a more just world, more brotherly, one based on Gospel values, the hope and eternal joy to which we are all called.”

The feast of Christ the King also leads the Church to consider its ultimate fulfillment at the end of time, and the relevance of that future event to the world here and now, he said.

“Today’s feast is like experiencing an anticipation of the second coming of Christ in power and majesty, the glorious coming which will fill the hearts and will dry forever the tears of unhappiness,” Cardinal Rodriguez said. “And, at the same time, it is an encouragement to make real this experience of the Kingdom coming by our good works, because the hope of a new Earth should not scare us.

“Rather, it should strengthen our commitment to cultivate the Earth, where that body of a new human family grows and can give us an advance taste of the new world.”

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(Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga of Tegucigalpa, Honduras, left, holds up the Eucharist during the closing Mass of the National Catholic Youth Conference on Nov. 21 while Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin prays with him. (Photo by Sean Gallagher) 

Concelebrating priests pray during the closing Mass for the National Catholic Youth Conference on Nov. 21. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

A woman leads deaf participants in signing the Gloria during the closing Mass for the National Catholic Youth Conference on Nov. 21. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

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A woman leads deaf participants in signing the Gloria during the closing Mass for the National Catholic Youth Conference on Nov. 21. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)
Parents and sex education

While some parents might be happy to avoid the awkward conversations that arise around human sexuality by allowing the school system to provide all of their children’s sex education, it is nonetheless important for parents to recognize that they are the most significant teachers and models for their own children as they move forward.

Instilling a healthy attitude about sexuality in young people involves a variety of considerations, including conveying a proper sense of constraints and boundaries. These boundaries arise organically through the virtue of chastity, by which a person acquires the ability to renounce self, to make sacrifices and to wait generously in consideration of loving fidelity toward a future spouse, out of self-respect, and out of fidelity to God. This critical process of developing sexual self-mastery is an area where parents are particularly well suited to help their children.

At the end of the day, the parental duty to influence in a positive way a child’s upbringing around sexuality cannot be abdicated or delegated. Parents know their children in a personal and individual way, and are able to determine their readiness for, and receptivity to, sexual information. Moreover, the reality of parental love toward their children enables a parent to say certain “hard things” in love that may need to be said, in a manner that only a parent can say it. It is a balanced and loving approach.

I recall the story that a middle-aged woman once shared with me about something that happened when she was 12. She was at home watching TV with her mother, who was the strong authority figure in her life.

At a certain moment, a scene came across the screen where a woman was removing her clothing and dancing in front of a group of men. Her mother glanced over at her and without skipping a beat said, “I’ll kill you if you ever even look at that.” Her daughter understood, of course, that she didn’t mean it literally, but appreciated that her mother cared enough about her to be very direct: “What my Mom said on that and many other occasions stayed with me for years afterward, and helped me to reflect carefully on the right use of my sexuality.”

Many parents experience their children in thousands of different ways, sometimes not even realizing how particular comments or observations they make may be highly significant to their child’s thinking.

Helping children to think correctly about human sexuality remains a delicate and challenging task in the midst of a sex-saturated society like our own. Indeed, our thoughts about human sexuality can easily go off the rails, and sexual activity itself can quickly degrade into a selfish and preferential kind of activity, even within marriage, if we are not careful to attend to deeper realities.

Reflection

Sean Gallagher

Work with God’s help to foster solidarity in the face of terror

The Islamic State militants that carried out horrifying terrorist attacks in Paris on Nov. 13 intended, at least in part, to rip apart the harmony of human solidarity. They wanted to foster an atmosphere of fear that divides humanity between, in their eyes, true believers and infidels. Moreover, there are conflicts all around our Earth in which people are set against each other and where violence rules. This has tragically been the case since the dawn of humanity when Cain raised his hand against his brother Abel.

But God did not create a world to be ruled by the principle that might makes right. He foresaw from all eternity a world in which people were to live in love and harmony with him, each other and creation as a whole. Adam and Eve’s original sin shattered this harmony in ways that continue to reverberate today. And in sending Jesus, his Son, God gave us the means to overcome conflict and division. God’s original plan in its fullness won’t be restored until Christ’s return comes. But he calls us to advance this harmony here and now with the power that his ever-present grace gives us.

Despite the vicious attacks in Paris that sought to divide people even further, the harmony that God intends in creation was not in the offing. The human race was soon on display as people around the world showed their solidarity with the suffering people of France.

Famous buildings and monuments around the world were bathed in the colors of the French flag. That flag was carried into football and basketball stadiums across the country alongside the American flag. And people around the world changed their profile photo on Facebook, Twitter and other social media platforms to show their solidarity with the French. This show of unity in the wake of the attacks, however, may have been attributed as much to the fact that Paris is much like the cities in which so many people lived in the developed western world live, as to the nature of the attack itself.

For on the day before the attacks in Paris, two Islamic State suicide bombers killed all people in Beirut. In response to that, though, I didn’t see people rushing to put the flag of Lebanon on social media platforms like Facebook. Our embrace of those who suffer needs to be widened. The unjust victims of violence wherever it occurs are lovingly held in the compassionate hands of God. But he empowers us to be tangible and visible instruments of that compassion to people who bear the burden of injustice and war.

We can do this through supporting Catholic Relief Services (www.crs.org), the U.S. bishops’ international aid agency, or supporting or volunteering for the Refugee Immigration Services office of Catholic Charities Indianapolis (www.catholicindy.org) to help former victims of violence and natural disasters where they live around the world.

The bishops of the Diocese of Indianapolis international refugees, such as people fleeing from ethnic and religious persecution or war.

Prayer, of course, is a means to foster solidarity that cannot be ignored or downplayed. Likewise, focusing on promoting the harmony that God intended can seem impossible. And, through humanity alone.

But when we invoke God’s help in prayer, and cooperate daily with his grace, we contribute step by step to the restoration of his original vision for harmony among himself, humanity and all creation.

Sean Gallagher is a reporter for The Criterion. (See Gallagher, page 14.)
The days are coming, says the Lord. Are we ready?

The days are coming, says the Lord. Are we ready?

A dvent, which begins on Sunday, Nov. 29, is a time of preparation, an opportunity to begin anew by placing first things first. The first and second readings for the First Sunday of Advent are hope-filled: “The days are coming, says the Lord. When I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and Judah, I will raise up for David a just shoot; he shall do what is right and just in the land.” (Lk 21:17–25)

What does it mean to be ready?

We keep our hearts from becoming drowsy by paying attention to the needs of others and by constant acts of love and service. When we are focused on the good of others, rather than on our own wants and desires, we can shake off disappointment, self-centeredness and anxiety. Nothing stimulates a drowsy heart more effectively than a simple act of kindness. Nothing can ensure we will remain vigilant better than active engagement with our sisters and brothers in need.

Pope Francis consistently urges us to be a Church that is engaged with others, especially those who are most in need, “on the peripheries.” Why? Because that is what Christ did and what he asks us, his followers, to do in his name.

The Gospel for the First Sunday of Advent admonishes us: “Be vigilant at all times and pray that you have the strength to escape the tribulations that are imminent and to stand before the Son of Man” (Lk 21:36). These are strong words of warning, but they are also words of Advent hope. The Lord will come again as promised. Let’s do our part and make sure we’re wide awake and fully prepared for “the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his holy ones” (1 Thes 3:13)!”

—Vienen días —dice el Señor.— ¿Estamos preparados?

La temporada de Adviento que comienza el 29 de noviembre, es una época de preparación, una oportunidad para un nuevo comienzo y dar prioridad a lo que es verdaderamente importante.

La primera y la segunda lectura del Primer Domingo de Adviento están repletas de esperanza: “—Vienen días —dice el Señor— en que vosotros confirmaréis las buenas promesas que he hecho a la Iglesia en la tierra. En esos días Judá será salvado, y en las estrellas. En la tierra, la gente será enteramente engañada por causa del bramido del mar y de las olas. El miedo y la expectación de las cosas que sobrevendrán en la tierra hasta que los tiempos de la desolación, y los tiempos de la desolación, y los tiempos...” (Lc 21:34–36).

Estamos tentados a ver señales del fin de los tiempos en cada época. La advertencia de Nuestro Señor que “en la tierra, la gente se angustiará” (Lc 21:25). Nos resulta muy conocida. Esto es especialmente cierto desde los horrores de Hiroshima y Nagasaki, al final de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, ya que desde entonces hemos vivido bajo la amenaza de que sobrevenga un holocausto inimaginable a consecuencia de nuestra crueldad. Esa es una de las razones por la que la Iglesia nos exhorta a mantenernos “siempre atentos” (Lc 23:36).

Nunca se sabe cuándo sobrevendrá la desgracia, ya sea individualmente, en nuestras familias, comunidades o países. Lo que sí sabemos es que Dios es fiel, que cumple con lo que promete y que no dejará que sucumbamos a las fuerzas del mal que nos rodean más que cualquier otra época en el futuro.

¿Qué significa estar preparados? La temporada delAdviento nos recuerda que debemos concentrarnos en todo aquello que es verdaderamente importante. ¿Que nos animamos a dejar de lado nuestros deseos, nuestra indolencia, y tener en cuenta los de otros? ¿Nos dedicamos a escuchar a los demás? ¿No buscamos un simple acto de amabilidad, como lo dice San Pablo “santos e irreprensibles” (1 Tes 3:13)?

A partir de la Epístola de San Pablo a los Efesios, el 3 de diciembre, comienza la temporada de Adviento. Así, en cada momento, en vez de atender a nuestros propios deseos y anhelos, nos despojamos del descontento, el egoísmo y la vanidad, Nuestro Señor nos exhorta más a un corazón aletargado que un simple acto de amabilidad. La mejor garantía para mantenernos atentos es interactuar activamente con nuestros hermanos y hermanas necesitados.

El papa Francisco nos exhorta sistemáticamente a que seamos una Iglesia que interacciona con los demás, especialmente con los más necesitados o “que se encuentren en la periferia”. ¿Por qué? Porque eso es lo que hizo Cristo y lo que nos pide a nosotros, los seguidores, que hagamos en su nombre.

El evangelio del Primer Domingo de Adviento nos presenta la siguiente exhortación: “Por lo tanto, manténase siempre atentos, y oren para que se les considere dignos de escapar de todo lo que habrá de suceder, y de presentarse ante el Hijo del Hombre” (Lc 21:36).

Estas son fuertes palabras de advertencia, pero también son palabras llenas de la esperanza del adviento. El Señor vendrá a estar con nosotros, como lo anunció a su discípulo en el Evangelio de Mateo “cuando venga nuestro Señor Jesucristo con todos sus santos” (1 Tes 3:13).”

Redactado por: Daniela Guanipa
Our Lady of the Greenwood Church, 335 S. Meridian St., Greenwood. First Friday celebration of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mass, 8:45 p.m.; exposition of the Blessed Sacrament following Mass until 9:30 p.m.; sacrament of reconciliation available. Information: 317-888-2861 or info@lumen.org.

St. Lawrence Church, 6941 E. 46th St., Indianapolis. Charismatic Mass, praise and worship, 7 p.m.; Mass and healing prayer, 7:30 p.m. Model train display, 11 a.m.-noon. Information: 317-666-4854.

Most Holy Name of Jesus Parish, 89 N. 17th Ave., Beech Grove. First Friday devotion, exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, 5:30 p.m.; reconciliation, 5:45-6:45 p.m.; Mass, 7 p.m.; Litany of the Sacred Heart and prayers for the Holy Father, 7:30 p.m. Information: 317-784-5454.

December 5

 Helpers of God’s Precious Infants Prayer Vigil, Terre Haute. 7:30 a.m. Mass at the Carmelite Monastery at 59 Allendale. 9:25 a.m. parking on Ohio Blvd., 9:30 a.m. assemble on sidewalk in front of Planned Parenthood at 30 S. 3rd St. for prayers, 10 a.m. travel to St. Patrick Adoration Chapel at 1807 Poplar St. for Divine Mercy Chapel, completed around 10:30 a.m. St. Michael Church, 145 S. Michael Blvd., Brookville. First Saturday Devotional Prayer Group, Mass, Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, rosary, confession, meditation, 8 a.m. Information: 765-647-5462.

St. John the Evangelist Church, 126 W. Georgia St., Indianapolis. St. Brigid’s Parish, 3190 Southport Rd., Indianapolis. Perpetual Adoration Day of Reflection for Single Catholic Women, ages 16-30, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Includes lunch, adoration, confession, vespers. Information and registration: cdfp.org/retreats.

December 6

Marian University, 3200 Cold Spring Road, Indianapolis. A. Michael Evans Center for Faith and Science, Indianapolis. Richard G. Lugar Franciscan Center for Global Studies Speaker Series, “America and the World.” Former Sen. Richard G. Lugar, presenter. 6 p.m. Information: maple@moran.edu or 317-955-6775.

Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish, 15301 Union St., Indianapolis. St. Nicholas dinner and Indianapolis Maennerchor Concert, 6 p.m., $15 per person, tickets are presale no tickets at the door. Information: shepartrp18@sheygel.net or 317-638-5551.

Most Holy Name of Jesus Parish, 89 N. 17th St., Beech Grove. Christmas bazaar, craft and holiday bazaar, white elephant booth, chili luncheon, 12:30-4:30 p.m. Information: 317-784-9124 or info@lumen.org.

St. Mary’s of the Rock Parish, 17440 S. Mary’s Road, Batesville. Preservation Society, horse and wagon, Christmas bazaar and pancake breakfast, 7 a.m.-noon, free will donation. Information: 812-934-6348.

December 8

St. Paul Hermitage, 501 N. 17th Ave., Beech Grove. Ave Maria Guild, Children’s charity and pitch-in luncheon, noon. Information: 317-888-7625 or vlagen@adams.net.

Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Christmas Tree Farm at 5012 N. Brown St., Terre Haute. Information: 812-535-2932 or provctr@spsmw.org.

December 13

Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, 15301 Union St., Indianapolis. Advent/Christmas concert, 2 p.m., reception following concert, no charge. Information: 317-638-5551 or shepartrp18@sheygel.net.

St. Michael the Archangel Church, 3352 W. 30th St., Indianapolis. First Annual CYO Wrestling Coaching Symposium, 3 p.m.-6 p.m., charge, Mass; 5:30 p.m. Information: 317-926-0156 or lindsay@adams.net.

Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Providence Spirituality and Conference Center, 3 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. Christmas Fun at the Woods, 1-4 p.m., $7 per person. Information: 812-553-2932 or provctr@spsmw.org.

St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) Church, 4720 E. 13th St., Indianapolis. Class of ‘63 monthly gathering, 6 p.m. Information: 317-523-4193 or foraf6314@gmail.com.

Calvary Cemetery Chapel, 433 W. Troy Road, Indianapolis. Christmas Mass, 2 p.m. Information: 317-574-8898 or ommach@bcmsanto.org.

Holidays Under the Spires is a 13-year-old tradition of the town of Oldenburg involving dining, shopping and holiday activities throughout the entire village on Dec. 5.

Holy Family Parish cafeteria, 3027 Pearl St., will be the site of the Knights of St. John breakfast with Santa from 8-11 a.m., and a roast beef dinner from 4-7 p.m. Oldenburg restaurants will also be open all day.

Oldenburg’s specialty shops will offer registration to win prizes. There will be arts and crafts fair in the Holy Family Parish gymnasium, 3027 Pearl St., and at the Sisters of St. Francis campus, 2413 Main St.

Christmas trees and wreaths will be sold in the chapel, and homemade goods will be on sale in the motherhouse. Activities include the Jingle Bell Jog/Walk, model train display, choir concerts, concrete and gingerbread house making, wine tasting, trolley rides and more.

For more information, log on to www.holidaysunderthespires.com.†

For a list of events for the next four weeks as reported to The Criterion, log on to www.archindy.org/events.

Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology, 200 Hill Drive, in St. Meinrad, will present an Advent lessons and carols service in the school’s St. Thomas Aquinas Chapel at 7 p.m. Central Time on Dec. 7.

The service, titled “From Eden to Heaven: The Story of Salvation,” tells the story of the redemption of humankind 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. A reception will follow in the Alumni Commons.

Parking is available in the Guest House and student parking lots.

For more information, contact Mary Jeanne Schumacher at 812-357-6501 or mschumacher@saintmeinrad.org.

For updates on the day of the performance, call 812-357-6611.†

The Sisters of Providence of St. Mary-of-the-Woods invite all to join them for Mass and prayer during this Advent season as a way to help prepare hearts and minds for the coming of the commemorations of the birth of Jesus.

Mass on the four Sundays of Advent, Nov. 29, Dec. 6, Dec. 13 and Dec. 20, are at 11 a.m., and are celebrated in the Church of the Immaculate Conception.

The blessing of the Advent Wreath takes place during the Nov. 29 Mass. In addition, Mass for the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary will be celebrated at 11 a.m. on Dec. 8.

Mentioned by Fonsi, located in Providence Spirituality and Conference Center, will be open from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. during the Sundays of Advent.†

VIPS

Richard and Martha (Darnell) Knecht, members of St. Michael Parish in Greenwood, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on Nov. 25.

The couple was married on Nov. 25, 1965, at St. Mary Church in Rushville.

They are the parents of six children, Kris Leising, Katie Schwertfeger, Donna Strong, Greg, Doug and Dianne Knecht.

They also have 16 grandchildren.

The couple celebrated an Alaskan cruise, and attended the Golden Wedding Jubilee Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis. A family celebration was held earlier in November.†

Francis and Mary Jane (Wilhelm) Telles, members of St. Louis Parish in Batesville, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on Nov. 25.

The couple was married on Nov. 25, 1965, at St. Joseph Church in St. Leon.

They are the parents of six children, Becky Brown, Gary, Mark, Scott, Ted and Tim Telles.

They also have 11 grandchildren.

The couple will celebrate with a dinner for family and friends.†

Advent lessons and carols service planned for Dec. 7 at Saint Meinrad

St. John the Evangelist Church, 126 W. Georgia St., Indianapolis. Former Sen. Richard G. Lugar, “America and the World,” will present an Advent lessons and carols service in the school’s St. Thomas Aquinas Chapel at 7 p.m. Central Time on Dec. 7.

The service, titled “From Eden to Heaven: The Story of Salvation,” tells the story of the redemption of humankind 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. A reception will follow in the Alumni Commons.

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For more information, contact Mary Jeanne Schumacher at 812-357-6501 or mschumacher@saintmeinrad.org.

For updates on the day of the performance, call 812-357-6611.†

Sisters of Providence invite all to Advent prayer services, Mass

Food and festivities abound at ‘Holidays Under the Spires’ in Oldenburg on Dec. 5

The Criterion

For a list of events for the next four weeks as reported to The Criterion, log on to www.archindy.org/events.
Archbishop Tobin gives charge to archdiocesan youths: ‘If today you hear his voice, harden not your heart’

By Natalie Hoefer

As more than 1,000 high school youths, young adult leaders and chaperones from across central and southern Indiana gathered for the archdiocese’s opening National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) Mass at St. John the Evangelist Church in Indianapolis on Nov. 19, something was noticeably missing, something NCYC is noted for: the crazy hats.

The youth of NCYC are known for donning hilarious headgear—cow heads, sharks, pizzas, hot dogs, tall hats, drooping hats, hats that light up.

But as they entered the 144-year-old spired church, the hats were tucked away in reverence for the sacrifice of the holy Mass in which they were about to partake.

After the opening song, led by a special choir consisting of NCYC participants from throughout the archdiocese, Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin put his fingers to his lips in contemplation, looking over the standing-room only congregation.

“You have no idea how good you look, not after where I’ve been in the last week,” he said in reference to the time he spent in Baltimore for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ fall general assembly on Nov. 19.

Repeating the words from Psalm 95:7-8, “If today you hear his voice, harden not your heart,” the archbishop used his homily to call the youth to focus on the present.

“All we really have is today,” he said. “What other day is there? It’s tempting to think I have many more todays ahead of me. But all I have is today. If today you hear his voice, harden not your heart” (Ps 95:7-8).

Archbishop Tobin acknowledged that some days are harder than others.

“We proclaim that we should offer to God our praise in times of distress,” he told the teens, their youth ministry leaders and chaperones. “But sometimes I wish today would go away. Sometimes my heart hardens. ‘Why did you let this happen to me, God? If you loved me, you would take this trouble away.’

‘God says, ‘Call on me in times of distress. I will rescue you, and you will glorify me.’

‘Some days I can’t do that. I feel too sorry for myself to play a game loving the game doing it tomorrow. But I only have today. If today you hear his voice, harden not your heart’ (Ps 95:7-8).

The archbishop closed his homily with words looking to what the youths would experience during NCYC, for which this year’s theme was “Here I Am, Lord. Aqui estoy, Señor.”

“God will speak to you today,” he said. “And when Friday comes, God will speak again. And Saturday, God will speak again. I would like to say that NCYC will change me for the rest of my life, but it won’t. What I really hope is that this experience will change me today. If today you hear his voice, harden not your heart’ (Ps 95:7-8). Instead, let’s simply say, ‘Here I am, Lord. Aqui estoy, Señor.’

After the Mass, the archbishop, preceded by the approximately 35 priests and 15 seminarians who joined him at the altar, processed with the Blessed Sacrament across Capitol Avenue to the Indiana Convention Center.

The raucous, energetic youths in the halls of the convention center removed their hats and dropped to their knees in reverent silence as Christ in the Blessed Sacrament was processed by, accompanied by a litany of hymns and antiphons sung by those in the procession.

The procession ended in a large ballroom where Mass had been celebrated for members of the Diocese of Lafayette, Ind. After Benediction, many remained for quiet prayer in the presence of Christ.

Abbi Hamm, a member of St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Clarksville, knelt for several minutes, head turned upward, eyes closed in prayer.

After leaving the ballroom, she shared a broad smile.

“I was praying about the whole idea of saying, ‘Here I am, Lord’—use me this week,” she said. “I asked him to speak to me, and I told him I’m saying ‘yes’ to him these next couple of days.”

God’s love and Mary’s ‘yes’ overcome haunting moments in life, speaker says

By John Shaughnessy

Chris Padgett got the laughs he wanted when he showed amusing photos from his childhood during his talk with the 23,000 youths at the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) in Indianapolis.

Yet Padgett’s most lasting impression on the teenagers likely came when he shared two memories from his youth that still haunt his thoughts as an adult.

The first one involves a playground scene from his school days when recess became a time of picking teams—one player at a time—for a game of football.

“And then two people at the end remained, and I would always watch them and wonder. ‘Why would you two nerdy people who are always picked last continue to subject yourself to the pain we call afternoon recess?’” Padgett told the audience of teenagers on the morning of Nov. 20. “And the reason they did is because they just wanted to belong.

“I remember it was always David and Ronnie, the last two picks. They would reluctantly pick David to be on one team, and the other team had Ronnie. But they wouldn’t wait for Ronnie. They’d leave him standing there because the team knew in order to win the game that day they had to win it in spite of having Ronnie on their team.”

Then Padgett shared his memories of a girl named Loretta. “Every day, she was picked on, and she was ridiculed because she looked funny, walked funny, and she acted funny. Nobody wanted to play with Loretta.”

Years later, Loretta was on Padgett’s mind when it was time for a class reunion. Unable to attend, he phoned a friend to learn about the reunion and the lives of his classmates. Finally, he asked the question that was most important to him: “What about Loretta?” His friend told him, “I think Loretta died.”

“I hadn’t seen her since I was 16, but I mourned for her that day,” recalled Padgett, a speaker and author of books about the Catholic faith. “I wondered if anyone ever loved Loretta.”

Padgett used those two memories to make a point about the way that God chooses people, the way God views people.

“God picks all sorts of people—the strange, the awkward,” the father of nine said. “He picks you to love and to live with. For you are never picked last when it comes to our faith. God is always there, choosing you.”

Padgett also told the youths that God’s love for us shows in the way he chose Mary, a humble teenager, to become the mother of Jesus. Still, we resist, he says. “The reality is we have a hard time allowing Mary to be a model for us when it comes to spirituality because we’re afraid that we don’t look the part. We feel out of place when it comes to talking about God and talking about Mary that often times we have a preconceived idea of what God likes when it comes to loving for him. And some of us think to ourselves, ‘How can God use me? Clearly, he could use Mary. She was perfect. But me, I’m flawed.’”

Mary had those same feelings, Padgett believes, but she trusted God’s love and plan for her.

“Mary allowed herself to fully be seen by God in the entirety of who she is, and that willingness to be seen allowed her to say an authentic ‘yes.’ Because to be seen by God, his love brings peace and casts out fear.”

People need to look beyond “the mess” that they think they are, and realize that God loves them and accepts them for who they are.

“Don’t let that stop you today,” Padgett added. “I want you to want to stop worrying about what people think of you.”

“I want you to want to stop pretending. Just for a moment, take off the mask. And I want you to think about that Jesus loves everything about you. I want you to say yes like Mary, to be a saint in this day.”

—NCYC speaker Chris Padgett

Above, more than 1,000 youths, youth ministry leaders and chaperones from the archdiocese packed St. John the Evangelist Church in Indianapolis on Nov. 19 for a Mass celebrated by Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin at the beginning of the National Catholic Youth Conference. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

Left, Abbi Hamm, a member of St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Clarksville, prays before the Blessed Sacrament after the eucharistic procession from St. John the Evangelist Church to the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis on Nov. 19.
Music, humor, wisdom highlight opening general session at youth conference

By Natalie Hoffer

Music, martial arts, beatboxing and breakdancing. The opening general session on Nov. 19 for the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis offered it all—plus words of wisdom and spiritual encouragement.

Before the speakers took the stage, the stadium pulsed with the lights and sounds of a rock concert as the Christian band For King and Country energized the youths with their popular songs.

Christian entertainers Jack Franco Angel and Paul J. Kim served as emcees, and warmed up the crowd with spiritual humor. Kim wowwed the crowd with his beatboxing, using only his mouth and vocal chords to create music and songs.

But the highlight of the session was the keynote speaker, Voluntas Dei priest Father Leo Patalinghug.

The Filipino is most known as the host and chef of the Eternal Word Television Network’s cooking show “Savoring Our Faith,” and for creating “Grace Before Meals,” an international apostolate to help strengthen families’ relationships through sharing at mealtime.

Not as well-known are Father Leo’s talents as a third-degree black belt martial arts teacher and an award-winning former breakdance choreographer.

It was his martial arts talent that Father Leo called upon to teach the 23,000 youths the tools to lead a spiritual life.

But first, he began with a prayer.

“I’m going to give you the most powerful prayer ever,” he began. “Are you ready? OK, here we go. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. ‘There you go. That’s it. ‘When you make the sign of the cross, you make yourself a target, asking God to look at you. You’re saying, ‘Here, I. Am. Lord,’ he explained, punctuating each word with a motion of the sign of the cross.

“Touching briefly on one of his favorite topics—food—Father Leo gave the youth a “double dog dare” to make the sign of the cross and pray before meals when eating in a restaurant.

Like omitting the prayer before the meal when eating out, Father Leo noted that “sometimes, we don’t want to be for our religious upbringing. Sometimes we want to be seen in the wrong light.”

“That’s because we are in a battle. It occurs in our soul, which is why I need to show you, as a martial artist—two-time third-degree black belt—how to fight.”

He then taught the youths about the “A, B, C and D’s” of spiritual combat: avoid, bypass, control, then destroy the devil.

Using a breakdown of martial arts movements—and oneaffle teen from the crowd—Father Leo demonstrated how the youths can avoid the near occasion of sin, just as in combat a warrior can avoid an incoming fist.

Comparing a punching fist to temptation, he noted that the avoided fist will pass by, just as one can bypass temptation.

“If the temptation pass you by,” he said. “If you know where your worst temptation will not last forever. In fact, your worst temptation might just last 15 seconds, enough time for you to pray an Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be.”

If one can do that, he continued as he grabbed the teen’s now-extended arm with his fisted hand, “you can implement step C, which is control.”

“It’s not controlling temptation, but your reaction (to it).”

“You can control your reaction, then you can exercise step D, which is destroy the devil.”

Making use of more martial arts moves to teach points of faith, Father Leo talked about breaking boards with the hand and foot, just as “in our lives we are constantly trying to break through barriers.”

First, he said, the martial artist has to go to the grain of the wood—something he compared to cooperating with God’s will.

“The second thing he has to do is acknowledge that this is going to hurt a little bit,” he said. “It really is going to require discipline… If we don’t have discipline, we won’t be able to break through our barriers in life.”

Next, he said, is not to aim for the board, but aim beyond the board.

“If I do that, that’s like shooting for mediocrity,” he explained. “When you present yourself to God, you can’t be mediocre. You’ve got to live a life of excellence. That means I’m not aiming for the board—I’m aiming for heaven.”

And lastly, he said, “You must practice”—and he proceeded to break through two boards with his bare hands and one board with his foot, feats that brought cheers from all sides of the stadium.

“Our world struggles,” Father Leo said in closing.

“All of those people who are in harm’s way battling between life and death, we pray for them, and we want to support them.

“The best way to do that is stand with a brother or sister hurting, with the person who doesn’t have any friends. Be a source of welcome, compassion and generous love.”

“I guarantee you, you will be a target. Every time you pray the sign of the cross, realize that God is looking [at you] with love.” †
Hopes, stresses and fears

By John Shaughnessy

The moment brought goose bumps. Seconds earlier on Nov. 20, Grammy-nominee Matt Maher had been leading the 23,000 teenagers at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis in song—tuning up the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) audience for a night of praise and worship of God.

"So lay down your burdens, lay down your shame, all who are broken, lift up your face," Maher sang before finishing with the lyric, "Earth has no sorrow that heaven can't heal."

As young people swayed and raised their arms and faces toward the heavens, Maher asked them, "Right now, could you take a second and worship God? And I don't mean, 'Think nice thoughts.' I mean, maybe for the first time, just tell God how great he is—in your heart."

After a time of silence, Maher followed that request by doing something that led to the memorable, goose-bump-inducing moment.

He softly sang the opening line of "Hear I AM, Lord." And as the crowd joined in, Maher stopped singing and stopped playing music, realizing it was better just to let the voices of the 23,000 youths rise in unison together. And those youthful voices filled the stadium as they poured their hearts into the rest of the song's refrain, "Is it I, Lord? I have heard you calling in the night. I will go, Lord, where you lead me, I will hold your people in my heart."

It was a powerful, moving moment—a moment that led into a high-energy presentation by Mark Hart, the executive vice president of Life Teen, a Catholic youth ministry movement being used by 1,600 parishes in 26 countries.

Weaving back and forth across the stage, Hart focused on the altar that had been set up there.

"The focal point in the Catholic Church is always the altar—the altar of sacrifice," Hart told the youths. "It's not just a table, but an altar of sacrifice."

"At Mass, do you know what's really happening? It's not just about the bread and the wine, it's about what you're willing to bring—your own hopes, your own fears, your own anxieties, your own stresses. Are you putting them on the altar and trusting that there is a God and that he does care, that he does hear you, that he wants good things for you?"

Hart stressed to the teenagers, "The God who created you, the God who died for you, he understands you. And that's why it's so important for you to remember that the God of the universe, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, knows what it's like to suffer."

He knows your suffering. He's experienced your suffering. He knows the betrayal, he knows the temptation, he knows the loneliness, he knows the pain. He knows. And he wants you to do something with it. He wants you to bring it to the altar so he can transform it, so he can change it.

Hart then set the stage for the eucharistic adoration that would follow his talk, preparing the teenagers for the opportunity to spend time with God, to focus on him.

"In a few minutes, the God of the universe is going to come into this room in a beautiful vessel called the monstrance," Hart said. "A monstrance comes from the Latin word to ‘show forth.’ It's to be placed on an altar of sacrifice. What you do with this time is really up to you—because God is a lover, but he doesn't force himself on you. You've got to be willing to let God love you tonight. This is your chance to allow God to transform you."

Silence filled the stadium and the crowd fell to their knees as Father Louis Merosne of the Diocese of Anse-à-Veau, Haiti, slowly brought the monstrance to the altar.

"The summit of all existence, the reason for being is right here in front of us," Father Merosne told the youths. "Our God has come down to restore truth and to restore your heart."

"Tonight, God has come to show you a sneak preview of what he sees in you—the beauty and the preciousness, so good and so precious that it was worth the life of his son, Jesus. Each and every single one here, God is speaking to your heart and to your soul to show you how precious you are to him. He will show you the love for which he made you."

When adoration ended, Father Merosne lifted the monstrance from the altar, holding it high as he processed from the stadium. The silence that reigned was soon replaced by uplifting song as Matt Maher returned to the stage. With the crowd swaying together again, Maher and the youths sang, "Love will hold us together. Make us a shelter to weather the storm. And I'll be my brother's keeper. So the whole world will know that we're not alone."

Once again, their voices filled the night as the song filled their hearts.

"Each and every single one here, God is speaking to your heart and to your soul to show you how precious you are to him. He will show you the love for which he made you."

—Father Louis Merosne

Teens encouraged to bring hopes, stresses and fears to the altar of sacrifice

Mark Hart, executive vice president of Life Teen, encourages teenagers to take their fears, hopes, anxieties, and stresses to God. (Photo by Mike Krockos)
Youths live out their faith at National Catholic Youth Conference

Alaina Sincich, a member of St. John Neumann Parish in Sunbury, Ohio, kneels in prayer during the closing Mass of the National Catholic Youth Conference on Nov. 21 at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

Youths from the St. Cloud Diocese in Minnesota help form the NCYC sign inside Camp Tekakwitha on Nov. 19, the theme park for the National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)

Youths from St. Christopher Parish in Indianapolis sport unusual hats worn by NCYC participants before a conference general assembly on Nov. 21 in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

Teens write petitions in a candle-lit area of the Prayer Corner in Camp Tekakwitha during the National Catholic Youth Conference on Nov. 20. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

Bishop Paul D. Etienne of Cheyenne, Wyo., gives a high five after the conclusion of the closing Mass on Nov. 21. Bishop Etienne was previously a priest of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin on Nov. 20 autographs the shirt of Jessica Boren, a high school freshman and member of St. Jude Parish in Spencer. (Photo by Mike Krokos)

Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin distributes Communion during the closing Mass of the National Catholic Youth Conference on Nov. 21 in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

Catholic musician Tony Melendez, left, sings and plays a guitar with his feet on Nov. 21 in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis during a general session. Melendez, 53, was born without arms and is known for inspiring youths with his music and the story of overcoming his physical challenges. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

Carolyn Woo, president of Catholic Relief Services, speaks on Nov. 21 at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis during a general assembly. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

Youths place pins marking their hometowns on a map of the United States in Camp Tekakwitha during the National Catholic Youth Conference on Nov. 19. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

Dan Wiegand, left, and Zach Eckroth, both of St. Susanna Parish in Plainfield, sport shirts proclaiming the often-heard call-and-response phrase at the National Catholic Youth Conference on Nov. 19. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

Members of the Diocese of Dubuque, Iowa, kneel for the Liturgy of the Eucharist during the closing Mass of the National Catholic Youth Conference on Nov. 21 at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

Teens write petitions in a candle-lit area of the Prayer Corner in Camp Tekakwitha during the National Catholic Youth Conference on Nov. 20. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

Youth place pins marking their hometowns on a map of the United States in Camp Tekakwitha during the National Catholic Youth Conference on Nov. 19. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin autographs the shirt of Jessica Boren, a high school freshman and member of St. Jude Parish in Spencer. (Photo by Mike Krokos)
Extraordinary form of the Mass draws youths into quiet prayer

By Sean Gallagher

Many of the presentations and other events of the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) are marked by loud, high energy music and spotlights flashing across crowds of youths dancing while wearing a broad array of unusual hats and colorful T-shirts. The more than 20 Masses that were celebrated during the three-day conference, by contrast, featured times of silence and opportunities for quiet, prayerful reflection for the teens attending it.

On Nov. 20, some 250 teens participated in a form of the liturgy that many of them had not experienced before and was new to NYCC. It was the extraordinary form of the Mass, also known as the traditional Latin Mass. Youths knelt quietly in prayer during it while a small choir of young women sang centuries-old Gregorian chant. The extraordinary form of Mass is marked by the near-exclusive use of Latin (the only other language used being Greek), and the priest celebrant and the congregation facing the same direction. The Latin Rite of the Church celebrated this form of the Eucharist for centuries up to the start of the implementation of the restoration of the sacred liturgy during the Second Vatican Council 51 years ago.

Those who participated in the extraordinary form Mass at NCYC filled the conference room at the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis in which it was celebrated. Approximately 100 more attendees knelt in the hallway outside the room.

Mariana Canales, 16, attended the Mass with a student ministry team. “I thought that I’d never get,” she said. “It’s easier to hear God’s voice with that peace and quiet.” For many of the youths who participated in the liturgy, it was their first time to experience an extraordinary form Mass.

That was not the case for Laura Phillips, 24, a chaperone at the conference from St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Columbus, Ohio. As a teenager, Phillips attended NCYC in 2005 in Atlanta, and served as an animator for the conference in 2007 in Columbus. Animators help to energize youth attendees by singing and dancing during general sessions, much like high school show choirs. While a college student at the University of Alabama, she often attended an extraordinary form Mass celebrated regularly in Birmingham.

Phillips was impressed by the number of people attending the Mass at the conference this year. “It was fantastic,” she said. “It was such a blessing for all of the people who had never experienced it before been given the opportunity.”

They had been opened them to the Latin Mass and Gregorian chant and any of the traditional Latin prayers. They can take them back to their parishes and do them within their youth groups. That’s really fantastic.”

Sam Rosko, 17, assisted as an altar server at the Mass.

But her appreciation of the Mass extended beyond her ability to follow along more easily with the prayers. “It was kind of relaxing,” Mariana said. “You’re there in the middle of all of the noise [in a general session]. And then you come here, and you’re calm.”

Liam O’Brien, 15, of Queen of the Miraculous Medal Parish in Jackson, Mich., said the liturgy helped him enter more deeply into prayer. “It was really peaceful and a new experience that I thought that I’d never get,” he said. “It’s easier to hear God’s voice with that peace and quiet.”

For many of the youths who participated in the liturgy, it was their first time to experience an extraordinary form Mass.

“Going to confession [at NCYC] is just a way to go through the rest of the conference and feel like you’ve got a fresh start,” said Nathan Wellman of Canton, Ohio, after going to confession on Nov. 20. “You feel like you belong, like there’s nothing wrong in your soul.”

Dozens of priests and bishops filled a large conference room at the convention center to celebrate the sacrament of penance with conference attendees.

Many had signed up on a schedule for a specific time slot. Others volunteered on the spur of the moment. Extra purple stoles were on hand for the priests and bishops spending time in the confession room.

Many seminarians also helped guide those seeking to confess their sins to a priest or bishop who was free. One who was impressed was Matthew Long, a member of St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis. He is a freshman at the Thomas More Brumit College Seminary and Marian University, both in Indianapolis.

“It’s pretty amazing,” said Long of the large number of people seeking to experience the sacrament of penance. “You can see on their face that they’re a little nervous when they

"It was neat to be around so many teens who were passionate about their faith, and to celebrate Mass, go to the sessions and meet people from around the country—California, Alaska, Hawaii. Even as a young adult, it’s reaffirming to see all these kids here.”

Both young adults credit NYCC as part of the reason they are still active in their Catholic faith.

“It helped me continue to be active in my faith after high school,” said Andie, who graduated from Aquinas College in Grand Rapids, Mich. She now works for a law firm, and is a member of Christ the King Parish in Indianapolis. “I surrounded myself with other Catholics in college who were also interested. I even married the kind of people that I wanted to associate with and be around.”

Luke, a sophomore at Grand Valley State University in Allendale, Mich., is a member of his college’s Catholic student ministry team.

“A lot of those people [on the team] went to NYCC,” he said. “You meet these people later on that are still passionate about their faith.”

“By the time I signed up to volunteer [for NCYC], everyone else was booked up and couldn’t come, but they were all like, ‘That’s so cool! I want to volunteer at NYCC next time!’”

Luke hopes to go into youth ministry after graduating. When that time comes, he considers leading youth groups to NYCC a must.

“[NCYC] was a huge brick in the foundation of my faith life as a high schooler,” he said. “I would definitely take kids to it.”

“I think all but one of my friends have stopped practicing the faith. I want to make sure that doesn’t happen to our next generation.”

As for Andie, she plans on volunteering at NCYC again. “I had such a great time when I went [as a youth], and it was a great opportunity to be a part of it again,” she said. “You can talk to the kids and say, ‘I went to NCYC when I was a kid, and you can do the same thing as a chaperone.’”

“It’s important to them to come back after high school, because the more volunteers you have, the more [NCYC] is possible, and it keeps them active in their faith.”
Service opportunities in thematic park engage youths in ‘a key part of our faith’

By Natalie Hofer

As Clare Kelly wove the colorful yarn around the circular, plastic loom, she explained what she was doing. “I’m making a hat for a poor person,” said the youth of the Diocese of Wilmington, Del. “Cold weather is coming, and many people don’t have hats, so it will be really helpful for them in the cold winter months.”

Clare was making the hat in the service section of Camp Tekakwitha, the thematic park at the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) held at the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis on Nov. 19-21.

The service area was designed to engage youths in an important aspect of being Catholic—serving others, as an aspect Clare seemed to already understand.

“It’s important to be charitable,” she said. “You never know when you might bring joy or hope into someone’s life.”

Aaron Frazita, a member of the thematic park committee, explained more about the role of service at NCYC.

“Service is such a key part of our faith,” he said. “I don’t think we can say we’re Christians unless we put our faith into action. NCYC is a place where we need to make the young people aware of those things.”

To accomplish that, the service section offered information and hands-on activities at nearly 10 stations, like the hat-knitting area.

Beggars for the Poor, a volunteer-run ministry that helps the homeless in Indianapolis, will give the knitted hats to those whom they serve.

It makes the kids really aware that people need help—not just your financial support, but your volunteering,” said Beggars for the Poor volunteer Lynda Knauble. “The kids seem to really get it.”

On the other side of the service section, youths sat at tables writing messages and making designs on T-shirts and tote bags for Haiti.

“We’ll be sending these T-shirts and tote bags to our sister parishes in Haiti when all this is finished,” said Father Thomas Clegg, pastor of St. John Paul II Parish in Clark County.

It’s also an opportunity to do a little education about Haiti at the same time. Teenagers naturally want to serve. To provide an opportunity for them to do that here [at NCYC] is not only a good thing, but is essential for their understanding of what a total Christian person looks like.”

Mariah Brown of the Archdiocese of Kansas City, Kan., was excited about the opportunity to make an item to send to Haiti.

“When I get older, I really want to go on mission trips,” she said. “I hear about people who need our help, and I feel like I’m obligated to help because we have so many resources.”

In another section of Camp Tekakwitha, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) operated food package preparation stations as part of their Helping Hands Program. “It’s a program where volunteers come together to package meals to send to our hungry brothers and sisters in Burkina Faso, which is a country in West Africa,” said Rachel Malinowski, a program relief officer for CRS.

“For the people who live in [Burkina Faso], there’s just not enough food available. It’s not even an access problem—there just isn’t enough food available. So these meals are life-changing for them.”

Each pouch was filled with food from 6-8 meals, Malinowski said. During NCYC, 50,000 pouches were completed.

Participants learn not just about the project to feed the hungry in Burkina Faso. They also learn about other Helping Hands programs.

“We do a pre-education session before folks go to package the meals,” she said. “The meals do meet the short-term need, but more importantly, Helping Hands sends grant funds to the centers [in Burkina Faso] for long-term, income-generating projects so folks can learn skills to be able to lift themselves out of poverty in the long run and hopefully not need that food aid in the future.”

Emma Wagner of the Diocese of Savannah, Ga., participated in the Helping Hands project, filling pouches with food.

“I like helping others, knowing it’s doing some good in the world and being selfless,” she said. “We’re all God’s children, and we need to help each other.”

Bishop Emeritus John Kevin Boland of the Diocese of Savannah, stood across from Emma as he helped fill the food pouches.

“They voluntarily wanted to do this [project] as a spirit of giving, to give back,” he said of the youths the accompanied. “We live in a society with plenty of food, and there are lots of places where there’s no food. We find ourselves by giving and not receiving.”

He looked around at all the youths busy at the Helping Hands stations, and beamed with pride.

“These kids [at NCYC] are the cream of the crop,” he said. “You won’t find better in the U.S.”

Adoration, Prayer Corner offer opportunity for many forms of prayer

By Natalie Hofer

When 23,000 youths come together, “quiet” is not an adjective often used to describe the scene.

But quiet was accomplished for the conference’s ample opportunities to engage youths in ‘a key part of our faith’—prayer.

An Indiana Convention Center room designated as an adoration chapel was the scene of a constant wave of quiet motion as youths, adults, priests and religious filtered in and out to adore Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. Whether as groups or individuals, some stayed for a few minutes, others for an hour or more.

“I just came from confession,” said Jesi Brittnall of the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph, Mo. “Adoration is one of my favorite things to do, just to be able to be close to the Lord and be able to talk to him. It was a really good hour—I feel awesome!”

But there are many other forms of prayer, a fact made obvious at the Prayer Corner of NCYC’s thematic park, Camp Tekakwitha.

Andrew Miller, associate director of vocations for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis and a member of the thematic park team, explained the role of the Prayer Corner.

“The Prayer Corner is to give kids an experiential opportunity, a chance to not only maybe sit and pray, but to maybe have an interactive form of prayer,” said Miller. “We wanted tactile things, things they could touch, and [for them] to be able to be loud, to talk and interact with others while they’re praying.”

A walk through the Prayer Corner proved all the above to be true. In one area, youths collected and compared prayers from a makeshift tree.

Nearby, several teens wrote prayers on four boards, each board sporting one letter of the word ACTS—representing the acronym for the prayer forms of adoration, contrition, thanksgiving and supplication.

“I wrote a prayer of supplication for my friend’s grandma who just went in the hospital, and a prayer of thanksgiving for all the family and friends God put in my life,” said Emma Cherwimski of the Diocese of Gaylord, Mich. “I imagined wearing the crown of thorns—feel the weight of the cross on their own shoulders and contemplate its impact on Christ during his Passion. It was tough,” admitted Cameron Sims of the Diocese of Pueblo, Colo. “I was hurting, and then I imagined wearing the crown of thorns and having been beaten, and walking about a mile. It really touches you.”

Nick Ford, a member of St. Andrew the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis, was visibly moved by the experience.

“I can’t imagine doing something like that, and to do it for people who act like they hate you,” he said. “And touching the crown of thorns on a pedestal next to the hanging beam, I thought that had the biggest effect on me. Just one touch and I could feel it all.”

As Alex Hunter of the Diocese of Gaylord left the Prayer Corner, she reflected on her time there.

“I prayed for my family and friends, for God to be with them always,” she said. “[The Prayer Corner] was really peaceful. It’s nice to have some time with God with everything that’s going on at NCYC.”
By John Shaughnessy

They hoped to stand out, to fit in, to make someone laugh, to get a smile.

And so, many of the 23,000 teenagers at the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) in Indianapolis on Nov. 19-21 wore fun and whimsical headgear—domino halos, corn husks, lampshades, cow ears, Viking horns, lobster claws, a cooked turkey, and even a slice of pumpkin pie topped with a dollop of whipped cream.

Yet among all their comical efforts to create a distinctive look, the youths left their most lasting—and unique—impression when they responded to an informal invitation to talk about the importance of their Catholic faith in their lives.

At 18, Star DeRepentigny shared her story of finding a home in the Church, after years of not feeling wanted as a child who was passed from one foster home to another.

“I wasn’t born and raised Catholic,” said Star, a member of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Seaford, Del., in the Wilmington Diocese.

“I was in and out of foster homes, and I didn’t feel I belonged.

“Faith wasn’t a part of my life until I was adopted when I was 8. The family I was adopted into is Catholic. And the Church became my family: “Being in a Catholic church, you know God is there for you, and to know that someone is there for you. And you get to go to confession when you need to get something off your mind.”

“As she walked through the conference’s theme park, Megan Milroy drew a number of laughs and smiles as she wore a gold-toned lampshade—complete with small tassels on its bottom edge—over her head. She also shed some light on the challenges that face her fellow teenagers, and how welcoming God into their lives and focusing on their faith can make such a difference.

“There are so many influences, both negative and positive, at teenagers’ doors. And we’re susceptible to them,” said Megan, a member of St. Marcus Parish in Clear Lake, Minn., in the St. Paul Diocese.

“At this age, we’re trying to figure out who we are. My Catholic faith has given me my values. It has kept me grounded in who I am and who I want to become.”

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Two Family Conferences by Dr. Dilisaver
at St. A nthony of Padua Catholic Church
Morr...
Advent is a time of waiting in a culture that refuses to wait

If you’re old enough to remember Mr. Rogers, whose “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood” children’s program ran on public television for years, you may remember his song, “Let’s think of something to do while we’re waiting.”

Ring a bell? If it does, you’ll be humming “while we’re waiting” in your head long after you’ve finished reading this. That’s OK, because waiting is something we all might ponder during Advent, the Church’s season in which faithful focus their hearts on waiting for the coming of Christ.

Mr. Rogers knew that waiting is difficult for kids. Remember how it seemed as if your birthday would never arrive? Can you imagine family vacations without that refrain, “Are we there yet?”

We’ve all been that little child, waiting for grandparents or cousins to arrive, gazing out the window and down the street, longing impatiently to see our loved ones. Little kids even have a hard time waiting for their parents to serve dessert.

Life explodes with events for which we can’t wait, but we must wait.

Fast-forward a few years, and waiting isn’t quite the same for us adults. We’ve lost some of our sense of eager anticipation, haven’t we? We know something kids don’t know: Life is finite, so why rush it?

And some of our waiting is hard, such as the times we wait for a lab report from our doctor or wait to hear the garage door open to know that a teenager is home safe. And that next big birthday? It does not seem so urgent anymore, and we’d be just as happy to postpone it for as long as we can.

We sometimes feel ambivalent about certain events, such as a relative’s visit, a dinner party, a holiday. Such an event would have had us in knots of frenzied expectation when we were children or the first time we experienced it.

At the same time, and rather paradoxically, we live in a culture that doesn’t want or expect to wait—ever. We don’t wait to find out who wins a primary election because now we’ve become accustomed to every few minutes. We don’t wait to find out who wins a primary election because now we’ve become accustomed to every few minutes. We don’t wait to find out who wins a primary election because now we’ve become accustomed to every few minutes.

And some of our waiting is hard, such as the times we wait for a lab report from our doctor or wait to hear the garage door open to know that a teenager is home safe. And that next big birthday? It does not seem so urgent anymore, and we’d be just as happy to postpone it for as long as we can.

But our purchases aren’t the only thing we can’t wait for. Want to lose 30 pounds this month? We know that’s impossible, but our eyes are drawn to those ads. We don’t want to wait.

The season of Advent arrives in the midst of frenzied lives that now live in an extremely demanding culture, a culture that refuses to wait. It’s a short season, only four weeks, made shorter by the craziness of December.

Let’s admit it: How many of us have ever silently wished that this spiritual season came at a less busy time? There are so many Christmas parties, so much shopping to get done, cookies and other holiday goodies to make, presents to wrap. Who has time, right?

Yes, culturally we’ve subverted our season of waiting by making Christmas an overwhelming endeavor, almost a race, rather than a time that should cause us to slow down, pray and focus on the reason for Christmas.

We’ve forgotten that Advent is intertwined with Christmas and is a time of waiting. The word itself comes from the Latin “adventus,” which means coming or arrival. It means we’re not there yet, folks. It means we’re waiting, that activity we don’t do very well in this culture.

We who thump the steering wheel when the red light seems as if it will never change are asked to contemplate the people of God waiting centuries for a Messiah.

And we’re asked to anticipate Christ’s coming again, in the fullness of time, which could be next week or in the next millennia.

How can I think about waiting for that? Who’s got that kind of time? Is that who we want to be?

Perhaps that’s the challenge we might take up for Advent this year. We can think about waiting. We can think about slowing down and perhaps try to imagine ourselves as the kid with her nose pressed to the window single-mindedly willing Grandma to appear down the street.

Sure, it’s a busy time. But maybe we can turn waiting into prayer to the Christ for whom we wait. Let your mind seek stillness as you wait in long checkout lines. Find God when the yellow traffic light heralds your next delay. Turn off the television and give yourself 10 minutes, waiting, in a darkened room with a glowing tree.

Wherever you happen to be waiting impatiently, remind yourself to be mindful of waiting for the God who is waiting for you. Make time to wait, don’t wait for it to happen.

Wait like a kid, in joyful anticipation.

(Elfie Caldarola is a freelance writer and columnist for Catholic News Service. She lives in Nebraska.)

Mary is the prime example of patient waiting during Advent season

By Kelly Bothum

Patience is like a parking space at the mall on Black Friday. It exists, but it sure seems in short supply. Sometimes it’s nothing like we imagined. Sometimes the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed” (Lk 2:35).

Mary watched Jesus grow from an infant to a boy who stayed behind in the temple, and couldn’t understand why his parents were worried. She watched him rise, inviting him at Cana to his first miracle, then suffered the ultimate heartache, standing at the foot of the cross watching her son die a terrible death.

And still Mary waits. Her patient waiting provides a roadmap of faith for us. Steady, obedient, faithful, she follows the path God has drawn for her.

During Advent, we should all be so willing to wait and listen to what God is saying to us. That means slowing down and savoring the moment rather than pushing to get to the next great thing.

It also means accepting suffering, if need be, because we don’t know when it will turn to joy. It means appreciating the struggles because eventually they can lead to successes. It’s treasuring the unexpected.

Mary did just that, and look how it turned out for her—and all of us.

(Kelly Bothum is a freelance writer and mother of three.)

Christmas ornaments are on display in one of the many shops at the popular Christkindlmarkt in Vienna’s Rathauspark. Vienna is known for its outdoor Christmas markets, which are popular destinations for locals and tourists during Advent, a season in which Catholics are invited to prepare spiritually for the coming of Christ. (CHP photo/Chaz Muth)
Counting my blessings with a sincere gratitude each day

Emmaus Walk/Debra Tomassi

It’s Thanksgiving, and I’m in chemotherapy battling cancer, and I am overflowing with gratitude. Who would have thought?! After all, both my parents died of cancer, leaving me a bitter taste for chemo. I once told the oncologist that I was going to take my medicine, but I didn’t mean it. I felt the symptom of hopelessness and despair and I couldn’t do it.

Thank God, thank God. Another provision was developing. Shortly after I was diagnosed, my husband’s employer switched health plans. Unfortunately, our trusted doctor was no longer covered. He said to me: “Should we see oncologists? What if I end up in the emergency of chemotherapy? We visited a doctor after the new plan, but I left his office in tears even though I’d already known everything he told me. We returned to our primary care and explained the situation. You shouldn’t have to worry about that at a time like this,” he said. “I’ll take whatever your insurance pays. We won’t be charge patients.”

For years, I paid for the office visits anyway. It was my thanks to God for continuing good health. Perhaps we would help the oncologist assist someone else. If I needed expensive treatments, we would accept aid. For now, it was affordable. This year, our health care budget changed randomly. Today, the worry about how our doctor will get paid is lifted from my hands. He is fully covered by our plan. Additionally, my husband purchased Aflac, which provides funds for out-of-pocket expenses. We won’t have to touch savings.

So, another category for the gratitude list—financial provision.

My son friend phoned today. She recalled when I was first diagnosed, when our children were little. “I can’t believe it,” she said, “having leukemia at such a young age.” I have many friends and some of my husband’s relatives. They all make family reunions mini-Thanksgivings in their homes. When I consider the life I’ve had, I’m overwhelmed with gratitude. God gave me loving parents and a happy childhood. Not everyone is so lucky. After all, every family, including mine, is dysfunctional in some way. But if we look about us, we can value the experiences we’ve had and the lessons we’ve learned, good or bad. We need to listen and do whatever we can to help, but then back off and pray. Luckily, we have a national holiday on which to celebrate the idea! How clever of us. ♦

(Cynthia Dewes, a member of St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Greenwich, is a regular columnist for The Criterion.)

Penance during Advent can lead to true joy

Faith and Family/Sean Gallagher

For a period in the past, Advent in the Church was looked upon almost exclusively as a time of mortification, a kind of “mini-Lent.” In recent decades, a balance has emerged, and a historic view on Advent has come to the fore. It is still a time of preparation for Christmas. But it is marked more by the joy of anticipation than by the almost morbid penitence. Nonetheless, there is still a penitential aspect to this four-week season. The voids in one’s life, the sadnesses bespeak of penance. And parishes traditionally sponsor penance services during Advent, an opportunity to experience the mercy of God through the sacrament of reconciliation.

Any lack of joy in earlier Advents may have been due to a misunderstanding of penance at that time. True penance does not exclude joy from one’s life. It should foster it all at the more.

A case can be made that an Advent marked by a retreat penitential preparation for the celebration of Christ’s first coming at Christmas and his second coming at the end of time would result in a deeper, longer-lasting and more authentic joy in the hearts of all believers.

But why should penance during Advent? No doubt, we should show sorrow for our sins like the Church invites us to do throughout the “season of penance.” It is a fun to experience from that the great joy of experiencing God’s mercy and forgiveness in the sacrament of reconciliation, and the display of a penance service or at ordinary times of confession in a parish.

Therefore, we also show sorrow for the way in which Christmas has become increasingly detached from its spiritual meaning. I’m not advising mourning the front lines in the “Christmas wars,” or shortages of trees and wreaths that people who seem to forget about Advent and put up Christmas decorations immediately after Thanksgiving. There’s nothing joyless in such tactics.

What we can do, though, is live out an authentic celebration leading up to Christmas that opens our hearts more to the spiritual joy of the season and puts it into action. My family and I do this especially at supper time during Advent. We’ll turn off the TV and leave the dining room at the table, and have it lit only by the candles of our Advent wreath while we pray our meal prayer and sing the opening verse of “O Come, O Come Emmanuel.”

My sons also have fun taking turns during this ritual in opening a door of a homemade Advent calendar. This calendar isn’t filled with chocolates or sentimental winter scenes or woodcarvings of little ones that I experienced as a kid. Instead it focuses on the saints of the season, the “O” antiphons (which form the basis of “O Come, O Come Emmanuel!”) and the spiritual meaning of various symbols of the season, such as Christmas trees, lights, and gifts.

On Dec. 6, the feast of St. Nicholas, our boys will wake up to find small gifts in their shoes. They know the story of St. Nicholas, but they enjoy hearing it again and again! The more we celebrate Advent, the more we align our feet with both feet into our culture’s commercialized and secularized vision of Christmas, the more we risk losing sight of its spiritual life. Penance during Advent can seem penitential. But I remember, though, that penance is not so much about repentance, but about purification. It cleanses us of the dross of this world, and lets shine like the sun the gold of truth and authentic joy. Perhaps living out a more penitential Advent in this way can help us become more grateful witnesses to the coming of Christ for our family and all whom we meet in this season of grace.

Pteria the Cression Friday, November 27, 2015

From the Editor Emeritus/John F. Finn

Medieval Church: The golden age of papal power

(Sixteenth in a series of columns)

The first half of the 13th century was the golden age of papal power. When the papacy reached its medieval peak of authority, influence in the Church and in relations with civil rulers, Pope Innocent III was pope from 1198 to 1216. He was only 37 when he succeeded his half brother, who died in 1198. Innocent excommunicated the secular royalty of France, Britain and Germany, and man, below God and above man,” given “not only the universal Church, but the whole world to govern.”

Of course, he controlled the Papal States, virtually most of central Italy. He intervened in the political affairs of most European nations. In England, he first excommunicated King John (the third of Eleanor of Aquitaine’s sons to become king of England) for refusing to recognize Stephen Langton as archbishop of Canterbury, but, after the king submitted, declined to make the Papal States into a vassal land from improperly extorted from the king by barons.

Innocent also called for a crusade within the Western Church itself, against the Albigensians in southern France. They believed that all matter was evil, the creation of the devil. Sexual intercourse was prohibited, and they refused to eat meat and other products that were derived from the crusaders. They rejected the doctrine of the incarnation of Christ and the sacraments. Somehow, this sect was firmly established and powerful in southern France.

Innocent first sent a series of preaching missions across France, but these did not work. Then came the Fourth Crusade in 1204. It was a defeat for East-West relations. Its leaders, the Venetians, abandoned the crusade’s original purpose of attacking Constantinople to loot the Holy Land and attack Constantinople. The city fell on April 12, 1204, and was sacked by the crusaders. The Greek Christendom has never forgotten or forgiven. The crusaders established a Latin empire in Constantinople that lasted until 1261. Pope Innocent III accepted this fact in 1259 in the Council of Lyon. He called for a general council in Constantinople to assist reunion of the Greek Church with the West.

Innocent also called for a crusade for the whole world to govern. “The pope was ‘set midway between God and man,’ exalted the secular role of the pope higher than the role of kings.”

Pope Innocent III next week.

Cornucopia/Cynthia Dewes

It’s time to really put on our thankful hats and celebrate.

This is the season when we’re supposed to be thankful and count our blessings. It’s even a time when people get together and talk about how the world would be if we all did it more.

While doing this, there doesn’t seem to be a whole lot to be grateful about. I mean, doesn’t God and Trump and global warming? Please!

Still, we should take time to reflect about our blessings, whatever they are. Many of us can be thankful that we have a job which furnishes our housing, our food and most of the things we need in daily life. If it’s a job we love, that’s an added reason to be thankful. If our work is satisfying and our co-workers pleasant and generous, and if the work is helpful to others, that’s another plus.

Maybe we have children, grandchildren, and “greats” who enrich our lives, even when they’re naughty. Their imaginations enchant us, and they make us proud. We marvel at their insights, their kindness and their loving responses to others. Even when our kids are handicapped in some way, we can only admire their hopeful perseverance in doing the work we can’t do. In that case, we hope to settle for being thankful for God’s grace. We must realize, however, that we can’t help, but then back off and pray. Luckily, it’s God’s who’s in charge of every situation, and we can be grateful for that.

One thing I’m thankful for every moment of every day is a sense of humor. I’ve said this before, but there are very few occasions which I don’t find funny in some way. Maybe that’s denial or diminishedness, but it’s better than the alternative. Likewise, I have no doubt about it, and again as proof I cite Donald Trump.

Friends and family are major reason to be thankful. Mine range in age, race, political persuasion, religion, you name it. But somehow, we’re all on the same page when it comes to what we think is important or funny or inspiring. Some of us have a long shared past, others I see only once a year. It doesn’t matter. When I’m with the old friends I see only once a year, we take up right where we left off.

When I with others I see often, we see, our meetings are always far more interesting. Some of these friends for whom I’m thankful are actually relatives. Naturally, or maybe magically, they undertake all kinds of problems for me. Then there are my children, grands and greats, plus the in-law kids, my two elephant cousins, my married cousins and even some of my husband’s relatives. They all make family reunions mini-Thanksgivings in their homes.

When I consider the life I’ve had, I’m overwhelmed with gratitude. God gave me loving parents and a happy childhood. Not everyone is so lucky. After all, every family, including mine, is dysfunctional in some way. But if we look about us, we can value the experiences we’ve had and the lessons we’ve learned, good or bad.

We need to listen and do whatever we can to help, but then back off and pray. Luckily, we have a national holiday on which to celebrate the idea! How clever of us. ♦

(Cynthia Dewes, a member of St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Greenwich, is a regular columnist for The Criterion.)
Sunday Readings

Sunday, Nov. 29, 2015

- Jeremiah 33:14-16
- Daniel 9:24-27

With the First Sunday of Advent, the Church begins a new liturgical year. As such, the readings for Sunday for the week of November 29th will be from the “C” cycle of the Lectionary, the collection of biblical texts used by the Church for readings at Masses.

The first reading for this weekend is from the Book of Jeremiah, written when times were hard for God’s people. The dynasty formed by King David had disappeared, extinguished by infighting and internal intrigue. Its collapse had deep religious implications.

God had a covenant with David, and with his successors. Their task was not just to govern, but also to keep the nation of Israel faithful to God.

With the end of the unified monarchy under David and his heirs, no other figure or authority had God’s commission to exercise the role of strengthening the national bond with the Almighty.

More ominously, it seemed as if the instrument selected by God for this purpose, namely the Davidic dynasty, somehow yielded to pressures and temptations. It failed to fulfill the obligation to preserve the people’s relationship with God.

Despite these circumstances, Jeremiah promised that indeed God’s faithfulness would endure. His justice would endure. The people must not lose faith.

For its second reading, the Church presents a passage from St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Thessalonians. In it, Paul calls upon the Christians of Thessalonica to love each other. The call was simple, but not easily achieved given human nature. To love each other. The call was simple, but not easily achieved given human nature. To love each other. The call was simple, but not easily achieved given human nature.

Romans 13:8-10

The first Sunday of Advent often is described as a time to prepare for Christmas. It is thus, but it has two other purposes. It exists to enable us to reform ourselves, so that the Lord can come to us on any day.

Finally, it calls upon us to prepare ourselves for the decisive coming of Jesus when we die, and at the end of time, by reminding us that we are mortal, and that Jesus will return to the earth. He will vindicate the right. The forces of evil will wither and die. He will fall before the glory of the risen Lord.

He will reign forever. Everything else will pass away.

We must be with the Lord or place ourselves in opposition to the Lord. If we reject God, we shall die and be separated from him forever.

How do we prepare for all this? We prepare by keeping first and foremost our purpose to love God above all else, and by making everything secondary to that determination.

The second subject of the Sunday readings is timeless. The first reading emphasizes the responsibility of leaders to serve and protect their people, and the second reading stresses the importance of the Christian community to live in love and unity, following the example of Jesus.

The Gospel reading from St. Luke’s Gospel furnishes the last words the Lord Jesus gave to his disciples before he ascended into heaven.

“...He will come again.”

My Journey to God

Thank You Lord

By Greg Hublar

When the glass appears to be half-empty rather than half-full, Lord, thank you that you have given me the glass.

When I have a difficult and stressful day at work, Lord, thank you that you have given me a job.

When I am pushed beyond my limits and have no patience at home, Lord, thank you for blessing me with a family of my own.

When the bills stack up and there is debt that I cannot repay, Lord, I thank you for reminding me that it all belongs to you anyway.

When I am lost and overcome with fear and anxiety, Lord, I thank you for sending me a safe path home.

When I feel so small and fail to recognize that I can never earn your love, Lord, I thank you that you have already freely given to me your unconditional love.

When the road is dark and the future appears to provide no comfort, Lord, thank you for giving me a temporary, and that the best is yet to come.

When I have chosen myself over others and I have turned my back on you, Lord, I thank you for taking away my sins even before I loved you.

And when I can no longer take another step on my journey, Lord, I thank you that my journey will be completed, arriving safely in your arms!

Amen.

(Greg Hublar is a member of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in New Albany.)

Question Corner

Fr. Kenneth Doyle

Buying and selling at parishes permissible but should be done with discretion

I am wondering about Church law and your own position on people coming to Mass and being confronted every week with different parish clubs and organizations trying to sell something. In my parish on any given Sunday, there might be as many as “three” sales going on before and after Mass. I’ve always thought that we go to Mass to show our reverence for the Lord and not to walk into a flea market. (New York)

A From time to time, I have heard people decry the practice of selling anything on Church property—with the claim that it violates the direct teaching of Jesus who is seen in all four Gospels evicting moneychangers from the temple. A careful reading of those Gospel accounts, though, shows a more nuanced lesson. What troubled Jesus was not the practice itself, but the fact that the merchants were defrauding people—selling sacrificial animals at considerable personal profit or exchanging money at an extortionate rate.

The transactions themselves were understandable: Worshippers making their annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem’s sacred site could not be expected to carry sheep with them from a considerable distance, and the Roman currency of the realm was failing to invest his money where it could make a profit from another’s distress.

When I was a young boy growing up in a poor neighborhood in Chicago, the moneylenders were the local pawn shops. Also, it should be done in the largely agrarian society of medieval Europe, lending money involved failing to invest his money where it could make a profit from another’s distress.

When it involved some work and little risk, charging interest was morally acceptable. In fact, in the parable of the talents, Jesus criticizes the “lazy” servant for failing to invest his money where it could make a profit from another’s distress.

The tax collectors themselves were understandable: Worshippers making their annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem’s sacred site could not be expected to carry sheep with them from a considerable distance, and the Roman currency of the realm was failing to invest his money where it could make a profit from another’s distress.

How, then, does the action of Jesus develop is complex. In the Gospel of St. Luke, Jesus says, “Love your enemies and do good to them, and lend expecting nothing back” (Lk 6:35). Situated in the pastage on the Beatitudes, this would seem to be an appeal for Christian generosity rather than a proclamation on the intrinsic immorality of interest-taking.

In fact, in the parable of the talents, Jesus criticizes the “lazy” servant for failing to invest his money where it could make a profit from another’s distress.

By 1515, though, usury had acquired a more nuanced meaning, the Fifth Lateran Council in that year declared that charging interest was morally acceptable when it involved some work and risk-taking by the lender. Church teaching regarding usury has developed along these lines since then.

So, to sum up, charging a moderate rate of interest is permitted by the Church. Mortgages and student loans meet the test, as does gaining interest on a bank deposit.

(Questions may be sent to Father Kenneth Doyle at pkdoyle@w Garland.com and 40 Hopewell St. Albany, N.Y. 12208.)

First Sunday of Advent/Msgr. Owen F Campion

Daily Readings

Monday, November 30
St. Andrew, Apostle
Romans 10:9-18
Psalm 19:8-11
Matthew 4:18-22

Tuesday, December 1
Isaiah 11:1-10
Psalm 72:1-2, 7-13, 17

Wednesday, December 2
Isaiah 25:6-10a
Psalm 25:1-3, 5-6
Matthew 15:29-37

Thursday, December 3
St. Francis Xavier, priest
1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23
Psalm 117:1b, 2c
Matthew 16:15-20

Friday, December 4
St. John Damascene, priest and doctor of the Church
Isaiah 29:17-24
Psalm 27:1, 4, 13-14
Matthew 9:27-31

Saturday, December 5
Isaiah 30:18-26
Psalm 147:1-6
Matthew 9:35-10:1, 5a-6, 8-9

Sunday, December 6
Second Sunday of Advent
Baruch 5:1-9
Psalm 126:1-6
Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11
Luke 3:1-6

(Entries from the Criterion Friday, November 27, 2015)
Butler, Elizabeth Funck, Debra
of Lou Fagan. Father of Mary
Bloomington, Nov. 11. Husband
83, St. Charles Borromeo,
grandmother of two.
Grandmother of nine. Great-
Szczepanski, Bob and Jim Elias.
Nov. 16. Wife of Thomas Elias.
St. Barnabas, Indianapolis,
82, ELIAS, Dolores Ann
Dorrel. Grandfather of two.
Nov. 15. Father of Kelly
St. Gabriel, Connersville,
DORREL, Kirby D.
Oct. 22. Father of Kathryn
66, St. Augustine, Jeffersonville,
Grandfather of six.
Murray and Robert Hammond.
of Marybeth Fehribach, Dennis,
Indianapolis, Oct. 26. Mother
82, St. Michael the Archangel,
Great-grandmother of 28.
GROSSMAN, Albert N.,
77, Holy Family, Olenwood,
Great-grandfather of one.
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Faith leaders say refugees require compassion, acceptance

WASHINGTON (CNS)—A Boston cardinal and the Maryland Catholic Conference were among hundreds of faith leaders who called for compassion in addressing the world refugee crisis, and stressed the importance of developing a national immigration policy based on humanitarian need.

Acknowledging that the times are “dangerous,” and that “enhanced security measures are needed,” Cardinal Sean P. O’Malley in a statement on Nov. 19 cautioned that in developing an immigration policy, “decisions concerning the specific measures taken require careful deliberation.”

In a Nov. 18 statement, the Maryland Catholic Conference, which includes the Baltimore and Washington archdioceses and the Diocese of Wilmington, Del., called on the country to welcome “those feeling persecution in other countries, including refugees seeking asylum from fear.”

The statements came as lawmakers in Congress and governors—including Indiana Gov. Mike Pence—opposed measures to resettle Syrian refugees in response to a string of terror attacks in Paris on Nov. 13 that left 130 people dead and hundreds more injured.

Republicans in the House of Representatives on Nov. 19 won a veto-proof majority, 289-17, on a bill blocking Syrian and Iraqi refugees from entering the U.S. The bill’s status in the Senate is uncertain, however.

In addition, governors in at least 30 states have called for an end to Syrian resettlement until security concerns can be addressed.

Cardinal O’Malley said that proposals that “simply exclude Syrian refugees as such lack the balance and humanitarian perspective of this time.”

“Christian and Muslim Syrians, he noted, have been fleeing their homeland for months only to be “set adrift in a chaotic world,” unprepared to provide for their safety or their humanity.

“The barbaric attacks in Paris, which demand a strong and responsible international response, are the best possible proof that such a brutal event should not be used to efface the memory of Syrians and others from the Middle East and Africa who are desperately in need of shelter, support and safety,” the cardinal’s statement said.

The Maryland Catholic Conference said it was prepared to offer assistance in partnership with Catholic Relief Services to Syrian and Iraqi families fleeing oppression and brutality carried out by the Islamic State.

Baltimore (CNS)—The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) approved a formal statement on pornography and additions to their quadrennial statement on political conscience.

But some bishops said the document does not adequately address poverty, as Pope Francis has asked the Church to do.

The pornography statement, “Create in Me a Clean Heart: A Pastoral Response to Pornography,” says that “producing or using pornography is gravely wrong,” and is a “mortal sin” if committed with deliberate consent and has the Catholics to turn away from it. Approval of the statement came on a vote of 230-4 with one abstention, with 181 votes needed for passage.

Bishop Richard J. Malone, of Buffalo, N.Y., chair of the bishops’ Committee on-Life, Marriage, Family Life and Youth, described pornography as a “dark shadow in our world today.”

“Addiction to the devices made to reflect the teachings of Pope Francis, and the later encyclical on Mercy,” he said. But some bishops said the document does not adequately address poverty, as Pope Francis has asked the Church to do.

“For example, a statement by bishops in Chicago, Illinois, stated: “We urge all Marylanders to consider their plight with an open heart, and to learn more about the multiple layers of suffering that they have experienced. We desire to offer assistance in partnership with Catholic Relief Services and other Catholic organizations.”

The statement followed comments from the chairman of the U.S. bishops’ Committee on Migration, who said on Nov. 17 that he was disturbed by calls from federal and state officials for an end to the resettlement of Syrian refugees in the U.S.

“These refugees are fleeing terror themselves—violence like we have witnessed in Paris,” said Seattle Auxiliary Bishop Eusebio Elizondo, committee chairman. “They are extremely vulnerable—families, women and children who are fleeing for their lives. We cannot and should not blame them for the actions of a terrorist organization.”

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis has been working with one such Syrian family.

“We are working with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishop’s Migration and Refuge Services and the governor’s office on how to best resolve this situation that will help this family who is scheduled to arrive in Indianapolis in December,” said David Bethuram, director of Catholic Charities Indianapolis. “This family has small children who fled Syria in 2012, and has gone through an extensive screening process. They have already waited three years to gain clearance to come to the United States.”

While the Archdiocese of Indianapolis has no other Syrian refugee families slated to be resettled in central and southern Indiana, Heidi Smith, a spokeswoman who has told the authorities that any concerns Governor Pence has concerning Syrian refugees will be resolved quickly because the lives of so many families are at risk.
Tree house at theme park will take root at CYO camp in Brown County

By John Shaughnessy

Crouched in runners’ stances, good friends Jacob Riley and Quinton Bell smile and give each other the kind of goofy, competitive looks that often mark made-up tests of questionable skills between guys.

In a moment, the two teenagers will explode toward the huge rope net in front of them, climb as quickly as they can toward the top of the wooden tree house, and then race to see who will be the first to make it down a 16-foot slide.

When the race ends seconds later, Jacob jumps and raises his hands in triumph as he taunts Quinton, who is momentarily sullen. Yet before long, the focus of the friends changes as they’re raving about the tree house that was the center of Camp Tekakwitha, the interactive theme park of the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) in Indianapolis on Nov. 19-21.

“It’s way cool to have something to do like this,” says Jacob, 17, a member of St. Ambrose Parish in Anderson, Ind., in the Lafayette Diocese, the same parish as Quinton.

“It’s awesome,” adds Quinton, 18. “I like the feel of it—the camping and the outdoors.”

For three days during breaks from the Masses, eucharistic adoration and more serious workshops and faith-filled sessions, the theme park inside the Indiana Convention Center became the place where 25,000 youths from across the United States relaxed, socialized, considered their futures, and played games from their childhood. And the tree house was a big hit, creating smile after smile from the youths who climbed up it and slid down it.

Still, no one smiled more by the tree house than Kevin Sullivan, the co-director of Camp Rancho Framasa, the year-round camp of the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

When the national conference ended, Sullivan and his staff started the process of taking down the tree house that they built—and a nearby wooden pavilion—so they could reassemble them on the grounds of the CYO camp in Brown County.

“For years, I’ve always said I wanted a playground at camp, and the tree house will be a major part of it,” Sullivan says. “I’m hoping to add it to it in the future. I see it as a place where a counselor can go to see the top of the tree house and be there with the kids, hanging out together. When they start to talk about something deeper, about our faith, that’s where the ministry happens.”

Sullivan also envisions the pavilion as being a welcome addition to Camp Rancho Framasa. The plan is to reassemble it near the high-ropes area of the camp where campers put on helmets and harnesses for an outdoor adventure near the treetops.

“They’ve seen the big picture of having [23,000] kids from all over the country here,” Sullivan says. “They see how big the Catholic Church is, how strong the faith is.”

Striving to strengthen the Catholic faith is a year-round goal for Sullivan and his staff.

“We offer retreats and outdoor experiences year-round. We’re winterized,” Sullivan says. “Ours is a Catholic camp. The spiritual ties to the camping experience are stronger than you will find at a secular camp. We give them a shared experience that brings them together, and that’s part of the values of the Catholic Church.”

Kevin Sullivan

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CONFESSION

Answering the Gospel call to uphold the dignity of all people

Beautiful things happen at the many programs for seniors offered by Catholic Charities throughout the archdiocese. Your gift to the United Catholic Appeal allows us to respond with love and charity to the caregiving needs of our elderly and offer much needed support to family members caring for loved ones.

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