



The

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Christmas dream

Family gets home thanks to Sacred Heart Parish, other churches and housing center, page 3.



Syrian refugee children covered with dust arrive on Sept. 10 at the Jordanian border with Syria and Iraq, near the town of Ruwashed, which is close to Amman, Jordan. A Syrian family arrived in Indianapolis on Dec. 7. The husband, wife and two children fled their war-torn country three years ago due to the violence. (CNS photo/Muhammad Hamed, Reuters)

Statement from Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin regarding the resettlement of a family of refugees from Syria

I would like to bring you up to date regarding the question of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis resettling a family of refugees from Syria. The family arrived safely in Indianapolis last night (Dec. 7).



Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin

I thank Governor Pence for meeting with me last Wednesday (Dec. 2), when I was able to explain in some detail the plight of this family as well as the role of the Archdiocese's Refugee and Immigrant Services program in welcoming them to Indianapolis, where the family already has some relatives. I listened to the governor's concerns regarding security, and prayerfully considered his request that we defer from welcoming them until Congress had approved new legislation regarding immigrants and refugees.

I informed the governor prior to the family's arrival that I had asked the staff of Catholic Charities to receive this husband, wife and their two small children as planned.

Three years ago, this family fled the violence of terrorists in their homeland of Syria. After two years of extensive security checks and personal interviews, the United States government approved them to enter our country. The Archdiocese of Indianapolis was asked to help resettle this family through its regular participation in a program that is a public-private partnership between the federal government and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and its Migration and Refugee Services.

For 40 years, the Archdiocese's Refugee and Immigrant Services has welcomed people fleeing violence in various regions of the world. This is an essential part of our identity as Catholic Christians, and we will continue this life-saving tradition.

We welcome this family during Advent, a time when the Christian community asks God to renew our hope and recognize God's saving power among us. As we wait with hope during this season of Advent, I ask all people of good will to pray for peace in our homes, local communities and throughout the world. †

Syrian refugee family arrives in archdiocese with 'so much hope in their eyes'

By Natalie Hoefler

The two small children and their parents were exhausted as their plane landed in Indianapolis at 7:30 p.m. on Dec. 7.

These were not the average tired travelers coming home from a tourist trip. This was a family arriving to their new home, ready to start a new life in a new country.

This was a family of refugees, leaving behind all they owned in war-ravaged Syria, ready to finally settle in the United States after a three-year wait to be welcomed.

Flor Bickel, senior immigration consultant for the archdiocese's Refugee and Immigrant Services (RIS), assisted the family at the airport.

"They were so tired, and the children were sleeping in their arms," she said. "But there was so much hope in their eyes."

Heidi Smith, RIS director, said it was a "happy reunion" with the mother's sister and the sister's family, who live in Indianapolis.

The family's journey has been a long one. Fleeing their home in Syria three years ago due to violence, they have been living in transitional housing in Amman, Jordan.

After two years of extensive security checks and personal interviews by the U.S. government, the family was approved to come to America.

Because of the family's relatives in Indianapolis, the archdiocese was asked to help resettle the Syrian family through its regular participation in a program that is a public-private partnership between the federal government and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and its Migration and Refugee Services.

Then, on Nov. 16, Indiana Gov. Mike Pence announced that he would suspend the resettlement of Syrian refugees in the state.

On Dec. 2, Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin met with the governor to discuss the family's plight, to reassure him that they had gone through an extensive background check, and to

See FAMILY, page 2

Holy Year is a reminder to put mercy before judgment, pope says

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—On a cloudy, damp morning, Pope Francis' voice echoed in the atrium of St. Peter's Basilica: "Open the gates of justice."



With five strong thrusts, the pope pushed open the Holy Door, a symbol of God's justice, which he said will always be exercised "in the light of his mercy."

The rite of the opening of the Holy Door was

preceded by a Mass with 70,000 pilgrims packed in St. Peter's Square on Dec. 8, the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the beginning of the extraordinary Holy Year of Mercy.

As the sun broke through the clouds, heralding the start of the jubilee year, the

pope bowed his head and remained still for several minutes in silent prayer.

Amid a crowd of dignitaries and pilgrims, a familiar face was also present at the historic event: retired Pope Benedict XVI, who followed Pope Francis through the Holy Door into St. Peter's Basilica.

During his homily, Pope Francis emphasized the "simple, yet highly symbolic" act of opening the Holy Door, which "highlights the primacy of grace," the same grace that made Mary "worthy of becoming the mother of Christ."

See MERCY, page 8

Pope Francis opens the Holy Door in St. Peter's Basilica to inaugurate the Jubilee Year of Mercy at the Vatican on Dec. 8.

(CNS photo/Max Rossi, Reuters)



FAMILY

continued from page 1

explain the archdiocese's refugee resettlement process.

A press release was distributed to the media by the archdiocese on Dec. 8 announcing that the family had safely arrived the night before.

"I thank Governor Pence for meeting with me last Wednesday, when I was able to explain in some detail the plight of this family as well as the role of the Archdiocese's Refugee and Immigrant Services program in welcoming them to Indianapolis, where the family already has some relatives," the archbishop stated in the press release.

"I listened to the governor's concerns regarding security and prayerfully considered his request that we defer from welcoming them until Congress had approved new legislation regarding immigrants and refugees.

"I informed the governor prior to the family's arrival that I had asked the staff of Catholic Charities to receive this husband, wife and their two small children as planned."

Soon after the archdiocesan press release was distributed, the governor's office issued a statement that, while the governor "holds Catholic Charities in the highest regard," he "respectfully disagrees with their decision to place a Syrian refugee family in Indiana at this time."

David Bethuram, director of Catholic Charities Indianapolis, said his office has received numerous calls of support for the resettlement of the family—from offers of living space to offers of financial assistance,

and even "calls just saying 'we support what you're doing.'

"It's given us a good opportunity to explain to people the process of refugee resettlement, this avenue of the Church to welcome [refugees]," he said. "We've done it for 40 years, and will continue to do it."

While there are no other Syrian families slated for resettlement in the archdiocese, Bethuram pointed out that Syrians "are not the only population we're resettling right now. We have lots of others from Burma, Bhutanese [from Nepal], Africa—all of them have gone through the same process this Syrian family has gone through."

Per this process, the Syrian family will be placed in an apartment furnished with donated items. RIS will assist the family in registering for medical, welfare and Social Security aid, followed by help in transitioning to their new life in America. They will receive community and cultural orientation, English classes, tutoring, job readiness courses, professional certifications and employment placement.

The family arrived in the archdiocese on the eve of the beginning of the Jubilee Year of Mercy, and also in the midst of Advent, as Archbishop Tobin noted.

"We welcome this family during Advent, a time when the Christian community asks God to renew our hope and recognize God's saving power among us.

"As we wait with hope during this season of Advent, I ask all people of good will to pray for peace in our homes, local communities and throughout the world."

(For more information on Refugee and Immigrant Services, log on to www.archindy.org/cc/refugee.) †



Syrians refugees at the Zaatari refugee camp on Nov. 1 wait to register their names to return to their homeland in Syria. The U.N. refugee agency reports that currently about 100 Syrians return home nearly every day from Jordan. (CNS photo/Muhammad Hamed, Reuters)



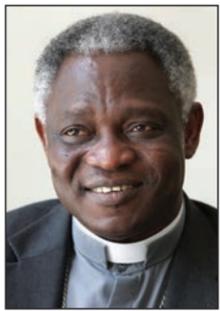
"It's given us a good opportunity to explain to people the process of refugee resettlement, this avenue of the Church to welcome [refugees]. We've done it for 40 years, and will continue to do it."

—David Bethuram, director of Catholic Charities Indianapolis

Cardinal tells world leaders 'great deal is at stake' in climate talks

PARIS (CNS)—A senior Vatican official urged a roomful of world leaders "to take action," and work in a spirit of solidarity to come up with an accord to combat global warming before it is too late.

"A great deal is at stake for every country. Progress has too long been based on fossil energy, to the detriment of the environment. This is the moment to take action," Cardinal Peter Turkson told a high-level segment of the U.N. climate change conference taking place on the outskirts of Paris.



Cardinal Peter Turkson

"As many scientists and economists are warning, the longer we wait, the more difficult it will be to rectify environmental conditions—and the more damage and suffering the delay will cause," Cardinal Turkson told the various heads of state and government assembled on Dec. 8.

Cardinal Turkson, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, said that while no one had the right to deprive future generations of the chance to live on Earth, "this, unfortunately, is a horrible and ever more likely possibility.

"Instead of being careful about this common home of ours, we have been careless. Damage flows from selfish, short-sighted economic and political choices. As a result, the cries of the poor and the desperate now join the groaning of the Earth. Those whose homes and livelihood are washed away by rising seas, or turned to dust by drought, where will they go?" he asked.

The high-level segment took place on the sidelines of major negotiations underway among 195 countries, who aim to produce a global climate accord that would curb global warming by limiting the use of fossil fuels and the

dangerous carbon gases they emit.

The U.N. conference began on Nov. 30 and ends on Dec. 11. Activists in favor of a climate accord that limits fossil fuels but safeguards the poor have reported major obstacles in the way of any agreement, including over issues of compensating poor countries most impacted by climate change, and the issue of human rights.

"As Pope Francis told world leaders assembled at the United Nations" on Sept. 25, "man is not authorized to abuse the environment, much less to destroy it," Cardinal Turkson reminded his audience.

"When the environment is assaulted, the poor, least able to defend themselves, suffer most. We cannot remain blind to the grave damage done to the planet, nor can we remain indifferent to the plight of the millions of people who most bear the burden of such destruction. While no one has the right to condemn people to hopelessness and misery, this all too frequently occurs through destructive actions or culpable indifference," he said.

Cardinal Turkson cited Pope Francis' June 2015 encyclical, "*Laudato Si'*," on Care for Our Common Home," which criticizes consumerism and the toll it and irresponsible development have taken on the environment and the poor. The letter calls for a change of heart to protect the Earth and all its inhabitants.

"Everything is interconnected, and ... genuine care for our own lives and our relationships with nature is inseparable from fraternity, justice and faithfulness to others," Cardinal Turkson quoted, listing various challenges he said remained in the face of a just climate agreement, including the integration of the wide range of perceptions the different countries involved in the Paris negotiations had regarding finance, technology, capacity building and environmental science.

"So our scientific and diplomatic task is immense. Please let us not lose ourselves in protecting current narrow

interests," he appealed to his audience.

He thanked everyone who had so far spoken out, prayed and pushed for climate justice, in particular the tens of thousands of people across the world he said had joined in climate-change marches and rallies.

"For we all can and indeed must do much better, transforming ourselves by way of an ecological conversion," he said.

"What must unite everyone is a shared ethical framing of the common good and solidarity," he said. "Such virtues are indispensable for any transformation, for any effective commitment to change. It may be that a lack of ethical guidelines and motivation makes the current negotiations more difficult."

The cardinal suggested that nations that have contributed most to greenhouse gas emissions and benefitted most from the industrial period should "now take the lead and contribute more to the solution than those whose standard of living is just beginning to rise."

"May we be guided by a shared vision and fortified by determination and courage in order to secure a fair, legally binding and truly transformational agreement," he said.

Noting that experts had advised that investments in clean energy globally should equal about \$2 trillion a year between now and 2030—roughly the same as annual military spending worldwide—the cardinal surmised that "clearly, the issue is not so much 'Can the economy afford it?' as 'What are our priorities?'"

He said what he called "a spirit of genuine and constructive" dialogue was essential at the Paris talks in order to come up with a just climate agreement.

Dialogue, he said, "is the way to be transformative: to rediscover our human dignity and start afresh as brothers and sisters. Through the strengthening of dialogue, we will also discover how to prevent conflict and build peace, and we all know how much climate change can affect peace." †

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Christmas dream comes true for family thanks to Sacred Heart Parish, other churches and housing center

By John Shaughnessy

Ever since she became a mother, Veronica Villafuerte has had a dream of the perfect Christmas for her family.

She and her husband and their four children would celebrate the birth of Christ in their own home, all of them together around a glowing evergreen on Christmas morning.

Yet with each passing year, the dream seemed less realistic, even as she worked two jobs to make it possible. There was also the challenge of one of her children being diagnosed with epilepsy.

"My children would ask, 'Mom, can we get a house now?'" recalls Villafuerte, who is 34. "It broke my heart to know that financially we were not at that point. My response was always 'almost.' They didn't argue, but accepted it and knew that I was really trying. We teach our kids that life is tough, but no matter how tough life is you have to embrace it and enjoy it."

This Christmas, the joy will flow as the family celebrates the holy day in their first house—an early present that became a reality through their own hard work, the efforts of Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Indianapolis, and the support of several Christian churches and a housing center on the city's south side.

It's a story of how the gift of "family" sometimes extends far beyond its usual definition. It's also a story of how the faith that binds people across denominations can create the hope and the promise that are at the heart of Christmas.

A 'hand-up' to a better life

More than any other day, Christmas is the one where dreams and memories converge most fully. And the dreams of the Villafuerte family are now forever tied to the memories of John Sauter.

Sauter and his wife Veronica are members of Sacred Heart Parish, even though they live on the northeast side of Indianapolis. As they make the 35-minute drive to the near south side church every Sunday morning for Mass, they return to a place and a neighborhood that has a deep emotional connection for Sauter.

"My dad grew up on Union Street where Sacred Heart is," he says. "That's why it's near and dear to me. We have a lot of older parishioners. There's a lot of nostalgia about the area for them. They talk about there being hundreds of kids in the neighborhood. When the church bells rang, there would be all these people walking to church."

That scene has mostly disappeared today, but it's one that Sauter has kept in his mind as he has searched for a way to make a difference in his retirement.

Turning his attention to the area around Sacred Heart, Sauter learned that nearly 65 percent of the housing in the area is rental property. So the challenge became, "How do we improve the quality of life and make the area a growing, vibrant family neighborhood as it was long ago?"

For Sauter, the answer is, "Increase owner-occupied housing with families who will invest in the neighborhood as part of their future—lifting the future for the entire area, one home and family at a time."

That effort started between Sacred Heart Parish and the Old Southside Neighborhood Association. It has grown to include a number of local businesses, the Southport Presbyterian Church, the Southport Christian Church, the East 91st Street Christian Church, and the Southside Catholic Business Professionals. A crucial part of the plan is the involvement of The Fuller Center for Housing of Central Indiana.

"The Fuller Center is in the business of building and rebuilding homes and lives with hope, hard work, determination, prayer and God's love," Sauter says about the non-profit, Christian housing ministry. "They believe in offering those in need not a 'hand-out' but a 'hand-up' to a better life."

With that belief in mind, the search began for a worthy family to get the first new house in the neighborhood in years.

Living the American dream

The Villafuerte family topped the list after the parish checked the families in the area who benefitted from the services of the Indianapolis chapter of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

"We recommended them to Fuller," Sauter says. "We thought they were the perfect family for this house. They are conscientious, and their kids all believe they'll go to college. They're a young family, a hard-working family."

Their work ethic was evident after The Fuller Center's staff agreed with the parish's recommendation that the family would live up to the terms and payments of owning the house.

During the three weeks the house was being built this fall, Jose Villafuerte used his skills as a roofer to put on the roof. And the oldest child, 16-year-old Kassandra, spent her two weeks of fall break from high school to do insulation work on the house.

"Kassandra is the oldest, so she's been through the rough times with me," her mom says. "This is what she wanted more than anything. She wanted us to be stable. We love this house. It's beautiful."

Sauter also feels blessed by the difference the house has meant to the family.

"I saw this as a chance to change somebody's life," he says. "I feel very good about the family getting this opportunity. They're just trying to live the American dream. And to see different faiths come together to make this happen is neat to see."

There is also the hope that the first house is just the beginning.

A homecoming of faith

That is the dream of Sauter and



Veronica Villafuerte, center, expresses the gratitude and amazement of her family for the new home they received through the efforts of Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Indianapolis, other churches and The Fuller Center for Housing of Central Indiana. Heather Rayka, left, of The Fuller Center for Housing, Franciscan Father Larry Janezic, pastor of Sacred Heart Parish, and Jesuit Father Jeremiah Lynch, associate pastor, far right, share in the moment. (Submitted photos)

Sacred Heart's pastor, Franciscan Father Larry Janezic.

"For years, we've been doing minor repairs on homes as a form of outreach as a Catholic community, but we wanted to do something more substantive, and we think we're on a good track here," the pastor says about the connection between the parish and the Fuller Center.

"It's important to the parish on two levels. One, it's another dimension of our outreach. And two, it has the potential to build up the parish. But I would emphasize the outreach. We're supposed to be mindful and caring of our environment. We hope to put up a few more houses in the near future."

To achieve that goal, more volunteers and resources are needed, the pastor says. And Sauter adds that he hopes other parishes in the archdiocese will become part of this effort in an economically struggling area.

"This could change the neighborhood, but Sacred Heart can't do this on our own," he says. "Future builds will depend on how successful we are in getting businesses and benefactors to donate, and possibly sponsor the builds. The Fuller Center will support as many builds as we can get funding for."

Villafuerte says the new house is a game-changer for her family, including the three younger children, Luis, Irene and Jazmin.

"We're going to enjoy the holidays more," she says. "We've always done Christmas at other relatives' houses. This will be our first Christmas at home. It makes me very emotional, very grateful and very proud. I'm going to feel good that our kids will be able to run down the stairs to get their Christmas presents. They won't get a lot of Christmas presents, but



Here is a full view of the new house that the Villafuerte family received through the efforts of Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Indianapolis, other churches and The Fuller Center for Housing of Central Indiana.

we'll be in our home."

That sense of home also extends to the one they have found at Sacred Heart Parish, she says. She has signed up her children at the parish to receive the sacraments of first Communion and confirmation. She also plans to receive the sacrament of confirmation herself.

It's all part of this Christmas being a homecoming for her—a homecoming of faith.

"For a while, I felt that God had forgotten me. But going through this process and getting this house, I feel that God is telling me, 'I haven't forgotten you. I am here.'"

(For any individual, group or parish wanting to help Sacred Heart Parish in this effort, visit the website, www.sacredheartindy.org, or contact John Sauter at sauterindy@yahoo.com. There will also be an informational meeting about the housing effort at 6:30 p.m. on Jan. 11 at Sacred Heart Parish Hall, 1125 S. Meridian Street, in Indianapolis.) †



"I saw this as a chance to change somebody's life. I feel very good about the family getting this opportunity. They're just trying to live the American dream. And to see different faiths come together to make this happen is neat to see."

—John Sauter



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

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.

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. †



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Editorial

Mary is present throughout the Advent and Christmas seasons

On Dec. 8, we celebrated the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the patronal feast day of the United States of America. On this day, we acknowledge that by the gracious gift of God, Mary was born without sin or guilt. She received in advance what all of us are promised as a result of her Son's victory over sin and death. Thus, from the moment of her conception, Mary became "full of grace" and a sign of the graces all humankind will receive through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

The next day, on Dec. 9, we observed the memorial of St. Juan Diego, the indigenous man to whom Mary appeared outside of what is now Mexico City in the early years of the Spanish conquest of the New World.

Juan Diego was an honest man who did what the beautiful lady—who spoke his language and wore native dress—asked him to do. He presented the local bishop with proof that the lady was who she claimed to be: "I am the ever-virgin Mary, Mother of the true God who gives life and maintains its existence. He created all things. He is in all places. He is Lord of Heaven and Earth."

Through the miraculous gift of her own image imprinted on Juan Diego's *tilma*, a poncho-like cape made of cactus fiber, the woman who called herself *Santa Maria de Guadalupe* proved her identity as both the Mother of God and our mother.

On his final visit to Mexico in 1999, St. John Paul II declared Mary, under the title of Our Lady of Guadalupe, to be the patroness of all the Americas. Her feast is celebrated on Dec. 12, and while it is an especially important day for Mexicans and other Latino peoples, all of us who call ourselves Americans are invited to join in thanking God for this beautiful lady who brings peace, healing and great joy to all who know and love her.

As Advent continues, Mary's role in the history of our salvation is recalled through the familiar Gospel stories that we have all heard many times. The days before Christmas can be truly special—a graced time—if we allow ourselves the freedom to ponder the mysteries that unfold in the life of Mary as she opens her heart to God's will, and generously accepts all that is asked of her.

The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas) which we celebrate on Dec. 25, shows us the baby lying in a manger surrounded by Mary and Joseph, animals and shepherds (Pope Francis would call them people from "the peripheries"), who are the first to receive the glad tidings of great joy and who have come to adore the newborn king. Mary stands behind the manger, and once again signals that God is with us in the person of her only Son!

Two days later, on Dec. 27, the Church offers us the feast of The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Much has been written and discussed about the challenges of family life during this past year. We are right to celebrate the family in its simplest and most profound terms, but also to acknowledge that even this family was



A statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe is pictured in 2014 in Los Angeles. Our Lady of Guadalupe's feast day is celebrated on Dec. 12. Mary is present throughout the Advent and Christmas seasons. (CNS photo/Victor Aleman, Vida-Nueva.com)

"non-traditional" and experienced more than its share of problems. What makes this family unique, a model for all families, is the way its members accept God's will—even when they do not understand it—and show the greatest reverence and respect for each other and for everyone they meet

The New Year begins on Jan. 1 with the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God. We begin again with confident hope and a profound prayer for peace in our hearts and in our world. Mary stands at the beginning, and she points the way to her Son. By honoring her this New Year's day, we entrust ourselves, and the unknown future, to her loving care.

The Christmas season reaches its climax in The Epiphany of the Lord, which celebrates the revelation of God-with-us to people of every nation, language, race and culture. Epiphany reminds us that we cannot keep Christ's birth (or the responsibilities of Christian discipleship) to ourselves. Our faith is not to be kept secret. It is to be generously shared with all, to be proclaimed to the ends of the Earth. Here, too, Mary leads the way. She speaks all languages, adopts the customs of all peoples, and gives witness to her son in every era.

Let's ask Mary to open our hearts during the Advent and Christmas seasons. Let's follow her example by listening for God's word, and saying "yes" when he invites us to follow him.

—Daniel Conway

Perspective/Sean Gallagher

Critics have short-sighted view on faith in wake of San Bernadino terrorist attack

Various forms of social media—Facebook, Twitter and the like—have for years shown a tendency to coarsen public discourse. The anonymity of such online forms of communication make it easier for people to speak their minds in harsh ways that they might think twice about doing if speaking face to face with another person.

At other times, social media can promote the common good and strengthen solidarity. This happened shortly after Syed Rizwan Farook and Tashfeen Malik gunned down 14 people and injured 21 others on Dec. 2 in an Islamic State-inspired terrorist attack in San Bernadino, Calif., when people across the country, many political leaders included, went to Twitter to express their prayers for all those affected by the shooting.

That good use of social media quickly turned dark, however. With the dead and injured still littering the Inland Regional Center in San Bernadino and police officers scouring the area in a search for the attackers, Gene Weingarten, a columnist for *The Washington Post*, sent out a tweet that read, "Dear 'thoughts and prayers' people: Please shut up and slink away. You are the problem, and everyone knows it."

The online news outlet *The Huffington Post* characterized the prayers of political leaders in such a context as "useless." And the New York *Daily News*, known for its scathing headlines, reached a new level of daring when it spread the following message across its front page on Dec. 3: "God Isn't Fixing This," condemning anti-gun control politicians who "hide behind meaningless platitudes." The *Daily News'* disdainful front page was soon spread far and wide through social media.

Clearly, the primary goal of the shocking words of many of these critics was to call to task politicians who oppose gun control laws, or at least the ones favored by the critics. Because I'm not opposed in principle to increasing gun control measures, I think furthering the public discussion on that topic can be helpful.

I just think scorning prayer is not an effective way to do this. Seen from a

merely political perspective, the sharp condemnation of prayer by Weingarten, the *Daily News* and others might alienate many people across the country who might otherwise be as critical of gun control opponents as they are. I suspect there are many people of faith across the country who both highly value prayer and are open to deepening the public debate on gun control.

At a deeper level, such widespread and open scorning of prayer by members of the mainstream media is suggestive of the growing secularization of a society where the complete shunning of religious voices by influential people is more socially acceptable.

These shapers of culture, however, have a short-sighted perspective on faith. In the Catholic faith at least, a "both and" perspective has been embraced from the very beginning. We believe that God calls us both to pray and to be active in carrying out his will for his glory and the common good. Indeed, we see the two as closely intertwined. Through prayer, we are drawn to a clearer knowledge of God's will and given the grace to carry it out more effectively.

If Weingarten, the *Daily News* and others had this perspective on prayer and works, they might actually sincerely encourage the politicians they oppose to enter more deeply into prayer for themselves and those affected by the kind of attack that happened in San Bernadino.

Maybe that is too much to hope for in our growing secularized society. But that won't stop me from praying for it to happen.



Sean Gallagher is a reporter for The Criterion, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. †

Letter to the Editor

Outreach allows low-income children to get shoes in the winter

Thanks for the recent article and photo in the Nov. 27 issue of *The Criterion* about our shoe project, "Warm Hearts, Warm Toes," which benefits children so they are able to receive new shoes for the winter in Jackson County.

A few days ago, we had a call from a local doctor wanting to donate.

The publicity you have given this project helps us to continue to raise money for the next round of supplying shoes to low-income youngsters in winter.

**Maureen Pesta
Brownstown**

(Editor's note: Donations may be made through St. Ambrose/Our Lady of Providence Conference of the St. Vincent de Paul Society. They should be designated to use in the "Warm Hearts, Warm Toes" project. Members of the two parishes work together. The treasurer of the conference is Judy Carmer, 815 South Chestnut, Seymour, IN 47274.)

Letters Policy

Letters from readers are published in *The Criterion* as part of the newspaper's commitment to "the responsible exchange of freely-held and expressed opinion among the People of God" (*Communio et Progressio*, 116).

Letters from readers are welcome and every effort will be made to include letters from as many people and representing as many viewpoints as possible. Letters should be informed, relevant, well-expressed and temperate in tone. They must reflect a basic sense of courtesy and respect.

The editors reserve the right to select the letters that will be published and to edit letters from readers as necessary based on space limitations, pastoral sensitivity and content (including spelling and grammar). In order to encourage opinions from a variety of readers, frequent writers will ordinarily be limited to one letter every three months. Concise letters (usually less than 300 words) are more likely to be printed.

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

Send letters to "Letters to the Editor," *The Criterion*, 1400 N. Meridian Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367.

Readers with access to e-mail may send letters to criticon@archindy.org.

ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO JOSEPH W. TOBIN



REJOICE IN THE LORD

ALÉGRENSE EN EL SEÑOR

The Lord is coming again in glory

This weekend, we celebrate *Gaudete* Sunday (the Third Sunday of Advent). The Latin word “*Gaudete*” means rejoice. In his letter to the Philippians, St. Paul tells us to rejoice always because the Lord is near (Phil 4:4-7). Christians should always be filled with joy, but we rejoice in a special way during the Advent season because the Lord is near.

Christ lived among us as a man 2,000 years ago. After his passion, death and resurrection, he ascended to his Father. But we Christians believe that he will come again in glory on the last day. We also believe that he is with us here and now—in the holy Eucharist and all the sacraments, in our prayer and in the works we perform in his name, and wherever two or more are gathered as his Church.

What do we mean when we say that the Lord, who is with us always, is also coming again this Christmas season and at the end of time?

Jesus Christ is the Lord of history. That means that, while he is the goal or end of human history, he is not bound by the limits of time or space as we are. As

a result, he can be present with us now and, at the same time, be coming again in the future.

Advent celebrates this mystery. Although we know that Christ is with us always, we still wait for him, our blessed hope, and long for his coming again in glory. While we believe in his real presence in the Eucharist, we long for the more perfect communion that we will enjoy when we are with him in our heavenly home.

This “perfect communion” that is still yet to come is hinted at in the sights, sounds and smells of Christmas. The season of Christmas is the time of year when we once again rejoice at the coming of the Lord. We sing of his presence and celebrate the wondrous fact that God is with us (Emmanuel), the Lord of history freely choosing to enter into our time and space in order to be one with us.

As Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI has written, “As a child, Jesus came not only from God, but from other human beings. He grew in the womb of a woman, from whom he received his flesh and his blood, his heartbeat, his gestures, his language.

He received life from the life of another human being.”

Christmas celebrates this great mystery. God is with us—really and truly—in the person of an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. The Almighty God has emptied himself and taken the form of the most vulnerable and dependent human being, a little child.

So, we rejoice. We are filled with joy because the long-awaited Savior has come at last. We rejoice because we are not alone in a vast, uncaring universe. God is with us. He knows us—each one by name—and he loves us as his sisters and brothers in the one family of God.

But even as we rejoice at the mystery of God’s presence here and now, we also celebrate the profound hope that he will come again. The suffering and evil that we experience in this world will pass away one day. God’s kingdom will come—on Earth as it is heaven—and on that day every tear will be wiped away, and we will see God face to face.

What must we do to prepare for the Lord’s coming again? The Gospel reading

for this Sunday (Lk 3:10–18) is very clear:

“The crowds asked John the Baptist, ‘What should we do?’ He said to them in reply, ‘Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise’” (Lk 3:10-11).

What should we do to prepare for the Lord’s coming? Share generously with others all the gifts God has given us. This is the source of all true rejoicing. This is why we can wait for the Lord’s coming in joyful hope. It’s why we celebrate Christ’s birth and why we can pray with absolute certainty: *We proclaim your death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.*

My prayer for you and for all our brothers and sisters here in central and southern Indiana is that we will be filled with Advent hope. And that we will express our hope by reaching out to our sisters and brothers—especially those who are most in need of our love—and sharing with them our confident hope that the Lord is coming, now and at the end of time! †

Una vez más el Señor viene con gloria

Este fin de semana celebramos el Domingo de Gaudete (el tercer domingo de Adviento). La palabra latina *gaudete* significa alegría. En su carta a los filipenses, San Pablo nos dice que debemos estar alegres porque el Señor está cerca (Fil 4:4-7). Los cristianos siempre debemos estar alegres, pero nos regocijamos especialmente durante la época del Adviento por la cercanía del Señor.

Hace 2,000 años Cristo vivió entre nosotros como hombre; tras su pasión, muerte y resurrección, ascendió al encuentro con su Padre. Pero los cristianos creemos que volverá con gloria en el Día Final. También creemos que se encuentra con nosotros aquí y ahora: en la sagrada eucaristía y en todos los sacramentos, en nuestras oraciones y en las obras que realizamos en su nombre, y siempre que haya dos o más reunidos como Su Iglesia.

¿Qué queremos decir al afirmar que el Señor—quien siempre está con nosotros—también volverá en la época de Navidad y al final de los tiempos?

Jesucristo es el Señor de la historia y esto significa que, si bien Él es el objetivo o el fin de la historia de la humanidad, no se encuentra confinado a los límites del tiempo y del espacio como nosotros.

Por lo tanto, puede estar presente entre nosotros ahora y, al mismo tiempo, volver en el futuro.

El Adviento celebra este misterio. Aunque sabemos que Cristo siempre está con nosotros, igualmente lo esperamos como nuestra sagrada esperanza y añoramos su regreso glorioso. Si bien creemos que su presencia en la eucaristía es real, anhelamos la comunión más perfecta que disfrutaremos cuando estemos junto a Él en nuestro hogar celestial.

La “comunión perfecta” que está por venir se anticipa en las imágenes, los sonidos y los aromas de la Navidad. La época de la Navidad es el momento del año en el que nuevamente nos alegramos de la venida del Señor. Alabamos su presencia y celebramos el hecho maravilloso de que Dios está con nosotros (Emmanuel), el Señor de la historia que eligió participar en nuestro tiempo y nuestro espacio para hacerse uno con nosotros.

Tal como lo expresó el papa emérito Benedicto XVI: “Como niño, Jesús provino no solamente de Dios sino de otros seres humanos. Creció en el vientre de una mujer que le dio su carne y su sangre, su pulso, sus gestos y su idioma.

Recibió vida de otro ser humano.”

La Navidad celebra este gran misterio. Dios verdaderamente está con nosotros, encarnado en un recién nacido envuelto en pañales y acurrucado en un pesebre. Dios Todopoderoso se ha entregado y ha adoptado la forma del ser humano más indefenso y vulnerable: un bebé. Y esto es motivo de júbilo.

Nos inunda la alegría porque finalmente ha llegado el Salvador a quien ansiábamos. Nos regocijamos porque no estamos solos en un universo vasto e indiferente. Dios está con nosotros. Nos conoce por nombre a cada uno y nos ama como sus hermanos en una sola familia de Dios.

Pero incluso mientras celebramos el misterio de la presencia de Dios aquí y ahora, también celebramos la profunda esperanza de que volverá otra vez. Un día pasará el sufrimiento y el mal que aquejan a este mundo, y vendrá el Reino de Dios—en la Tierra como en el cielo—; ese día toda lágrima será enjugada y veremos frente a frente el rostro de Dios.

¿Qué debemos hacer para prepararnos para el regreso del Señor? La lectura del Evangelio de este domingo es muy precisa (Lc 3:10–18):

“La gente le preguntaba: ‘Entonces, ¿qué debemos hacer?’ Y Juan les respondía: ‘El que tenga dos túnicas, comparta una con el que no tiene ninguna, y el que tenga comida, haga lo mismo’” (Lc 3:10-11).

¿Qué debemos hacer para prepararnos para la venida del Señor? Compartir generosamente con los demás los obsequios que Dios nos ha dado. Esa es la fuente de la verdadera alegría y la razón por la que anticipamos con alegre esperanza la venida del Señor. Es el motivo por el que celebramos el nacimiento de Cristo y por el que rezamos con absoluta convicción: *Anunciamos tu muerte, proclamamos tu resurrección. ¡Ven Señor Jesús!*

Mi oración para usted y para todos nuestros hermanos y hermanas del centro y del sur de Indiana es que estemos colmados de la esperanza del Adviento, y que expresemos nuestra esperanza acercándonos a nuestros hermanos y hermanas, especialmente a aquellos que más necesitan de nuestro amor, para compartir con ellos nuestra esperanza certera de que el Señor viene, ahora y al final de los tiempos. †

Traducido por: Daniela Guanipa

Events Calendar

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

December 12

Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. **Shop Inn-Spiced Christmas Sale**, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Information: 317-787-3287.

St. Michael the Archangel Parish, 3352 W. 30th St., Indianapolis. **First Annual CYO Wrestling Coaching Symposium**, 3 p.m., no charge, Mass 5:30 p.m. Information: 317-926-0516 or dradams3@gmail.com.

The Slovenian National Home, 2717 W. 10th St., Indianapolis. **Christmas party**, food, music, 5 p.m.-midnight, free will donation. Information: 317-632-0619 or emcollins462@yahoo.com.

Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Providence Spirituality and Conference Center, 1 Sisters of Providence, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Christmas Fun at the Woods**, 1-4 p.m., \$5 per person. Information: 812-535-2932 or provctr@spsmw.org.

December 13

Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, 1530 Union St., Indianapolis. **Advent/Christmas concert**, 2 p.m., reception following concert, no charge. Information: 317-638-5551 or sheartparish@sbcglobal.net.

Most Holy Name of Jesus Church, 89 N. 17th Ave., Beech Grove. **Christmas Concert #52**, 5 p.m., adults \$7, seniors and children \$5. Information: 317-784-5454 or jchrisman@holyname.cc.

St. Michael the Archangel Church, 3354 W. 30th St., Indianapolis. **Mass in French**, 1 p.m. Information: 317-523-4193 or acfadi2014@gmail.com.

St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) Church, 4720 E. 13th St., Indianapolis. **Class of '63 monthly gathering**, 6 p.m. Mass, optional dinner afterward. Information: 317-408-6396.

December 16

Calvary Cemetery Chapel, 435 W. Troy, Indianapolis. **Monthly Mass followed by Remembrance Tree blessing**, 2 p.m. Information: 317-574-8898 or

smeacham@buchanangroup.org.

December 17

St. Joseph Church, 1375 S. Mickley Ave., Indianapolis. **Third Thursday Adoration**, interceding for women experiencing crisis pregnancy, 11 a.m.-7 p.m., with Mass at 5:45 p.m.

Our Lady of Peace Cemetery, 9001 Haverstick Road, Indianapolis. **Monthly Mass followed by Remembrance Tree blessing**, 2 p.m. Information: 317-574-8898 or smeacham@buchanangroup.org.

December 18

Northside Knights of Columbus Hall, 2100 E. 71st St., Indianapolis. **Catholic Business Exchange Mass**, breakfast and program, "How Faith Shapes Public Service," Sue Ellsperman, Lt. Governor of Indiana, presenter, 7-9 a.m., \$15 members, \$21 non-members, breakfast included, Bring an unwrapped toy for the U.S. Marines Toys 4 Tots toy drive. Reservations and information: www.catholicbusinessexchange.org.

December 18-19

St. John the Evangelist Parish, 126 W. Georgia St., Indianapolis. **Christkindl Village**, along west block of Georgia St. and St. John parking lot, 5-9 p.m. Dec. 18, noon-9 p.m. Dec. 19, live Nativity animals, kids' activities, caroling, handcrafted gifts, beer garden, music. Information: 317-635-2021 or www.stjohnsindy.org/christkindl-village.

December 19

Helpers of God's Precious Infants, Indianapolis. Mass and Divine Mercy Chaplet at 8:30 a.m. at St. Michael the Archangel Church, 3354 W. 30th St., followed by prayer at a local abortion center, and continued prayer at the church for those who wish to remain.

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 Chaplet, completed around 10:30 a.m.

January 2

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 Chaplet, completed around 10:30 a.m.

St. Michael Church, 145 St. Michael Blvd., Brookville. **First Saturday Devotional Prayer Group**, Mass, Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, rosary, confession, meditation, 8 a.m. Information: 765-647-5462.

January 6

Archbishop O'Meara Catholic Center, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. **Solo Seniors**, Catholic, educational, charitable and social singles, 50 and over, single, separated, widowed or divorced. New members welcome. 6 p.m. Information: 317-243-0777.

January 10

St. Michael the Archangel Church, 3354 W. 30th St., Indianapolis. **Mass in French**, 1 p.m. Information: 317-523-4193 or acfadi2014@gmail.com.

St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) Church, 4720 E. 13th St., Indianapolis. **Class of '63 monthly gathering**, 6 p.m. Mass, optional dinner afterward. Information: 317-408-6396.

January 12

St. Simon the Apostle Parish, 8155 Oaklondon Road, Indianapolis. **Creighton Model of Fertility Care, "Know Your Body, Love Your Spouse,"** 6:30-8:30 p.m., \$35 if registered by Jan. 1. Information: 317-721-7332 or lizfcp@indyfertilitycare.com. †

Annual Christmas food basket program still needs volunteers

For 47 years, the Hammons family of the former Holy Cross Parish in Indianapolis has coordinated a Thanksgiving and Christmas food basket program for hundreds of families.

While the parish has merged with St. Philip Neri Parish in Indianapolis through the Connected in the Spirit process, the food basket program still continues and is in need of donations to complete the baskets for 450 families in

need this Christmas.

Volunteers are needed to help fill 900 bags with food at Holy Cross Chapel, 125 N. Oriental St., in Indianapolis, after the 9:15 a.m. Mass on Dec. 13. Volunteers are also needed to continue filling and then distributing bags from 9 a.m.-6 p.m. on Dec. 14.

For more information on the project, call 317-710-0919 or 317-501-1132. †

'Longest Night' Mass and service scheduled for Dec. 18 and Dec. 19

Many people find the holidays a challenging time. Instead of celebrating, they struggle with grief. They miss loved ones, and find usual traditions and bright lights serve only to heighten their struggle.

For these people, a "Longest Night" service or Mass is often helpful, offering prayer and Scripture acknowledging those who mourn and struggle with loss during the Christmas season.

One Mass and one service are scheduled in the archdiocese:

- Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish, 1752 Scheller Lane, in New Albany, will offer a "Longest Night" Mass at 6 p.m. on Dec. 18.
- Abbey Caskets, a work of Saint Meinrad Archabbey, will host a "Longest Night" service in the Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guest House Chapel, 200 Hill Drive, in St. Meinrad, at 6 p.m. Central Time on Dec. 19. Light refreshments will follow. RSVP requested, but not required, for planning. Call 800-987-7380 or e-mail info@abbeycaskets.com for reservations or further information. Parking is available in the Guest House parking lot. †

Advent, Christmas concert to be held at St. Boniface Church on Dec. 13

An Advent and Christmas concert will be performed by the Celebration Singers of Dubois, Martin, Pike and Spencer counties at St. Boniface Church, 15519 N. State Road 545, in Fulda, at 2 p.m. Central Time on Dec. 13.

All are invited to this free concert that is open to the general public. †

Worldwide Marriage Encounter is seeking longest married couple; deadline is Jan. 10

Worldwide Marriage Encounter, based in San Bernardino, Calif., is seeking nominations for its annual Longest Married Couple project. Each year, the project honors one national winner and winners from each of the 50 states and U.S. territories.

Nominations are open to married couples regardless of faith tradition. They must include the name of the couple, their wedding date and what city and state they reside in, plus the nominator's name, and a phone number or e-mail address so they can be contacted if their nominee is a national or state winner.

The information can be sent the following ways: by e-mail to

wwmelmc2015@gmail.com or dickanddiane66@bellsouth.net; by regular mail to Dick and Diane Baumbach, 8924 Puerto Del Rio Drive, Suite 402, Cape Canaveral, FL 32920; by calling 321-613-5180; or by logging onto www.me.org.

Nominations must be received by Jan. 10, 2016.

The longest married couple in the United States will receive special gifts during the week of Valentine's Day. The individual state winners will receive a special certificate of achievement and recognition from the Worldwide Marriage Encounter representatives in their states.

For more information, log onto www.me.org. †

Christmas list can include gift certificates, gift cards to retreat centers in archdiocese

Several retreat centers in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis offer gift certificates or gift cards applicable to retreats that would make thoughtful gifts for Christmas or any time of year.

Below is a list of their locations and how to purchase the gift certificate or card, as well as a website to view the retreats each facility will offer in 2016.

- Benedict Inn Retreat & Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. Gift certificates are available by contacting Helen Kite at 317-788-7581, ext. 0. The 2016 retreat listing will soon be available at www.benedictinn.org.
- Mount St. Francis Retreat Center, 101 St. Anthony Drive, Mt. St. Francis. Gift certificates are good for one year from the issue date, and are available by contacting Karen Krider at retreats@mountsaintfrancis.org or at 812-923-8817. The 2016 retreat calendar is available at mountsaintfrancis.org/retreat-offerings.
- Oldenburg Franciscan Center, Oldenburg. Gift cards are available in any amount by e-mailing center@oldenburgosf.com or by calling 812-933-6437. A 2016 calendar of retreats is available by logging onto www.oldenburgfranciscancenter.org.
- Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. Gift cards are available in any amount by visiting the facility bookstore or by calling 317-545-7681. A 2016 calendar of retreats is available at www.archindy.org/fatima.
- Providence Spirituality and Conference Center of the Sisters of Providence, 1 Sisters of Providence, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. Gift certificates are available by contacting Jeanne Frost at jfrost@spsmw.org or 812-535-2952. A 2016 calendar of retreats is available by logging onto spsmw.org/sp/events/retreat-opportunities/.
- Saint Meinrad Archabbey, 200 Abbey Drive, St. Meinrad. Gift certificates are available by calling guest services at 800-581-6905. Note that Saint Meinrad Archabbey falls in the Central Time zone. A 2016 calendar of retreats is available at www.saintmeinrad.org/retreats/list-all-retreats/. †



New Providence Associates

On Nov. 14, the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods welcomed 28 new Providence Associates in a ceremony in the Church of the Immaculate Conception on the motherhouse grounds in St. Mary-of-the-Woods, bringing the number of Providence Associates in the United States and Taiwan to more than 220. Candidates are paired with a Sister of Providence or Providence Associate companion, then participate in a year of study, prayer and reflection. The Providence Associate relationship is open to people ages 18 and older of all faith traditions. For more information on the program, contact Debbie Dillow at 317-250-3294 or ddillow@spsmw.org, or log on to spsmw.org. (Submitted Photo)

Bishop urges prayers for unity, healing after shootings

OXNARD, Calif. (CNS)—Arriving in the late morning on Dec. 2 at the San Bernardino diocesan pastoral center for his job in the diocese's Office of Worship, Chris Estrella knew something was very wrong.

"I could see a police blockade of Waterman Avenue, which is where the Inland Regional Center is located," said Estrella, music and liturgy assistant. "That's less than two miles from the pastoral center. Then I saw a lot of law enforcement in the area—and I needed to use my key to get in the building, which is unusual."

Once at his desk, Estrella turned on his computer and saw the reason for the blockade and increased security: The Inland Regional Center had become a murder scene, with 14 people killed and 21 more wounded.

"At that time, realistically, I felt safe," Estrella, 27, told Catholic News Service (CNS) on Dec. 3. "But I worried about my family—my parents, my siblings, including my little brother who attends Our Lady of the Assumption School not that far away. Fortunately, they were all safe."

But the pastoral center—and Catholic schools in the city—remained on lockdown for several hours until about 2 p.m. "when they began shuffling us out and told us, 'Go home, be with your families,'" said Estrella. The office remained closed on Dec. 3, and was already slated to be closed on Dec. 4 for first Friday observances.

The Office of Worship canceled a Dec. 3 formation class for the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) program at the pastoral center. In a statement, the office expressed its sorrow at the killings and its solidarity in prayer with families and victims of the tragedy, saying, "Let us pray for peace and mutual tolerance, moving forward."

While no additional prayer services



An attendee weeps during a candlelight vigil in San Bernardino, Calif., on Dec. 3 for the victims of a mass shooting the previous day at the Inland Regional Center. At least 14 people were killed when gunmen opened fire during a function at a center for people with developmental disabilities. (CNS photo/Mario Anzuoni, Reuters)

had been scheduled as of Dec. 3, Estrella noted that the diocesan Department of Life, Dignity and Justice had previously scheduled an evening vigil on Dec. 5 for victims of violence at Sacred Heart Church in Rancho Cucamonga, in the western portion of the diocese that includes San Bernardino and Riverside counties.

"I expect we will be remembering the victims of the [Inland Regional Center] at that event," said Estrella, who added that more plans for prayer liturgies and Catholic community outreach will be discussed at a Dec. 7 meeting with diocesan staff

and led by San Bernardino Bishop R. Gerald Barnes.

"Like Bishop Barnes said [in a Dec. 2 statement], this is a time for prayer, a time to pray for peace," said Estrella. "I know there are many people all over who are praying for us here in such a terrible time, and I want to extend my thanks to all of them. We don't need any more violence."

Bishop Barnes attended a candlelight vigil on Dec. 3 at San Manuel Stadium in San Bernardino to remember those who died in the shooting. During the service, the names of the 14 people who were killed were read aloud.

The bishop, in a tweet sent on Dec. 3, said it was a "blessing to come together with leaders of our community tonight" to pray for peace and healing.

In a statement the previous day, Bishop Barnes urged people to pray for unity and healing after the mass shooting.

"For those who lost their lives, we pray for their eternal rest and God's strength to their loved ones left behind; for those who are wounded, we pray for their health and healing," he said.

The bishop called on people to pray for "all of the victims of this horrific incident and their families," and also asked for prayers for law enforcement officers who at the time were still "pursuing the suspects in this case."

"Our community of San Bernardino has faced great challenges through the years. Let us come together now in unity to bring light to the darkness of this day," Bishop Barnes said.

The shooting took place at the Inland Regional Center, a state-run facility for individuals with developmental disabilities where county health officials were having an employee holiday party.

Two armed suspects—later identified as Syed Farook, 28, and Tashfeen Malik, 27—were killed by police four hours later in a shootout about two miles from the social services center.

Farook, a county environmental inspector, had attended the holiday party and left, returning with Malik, wearing "assault-style clothing" with ammunition attached, according to news reports.

Police and federal agents have not yet offered a motive for the couple's shootings at the center, which provides housing and work programs and therapy and social services to more than 30,000 people with developmental disabilities. But federal law enforcement officials told *The New York Times* on Dec. 4 that Farook's wife, Malik, had pledged allegiance to the Islamic State in a Facebook posting. The FBI announced on Dec. 4 that it is officially investigating the shooting as an act of terrorism.

"Today, yet another American community is reeling from the horror of gun violence," said House Minority Leader

Nancy Pelosi, D-California in a Dec. 2 statement.

"As the families of the victims grieve and the survivors focus on healing, the entire American family mourns," she added.

Pelosi noted that gun violence is "a crisis of epidemic proportions in our nation," and said Congress has a moral responsibility to vote on common sense measures to prevent the daily agony of gun violence in communities across America. Enough is enough."

Los Angeles Archbishop Jose H. Gomez said in a Dec. 3 statement that it is "hard to understand this kind of violence and the hatred that motivates it. We ask how people can do such things, what is in their hearts? In these times, we need to trust in the providence of God and rely on his mercy.

"Our Christian faith tells us that we must overcome evil with good and respond to hatred with love. So this is our challenge in the days ahead," he added.

The archbishop said the Los Angeles Archdiocese mourns with the families and loved ones of victims and prays for healing for the wounded.

"We ask that God give his wisdom and prudence to the public authorities and law enforcement officials who are seeking to make sense of this horrible crime. And we pray for the conversion of hearts that are hardened by hatred," he said.

At least one of the victims of the shooting was Catholic. Damian Meins, 58, was described by a friend to The Associated Press as someone who "never strayed far from his Church or its teachings."

Meins, who worked in the public health department in San Bernardino and was the father of two girls, attended Notre Dame High School in Riverside where he met his wife, Trenna, who is principal of Sacred Heart School in Rancho Cucamonga.

"His death has affected our community deeply. He will be missed," Notre Dame's principal said in a message on the school's website.

Another shooting victim who was Catholic is Bennetta Betbadal, who was born in Iran in 1969. According to a fundraising page set up for her children, she fled to the United States when she was 18 to escape Islamic extremism and the persecution of Christians following the Iranian Revolution. She and her husband, both Catholic, had three children and lived in Rialto.

The day of the shooting, Betbadal, a health inspector, was at the Inland Regional Center to give a presentation.

"She loved her job, her community, and her country," the fundraising page says. "Her greatest love, however, was for her husband, her children, and her large extended family." †



“Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, It is *more blessed to give than to receive.*”
Acts 20:35

To the more than 11,000 of you who have already cheerfully made your gift to this year's United Catholic Appeal, bless you and thank you!

UNITED CATHOLIC APPEAL

Christ Our Hope

ANNUAL EARNINGS	1%		3%	
	PLEDGE	12 PAYMENTS	PLEDGE	12 PAYMENTS
\$10,000	\$100	\$9	\$300	\$25
\$20,000	\$200	\$17	\$600	\$50
\$25,000	\$250	\$21	\$750	\$63
\$30,000	\$300	\$25	\$900	\$75
\$36,500	\$365	\$31	\$1,095	\$92
\$50,000	\$500	\$42	\$1,500	\$125
\$75,000	\$750	\$63	\$2,250	\$188
\$85,000	\$850	\$71	\$2,550	\$213
\$100,000	\$1,000	\$84	\$3,000	\$250
\$125,000	\$1,250	\$104	\$3,750	\$312
\$150,000	\$1,500	\$125	\$4,500	\$375
\$175,000	\$1,750	\$146	\$5,250	\$438
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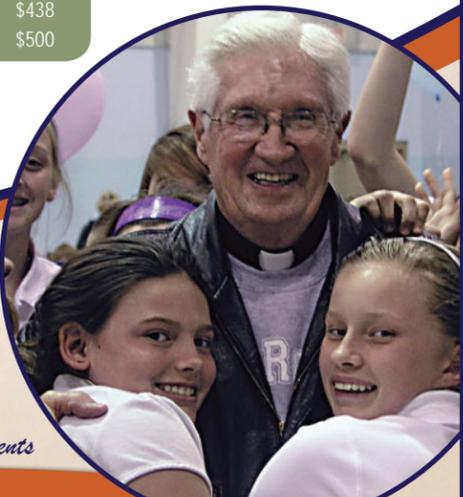
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MERCY

continued from page 1

“The fullness of grace can transform the human heart, and enable it to do something so great as to change the course of human history,” he said.

The feast of the Immaculate Conception, he continued, serves as a reminder of the grandeur of God’s love in allowing Mary to “avert the original sin present in every man and woman who comes into this world.”

“This is the love of God which precedes, anticipates and saves,” he said. “Were sin the only thing that mattered, we would be the most desperate of creatures. But the promised triumph of Christ’s love enfolds everything in the Father’s mercy.”

The Year of Mercy, the pope stressed, is a gift of grace that allows Christians to experience the joy of encountering the transforming power of grace and rediscovering God’s infinite mercy toward sinners.

“How much wrong we do to God and his grace when we speak of sins being punished by his judgment before we speak of their being forgiven by his mercy,” he said.

“We have to put mercy before judgment, and in any event God’s judgment will always be in the light of his mercy. In passing through the Holy Door, then, may we feel that we ourselves are part of this mystery of love.”

Fifty years ago, he said, the Church celebrated the “opening of another door,” with the Second Vatican Council urging the Church to come out from self-enclosure and “set out once again with enthusiasm on her missionary journey.” The council closed on Dec. 8, 1965.

Pope Francis, the first pope to be ordained to the priesthood after the council, said the council documents “testify to a great advance in faith,” but the council’s importance lies particularly



Pope Francis greets retired Pope Benedict XVI prior to the opening of the Holy Door of Saint Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican on Dec. 8. Pope Francis opened the Holy Door to inaugurate the Jubilee Year of Mercy.

(CNS photo/Maurizio Brambatti, EPA)

in calling the Catholic Church to return to the spirit of the early Christians by undertaking “a journey of encountering people where they live: in their cities and homes, in their workplaces. Wherever there are people, the Church is called to reach out to them and to bring the joy of the Gospel. After these decades, we again take up this missionary drive with the same power and enthusiasm.”

Shortly after the Mass, as thousands of people waited in St. Peter’s Square for a chance to walk through the Holy Door, Pope Francis led the midday Angelus prayer.

The feast of the Immaculate Conception has a special connection to the start of the Year of Mercy, he said, because “it reminds us that everything in our lives is a gift, everything is mercy.”

Like Mary, the pope continued, Christians are called to “become bearers of Christ” and to “let ourselves be embraced by the mercy of God who waits for us and forgives everything. Nothing is sweeter than his mercy. Let us allow ourselves to be caressed by God. The Lord is so good, and he forgives everything.” †



A woman kisses the Holy Door in St. Peter’s Basilica after Pope Francis opened it to mark the inauguration of the Jubilee Year of Mercy at the Vatican on Dec. 8. (CNS photo/Max Rossi, Reuters)



Our Lady of Guadalupe

Archdiocesan parishes to host Our Lady of Guadalupe celebrations

Special to *The Criterion*

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

Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin will be the principal celebrant for a Spanish Mass at 12:01 a.m. on Dec. 12 at St. Paul Catholic Center, 1413 E. 17th St., in Bloomington.

Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish

- 335 S. Meridian St., Greenwood.
- Dec. 11—6:30 p.m. Mass, sponsored by the parish’s Committee of Guadalupe.
- Dec. 12—5:30 p.m., Spanish Mass.

St. Ambrose Parish

- 325 S. Chestnut St., Seymour.
- Dec. 12—8 a.m. bilingual Mass.

St. Anthony Parish

- 337 N. Warman Ave., Indianapolis.
- Dec. 11—6 p.m. rosary in the church, 7 p.m. vigil Mass.
- Dec. 12—10 a.m. Mass, procession and celebration after Mass.

St. Bartholomew Parish

- 1306 27th St., Columbus.
- Dec. 11—10:30 p.m. procession, 10:45 p.m. rosary, 11:30 p.m. pre-Hispanic dance, midnight *mañanitas* (serenade).
- Dec. 12—12:30 a.m. Spanish Mass.

St. Gabriel the Archangel Parish

- 6000 W. 34th St., Indianapolis.
- Dec. 11—9 p.m. traditional dances, 10:05 p.m. rosary, 11 p.m. songs, 11:30 p.m. *mañanitas* (serenade), midnight Mass (*misa de gallo*).
- Dec. 12—6:30 p.m. procession, 7 p.m. bilingual Mass, 8 p.m. reception, 8:30 p.m. play.

St. Joseph Parish

- 125 E. Broadway St., Shelbyville.
- Dec. 11—11 p.m. Spanish Mass.

St. Lawrence Parish

- 6944 E. 46th St., Indianapolis.
- Dec. 12—4:30 a.m. *mañanitas* (serenade), 6:30 p.m. rosary, 7 p.m. Mass, 8:30 p.m. *mariachis*.

St. Mary Parish

- 317 N. New Jersey St., Indianapolis.
- Dec. 11—8:30 p.m. meet at Monument Circle, 9 p.m. procession to St. Mary’s, 9:30 p.m. folkloric dances, 9:45 p.m. rosary, 10:15 p.m. traditional dances, 11 p.m. *mariachis*.
- Dec. 12—midnight Mass in Spanish, 6 p.m. procession, 6:30 p.m. rosary, 7:30 p.m. re-enactment of the

apparitions, 8 p.m. dinner.

St. Mary Parish

- 415 E. Eighth St., New Albany.
- Dec. 11—10 p.m. Mass.
- Dec. 12—6 p.m. Mass, dinner to follow.

St. Michael Parish

- 101 St. Michael Drive, Charlestown.
- Dec. 11—9 p.m. to midnight, rosary and *mañanitas* (serenade).
- Dec. 12—7 p.m. Mass.

St. Monica Parish

- 6131 N. Michigan Road, Indianapolis.
- This year’s celebration will take place on Dec. 11 at **SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral**, 1347 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis.
- Dec. 11—8 p.m. rosary, 9 p.m. re-enactment of the apparitions, 10 p.m., songs and Aztec dance, 11 p.m. *mañanitas* (serenade), midnight Mass (*misa de gallo*), with coffee and sweet bread available afterward.
- Dec. 12—8:30 a.m. Mass in English at St. Monica, 12:30 p.m. Mass in Spanish at St. Monica.

St. Patrick Parish

- 950 Prospect St., Indianapolis.
- Dec. 11—7:30 p.m. rosary, 8:30 p.m. Aztec dance, 9:30 p.m. re-enactment of the apparitions, 10:45 p.m. Mass, midnight *mañanitas* (serenade).
- Dec. 12—6 a.m. *mañanitas* (serenade) and rosary, noon procession and rosary, 6 p.m. rosary, 6:30 p.m. Aztec dance, 7 p.m. Mass, 8:30 p.m. serenade to Mary.

St. Paul Catholic Center

- 1413 E. 17th St., Bloomington.
- Dec. 11—11:30 p.m. serenade to Our Lady of Guadalupe.
- Dec. 12—12:01 a.m., bilingual Mass with Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin as the principal celebrant, followed by a 1 a.m. celebration and dinner.

St. Philip Neri

- 550 N. Rural St., Indianapolis.
- Dec. 11—11 p.m. *Misa de gallo* (Mass).
- Dec. 12—7 p.m. *Misa de solemna* (solemn Mass). †

The Most Reverend Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R. invites you to stay connected

Social Gathering of Friends

Friday, February 26

Nativity Catholic Church, 705 E. Brandon Blvd, Brandon

- 11 a.m. Reception and Gathering
- 11:30 a.m. Remarks • Archbishop Tobin
- Noon Lunch
- 1 p.m. Blessing and Adjournment

Saturday, February 27

St. John the Evangelist, 625 111th Ave North, Naples

- 6:30 p.m. Mass in Church • St. John the Evangelist, Naples
- 7:20 p.m. Reception and Dinner
- 8:20 p.m. Remarks • Archbishop Tobin



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Event offers couples chance to laugh, 'learn to appreciate their marriage'

By Natalie Hoefler

Gabrielle King noticed a disturbing trend among her friends—a trend she felt she might be at risk of following.

"I noticed the number of friends I had whose marriage was in crisis, and they were getting divorced," she said. "My husband and I were tag-teaming getting our three kids to events, running back and forth to practices and concerts. We were communicating about his work schedule, my work schedule, and the kids' extracurricular and school schedules, but we weren't communicating about our marriage.

"I took a step back and thought, 'If we don't do something, we'll end up divorced, too.'"

'We needed something quick'

After 19 years of marriage, King and her husband Kurt decided to take some kind of action.

"We went through Tobit before we got married, and now we needed the Church to remind us why we chose marriage," she said.

But the couple's schedule didn't leave room for a weekend retreat or a 10-week marriage study.

"We needed something quick, down and dirty to re-energize us," she admitted with a laugh.

After much research and the approval of her pastor, Father Todd Goodson of St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis, King decided upon a marriage event offered through the Dynamic Catholic Institute, a ministry of renowned evangelist Matthew Kelly.

One of the many programs offered by the institute is "Passion and Purpose for Marriage," a four-hour event looking at three particular topics: five things women should know about men, five things men should know about women, and the most important word in marriage—and it isn't "love."

The event, which includes music by Catholic musician George Lower, features Dr. Allen Hunt, a former Protestant minister of Atlanta's largest mega-church who was received into the full communion of the Church in 2008. He has spoken at Atlanta's Eucharistic Congress by the invitation of Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory and travels nationwide

speaking on marriage.

In an e-mail interview with Hunt, he described his material as being pulled from "Church teaching, the latest research on marriage in America, [and] personal experience in working with thousands of couples over the course of the last 25 years.

"As a result, Passion and Purpose for Marriage dovetails nicely with Pope Francis' invitation to grow, safeguard and celebrate marriages," Hunt explained.

'Insights into every relationship'

Mary Burger, the Dynamic Catholic Institute representative assisting King and her team in hosting the event, said the event is perfect for married or engaged couples, Catholics and non-Catholics, even those who are not engaged or married.

"[The event] allows people to have insights into every relationship in their life," she said. "For married couples, they see each other in a different light. People walk out very excited. I sit in the back, and I literally watch couples get physically closer together. I've heard some couples in a rough spot in their marriage walk away saying, 'I see things in a new light. This opened the door to conversations I didn't think we would have.'"

King said participants can expect a lot of laughing, no group sharing, "and nice swag." Each couple or single person will receive a bag with Hunt's book, *21 Undeniable Secrets of Marriage*, a compact disc set titled *Love, Sex and Marriage*, information on how to lead a prayerful life, a journal, and more.

With a cost of \$25 per person, Burger said the material given out "is worth more than the cost [of two tickets], so you're investing in more to take from the event than in the event itself."

Helping 'a sister parish in time of need'

With the planning and promoting help of nearby St. Gabriel the Archangel Parish, King and her team had everything set for the event to be held on Jan. 30, 2016, at St. Monica Church.

Then the unthinkable happened. On Sept. 9, a two-alarm fire

destroyed St. Monica's narthex, rendering the church sanctuary inaccessible for an untold number of months (as of publication, the parish is estimating a re-opening of the sanctuary in late spring or early summer of 2016.)

The school gym has been serving as the sanctuary space. While that would work for the Passion and Purpose for Marriage event, King knew it was not ideal.

"As we started selling tickets, people said they didn't want to sit in folding chairs for four hours, and I can understand that," she said.

She reached out to other parishes in the Indianapolis West Deanery, but the churches were either unavailable on the needed date, or too small for the event.

She expanded her search outside of the West Deanery and contacted St. Luke the Evangelist Parish on Indianapolis' north side.

"They totally came through," King said. "It's wonderful. We'll be able to see the crucifix, and it will be more relaxing than sitting in folding chairs."

Diane Schafer, director of spiritual life and formation ministries at St. Luke, said the parish is happy to "help a sister parish in time of need.

"Msgr. [Joseph Schaedel, pastor of St. Luke Parish] said we'll do anything we can to help them."

The news came as a relief to Burger.

"I definitely did not expect that call from Gabby," she said of learning of the fire. "I was glad to hear that no one was hurt, and that it was fairly contained and not as devastating as it could have been.

"We talked about [holding the event in] the gym, and we've done that before. But there's something powerful about having this event in a church, and talking about the things [Hunt] talks about, and the messages he drives home. Being in a church can help drive those home.

"The people at St. Luke have been so kind. It speaks volumes about [the Archdiocese of] Indianapolis. It's a real sign of the generosity there."

'Take time to notice Jesus in our marriages'

Scott Seibert, archdiocesan



Elizabeth and Gregory Schmidt, members of Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ Parish in Indianapolis, look lovingly at each other during a service reaffirming their marital vows in Cana in the Holy Land on Feb. 12. Married and engaged couples, and even singles, will have an opportunity to grow in their relationships during the Passion and Purpose for Marriage event at St. Luke the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis on Jan. 30, 2016. (File photo by Natalie Hoefler)

marriage and family enrichment coordinator, said he is "very excited about the Passion and Purpose event, and I hope that many people take advantage of this opportunity.

"Marriages are like children—they need time, energy and attention devoted to them to make

sure they grow and develop and flourish.

"People change, and relationships change over time. Regular dates, retreats, and events allow the

couple to get to know themselves and each other all over again."

Seibert pointed out that "marriage is a sacrament, which means Jesus Christ is present. How often do we take the time to notice Jesus in our marriages? This [event] provides us this powerful opportunity."

As for King, she hopes that "people come and learn to appreciate their marriage—even though there may be junk in their marriage now—but to appreciate it and know that ultimately for our marriage, we're there to get our spouse to heaven.

"[I hope that people come to] appreciate those things that

may drive us crazy about our spouse or loved one, and be thankful of it, because there are so many marriages falling apart for such silly things that just shock me."

After seeing so many of her friends divorce from what King describes as "ego issues," she hopes those who attend the Passion and Purpose for Marriage event will become "excited about their marriages and realize that even in the thick of it all, there are a lot of people who want what they have, even with the junk.

"We're lucky we found someone, and we need to appreciate each other, warts and all. I don't want people to give up on their marriage."

(Passion and Purpose for Marriage will be held at St. Luke the Evangelist Church, 7575 Holliday Drive E., in Indianapolis, from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. on Jan. 30, 2016. Tickets are \$25 per person and can be purchased by logging on to www.DynamicCatholic.com/Indianapolis, or by calling the Dynamic Catholic Institute at 859-980-7900. General information about the Passion and Purpose for Marriage event can also be found by logging on to www.DynamicCatholic.com/Indianapolis.) †



Scott Seibert

What was in the news on Dec. 10, 1965? The Second Vatican Council comes to an official end, as do 900 years of mutual excommunication

By Brandon A. Evans

This week, we continue to examine what was going on in the Church and the world 50 years ago as seen through the pages of *The Criterion*.

Here are some of the items found in the Dec. 10, 1965, issue of *The Criterion*:

• 'Go in peace' is Pope Paul's message as council closes

"VATICAN CITY—'It is in peace—Go in peace.' With these words Pope Paul VI brought to a close the Second Vatican Council on December 8, the Feast of Mary's Immaculate Conception. In a colorful outdoor ceremony attended by an estimated 150,000 onlookers, the pontiff thus formally brought to an end the solemn deliberations which were opened by his predecessor, Pope John XXIII, on October 11, 1962. Pope Paul's words were directed primarily to the more than 2,300 council Fathers who had painstakingly hammered out 16 decrees designed to open a new era in Roman Catholicism and to revamp the Church's relations with other Christian and non-Christian religions. Government heads, princes, foreign ministers and other dignitaries from more than 80 nations occupied places of honor as the council Fathers in copes and miters moved from inside the basilica out in the square. Many wore the simple gold rings the pope had given them as a council memento."

- **Body gets new name: Pope Paul VI decrees Holy Office reform**
- **At historic service: We're on unity road, pope tells observers**
- **Post-council jubilee to begin January 1st**
- **Schema 13 is approved by council**
- **Twin rites end ancient dissension**
"VATICAN CITY—Rome and Constantinople, the chief sees respectively of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, have buried in simultaneous ceremonies the excommunications their leaders hurled at one another more than 900 years ago. These excommunications of 1054 heralded the great schism which has rent East from West for nine centuries. In relegating them to history, both Churches took a long step toward that unity which two general councils assembled for that purpose—at Lyons, France, in 1274, and at Ferrara and Florence, Italy, 1438-43—failed to achieve. Twin ceremonies took place at the same time at St. Peter's and at the Phanar, the headquarters of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, in what is now Istanbul on December 7, the day of the last formal voting of the Second Vatican Council."
- **U.S. represented at council closing**
- **Archdiocesan School Board is reorganized**
- **Ask U.S. to halt Viet bombing**
- **New parish church to be constructed at Mitchell**
- **No plans to bar 'jazz' during Mass**

- **Lay missionary elected mayor**
- **Urges parish school boards**
- **Raps diaconate restrictions**
- **Stresses challenges in 'Pacem in Terris'**
- **Says priests can solve crisis in vocations**
- **Catholics, Orthodox seen closing breach**
- **Expansion of English set in Mass**
- **Marian to present movie on Africa**
- **Growth in Cursillo surprises founder**
- **Speaker cites variety of factors in producing priestly vocations**
- **'Fantasticks' slated at Marian**
- **Symposium emphasizes lack of understanding of rhythm**



Read all of these stories from our Dec. 10, 1965, issue by logging on to our archives at www.CriterionOnline.com.) †

Truth Overruled makes reasoned case for traditional marriage, religious liberty

Reviewed by Sean Gallagher

Last June, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down state laws and constitutional amendments across the country that defined marriage as the union of one man and one woman.

On the surface, its *Obergefell v. Hodges* ruling seems to have ended discussion in the public square of the nature of marriage.

In many ways, however, the 5-4 decision has also served to broaden and deepen the debate. *Obergefell* has spurred supporters of marriage redefinition to push for broader civil rights protections for gays, lesbians, bisexual and transgendered people (LGBT) at various levels of government across the country.

In fact, this will be a prime topic of discussion when the Indiana General Assembly begins its session early next year.

Ryan T. Anderson has offered a contribution to this public discussion in his book, *Truth Overruled: The Future of Marriage and Religious Freedom*, which was published in July by Regnery just weeks after the announcement of the *Obergefell* decision.

The William E. Simon Senior Research Fellow in American Principles and Public Policy at the Washington-based Heritage Foundation, Anderson earned a bachelor's degree at Princeton University and a doctorate in political philosophy at the University of Notre Dame.

He has appeared on all major television networks, written for many major newspapers and other publications over the past several years during the debate on marriage redefinition, and is the editor of *Public Discourse: Ethics, Laws, and the Common Good*, the online journal of the Princeton, N.J.-based Witherspoon Institute.

While a Catholic himself, Anderson seeks in *Truth Overruled* to defend the notion that marriage is the union between one man and one woman solely from the perspective of reason expressed through philosophy and social science data.

This is the same approach he took with co-authors Robert George and Sherif Gergis in their 2012 book, *What is Marriage? Man and Woman: A Defense*.

This is a good approach, considering that many who support marriage redefinition are quick to reject any faith-based argument for holding that marriage is a union between one man and one woman on the grounds that such reasons would force a particular faith upon people

who do not hold such beliefs.

Critics of Anderson's arguments may disagree with the premises from which they start and the conclusions to which they tend, but they cannot say that they are irrational, absurd or cannot be understood by reason apart from faith.

Readers in Indiana may be especially interested in Anderson's analysis of the heated debate that took place in the state—and the nation as a whole—last spring when the General Assembly considered passing a state version of the federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act.

Describing the public discussion as "the most outrageous of the recent state religious liberty debates," Anderson said it was characterized by the confluence of leaders of big businesses and politicians, many of whom supported religious liberty legislation in the past, but who last spring condemned the proposed state law because it was perceived—wrongly according to Anderson—as trampling on the civil rights of the LGBT community.

A later chapter in Anderson's book examines the kind of law that will soon be debated in the General Assembly.

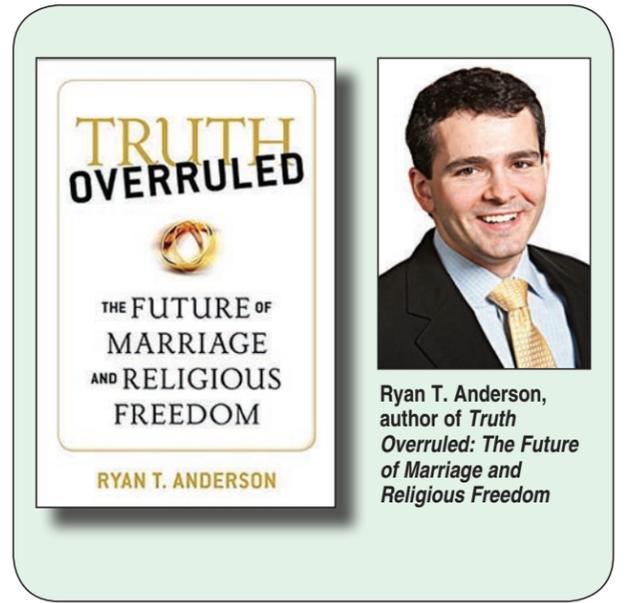
Using the generally accepted term of sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) laws, Anderson seeks to show the weakness of the case presented by the supporters of such laws that they protect the rights of the LGBT community like earlier civil rights legislation enshrined the rights of blacks.

Anderson makes the case that SOGI supporters are comparing apples and oranges in this case. He said that civil rights legislation that aids the black community is related to a person's unchangeable racial identity that can be affirmed through objective standards, whereas the identity of many in the LGBT community are understood subjectively and are subject to change.

Additionally, Anderson points out major flaws in the case made by SOGI law supporters that such statutes would eliminate the kind of discrimination struck down by the 1967 U.S. Supreme Court's *Loving v. Virginia* ruling, which overturned interracial marriage bans.

Anderson, citing the work of many historians, shows that such bans were part of the racism that emerged from institutional slavery in the U.S. and had nothing to do with the actual nature of marriage. SOGI laws, he counters, seek to broaden the effects of marriage redefinition.

Civil rights legislation and court decisions overturning racist laws were aimed, Anderson argued, at an irrational racial prejudice. On the other hand, he seeks to show that



a reasoned argument can be made to affirm the belief, held by millions of people across the country, that marriage is the union of one man and one woman, and that laws to carve out special rights for people whose identities can be prone to subjectivity should be opposed.

Anderson in no way argues that people in the LGBT community do not have the same rights, and deserve the same respect as people in general. He simply holds that SOGI laws put at risk the religious liberty of countless individuals, and religious institutions across the country, who are not so much opposed to the LGBT community but to being forced to affirm marriage redefinition.

Anderson makes these and many more reasoned arguments in *Truth Overruled*. As such, he has made a good contribution to the continuing public discussion regarding marriage redefinition and its possible broader effects on the nation's legal system and religious liberty.

What effect his contribution will have to the continuation of such discussion, in Indiana and elsewhere, remains to be seen.

(Sean Gallagher is a reporter for The Criterion, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.) †

Federal appeals court rules Wisconsin abortion law is unconstitutional

CHICAGO (CNS)—A three-judge panel of the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a lower court ruling that Wisconsin's abortion law requiring abortion clinic doctors to have hospital admitting privileges was unconstitutional.

In a 2-1 decision on Nov. 23, the 7th Circuit in Chicago said the provision of the 2013 law endangered the health of women.

The decision for the majority, written by Judge Richard Posner, said the medical benefit of the requirement was "nonexistent" and "cannot be taken seriously as a measure to improve women's health."

In response, Heather Weinger, executive director of Wisconsin Right to Life, said the appeals court decision "is detrimental to providing continuity of care for women who suffer complications from an abortion."

"Wisconsin Right to Life is disappointed that women will continue to not receive the care they need under these frightening circumstances," Weinger said in a statement from the organization.

Wisconsin Attorney General Brad Schimel planned to ask the U.S. Supreme Court to review the decision, a spokesman said. †



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We can grow in faith from the witness of those in consecrated life

By David Gibson

I don't know about you, but never once did I welcome guests to our home by prostrating myself on the floor out of reverence for Christ's presence in them. In the sixth century, however, the great St. Benedict proposed precisely that gesture to monks as a way of highlighting the respect, honor and hospitality owed to guests.

Today, nearly 1,500 years after St. Benedict penned his historic *Rule* for monks, its influence remains strong. Benedictine monks and sisters still are known for their hospitality, along with their simple lifestyles and communal bonds.

Guests must be "welcomed as Christ," St. Benedict wrote. "By a bow of the head or by a complete prostration of the body, Christ is to be adored" in them.

Hospitality characterizes Benedictine life, but it marks countless others' lives, too. My wife and I go to considerable lengths to assure that our guests feel welcome and receive the care they need. In this way, our Christian lives resemble the lifestyles in Benedictine communities and many religious orders.

"Consecrated life" is a term commonly used to describe the way of life embodied in religious orders. The term also applies to the lives of members of secular institutes, who include single laypeople and some clerics. It also includes single people, such as consecrated virgins, living out their vows in the world.

All in the consecrated life aim to show in daily life's ordinary settings that faith is richly rewarding.

The Church's current Year of Consecrated Life, which concludes on Feb. 2, 2016, focuses on the dedication of those in consecrated life—through lives vowed to poverty, chastity and obedience—

to bringing Christ's love into the world.

Everyone in consecrated life should ask what "God and people today are asking of them," Pope Francis said in his apostolic letter for the Year of Consecrated Life.

In earlier times, walls of one kind or another tended to divide the Church's laypeople from those in consecrated life. Typically today, however, the commonality among all Church members in their basic vocations is pointed out.

After all, simplicity, hospitality, prayer and communal living are not unique to the consecrated life. Don't families everywhere work to ensure that their communal home life remains vibrant and strong? Or, at least, shouldn't they?

Cardinal Joao Braz de Aviz, prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, spoke about this in a 2015 speech. "Today we understand better that all the baptized are called to ... put into practice what the Lord has taught us and testified to," he commented.

Those pursuing Christian perfection in the consecrated life should be understood, the cardinal said, in ways that do not imply "that the remaining states are bound to imperfection."

I am indebted to members of several religious orders for their strongly supportive roles in my life at various times. Probably that is why I welcome today's accent on closer relationships between laypeople and those in the consecrated life.

But this leads me to ask: Am I, too, consecrated? Are you?

Well, I am a baptized, confirmed member of the Church. That alone indicates that I am consecrated. "Through baptism, a person dies to sin and is consecrated to God," the Second Vatican Council stated in its "Dogmatic Constitution on the



Benedictine monks mingle with guests during a tasting in the brew room of St. Benedict's Monastery in Norcia, Italy, in 2013. The monks were marking their first anniversary in the brewery business, which helps them maintain their monastery while keeping prayer at the center of their lives. Pope Francis has called men and women religious to embrace a "true synergy" with people called to other vocations in the Church. (CNS photo/Henry Daggett)

Church" (#44).

What is this consecration's purpose? The council's "Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity" observes that those who receive baptism and confirmation "are consecrated" not only in order to "offer spiritual sacrifices in everything they do, but also that they may witness to Christ throughout the world" (#3).

I also am married, another indication that I somehow am consecrated.

"Christian spouses have a special sacrament by which they are fortified and receive a kind of consecration in the duties and dignity" of marriage, says the council's "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World." Thus, spouses are "penetrated with the spirit of Christ," and matrimony fosters each one's

growth and "their mutual sanctification" (#48).

The U.S. bishops noted this council teaching in "Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan," a pastoral letter they issued in 2009.

The sacrament of marriage strengthens and consecrates spouses so that they extend "the acts and courtesies of love toward each other, regardless of the feelings of the moment," said the bishops. The spouses "are enabled to perform acts of self-giving love."

Pope Francis encouraged those in the consecrated life to consider during this year whether they "are open to being challenged by the Gospel." They will be "empowered to love: everyone who crosses their path if Jesus is their first love," he wrote.

That goal hardly is restricted to religious orders, however. Not surprisingly, then, the pope's letter urges those in the consecrated life to embrace a "true synergy with all other vocations in the Church," including the laity.

One goal in this is to spread what is called the "spirituality of communion," Pope Francis explained. This spirituality fosters dialogues of charity with others and, in profoundly divided societies, becomes a sign, as St. John Paul II explained in his 1996 apostolic exhortation on the consecrated life "that dialogue is always possible, and that communion can bring differences into harmony" (#51).

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

The tradition of consecrating people and objects is rooted in Scripture

By Daniel S. Mulhall

While in the wilderness, tending the sheep of his father-in-law, Moses came upon a bush that was burning without being consumed. God called out to him from the burning bush, "Do not come near! Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is



In this file photo, Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, then of Denver, anoints the head of Bishop Paul D. Etienne with chrism oil during an episcopal ordination and installation liturgy on Dec. 9, 2009, at the Cheyenne Civic Center in Cheyenne, Wyo. Bishop Etienne, previously a priest of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, now serves as the bishop of Cheyenne. (File photo by Sean Gallagher)

holy ground" (Ex 3:5).

This story deftly illustrates the idea of "consecration," the setting aside of a person, a place or a thing as a way of recognizing God's presence that is found there. As the glossary of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains it, "consecration" is "the dedication of a thing or person to divine service by a prayer or blessing."

The act of consecration—recognizing something as holy and that the presence of God is found there—is prominent in the Scriptures. Take for example, the Book of Joshua, when Joshua, in preparation for entering the Promised Land, tells the Israelites, "Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will perform wonders among you" (Jos 3:5).

In Colossians, St. Paul offers a similar admonition to Christians, who are God's "beloved," telling them to put on "heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ... And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection. And let the peace of Christ control your hearts, the peace into which you were also called in one body" (Col 3:12-15). For Joshua and for Paul, people are being asked to consecrate themselves, to set themselves apart as holy.

Scripture references to consecration are many, and found throughout the Bible, starting in Genesis when "God blessed the seventh day and made it holy" (Gn 2:3) through Hebrews, where we are told, "Therefore, brothers, since through the blood of Jesus we have confidence of

entrance into the sanctuary by the new and living way he opened for us through the veil, that is, his flesh ... let us approach with a sincere heart and in absolute trust, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed in pure water" (Heb 10:19-20).

In remembrance of their rescue from Egypt, the Israelites are told by the Lord in Exodus 13:2 to "consecrate to me every firstborn," and in Exodus 19:10, the Israelites are called to make themselves clean in order to receive the commandments from the Lord.

The act of consecration remains an essential practice for the Catholic Church today. In addition to the consecration of the bread and wine at Mass, there are many other examples of consecration.

The oil used in sacramental anointing is consecrated. That oil, especially chrism oil, is used to consecrate those who are baptized and confirmed as well as the hands of priests and heads of bishops. Church buildings are symbolically set apart for the use of sacred worship when their walls are anointed with chrism.

In addition, many objects are consecrated, such as altars, vessels and vestments and bells. To be clear, people are consecrated to God, while objects and places are reserved for "liturgical use" through the act of consecration, says the catechism in #1672.

(Daniel S. Mulhall is a freelance writer and a catechist for adults. He lives in Laurel, Maryland.) †

From the Editor Emeritus/John F. Fink

Medieval Church: The six crusades of the 13th century

(Eighteenth in a series of columns)

There were six crusades during the 13th century. (Seven, if you count the Children's Crusade.) In this series, I already wrote that the Fourth Crusade (1202-1204) was a disaster because the crusaders abandoned their original purpose of liberating the Holy Land, and instead conquered Constantinople from the Orthodox, establishing the Latin Empire of Constantinople for 57 years but setting back relations between the Orthodox and the Catholic Churches.

The Fifth Crusade (1217-1221) was proclaimed by Pope Innocent III, but he died before it could be organized. Pope Honorius III tried to carry it out, but the political situation in Europe made it difficult. He arbitrated between the kings of Aragon and France, got France to abandon its planned invasion of England, and helped Henry III obtain the English crown.

He also tried to participate. Honorius had earlier crowned him as the leader of the Holy Roman Empire, which was largely

made up of present-day Germany and Austria. Eventually, some troops were sent to fight, but they weren't very effective. The crusade eventually simply fizzled out.

The most remarkable thing that happened during the Fifth Crusade was that St. Francis of Assisi showed up in Egypt where the crusaders were in 1219 and, during a truce, met with the Sultan al-Kamil. Francis was allowed to continue on to the Holy Land, and the Franciscans have been there ever since.

Emperor Frederick II seemed ready to lead the Sixth Crusade (1228-1229), proclaimed by Pope Gregory IX. However, he seemed to abandon the crusade after he became ill. Pope Gregory, remembering the trouble Pope Honorius had with Frederick, excommunicated him for not fighting.

But Frederick recovered his health and went on to fight the crusade, even negotiating the surrender of Jerusalem. But it only enraged the pope that an excommunicate would lead a crusade. Soon, Jerusalem went back under the control of the Muslims.

Nineteen years later, the Seventh Crusade (1248-1254) was led by the saintly King Louis IX of France when

he was 30 years old. During a battle in Egypt, St. Louis was captured. He was released after paying a ransom, and he then remained in Syria for four years before returning to France.

But St. Louis returned to crusading in 1267, leading the Eighth Crusade with his younger brother, Charles of Anjou. It ended disastrously when the army was decimated by disease within a month, and Louis died at age 44.

In 1271, Pope Gregory X was on the Ninth Crusade with the future King Edward I of England when he learned of his election to the papacy. He returned to Rome.

In 1291, Acre, the last Christian outpost in the Holy Land, fell to the Muslims. The crusades were over.

About that Children's Crusade: In 1212, thinking that the Holy Land could be captured by the pure of heart, 40,000 children started a march toward Palestine. There were two groups, one from France and the other from Germany. Few of the children reached the Holy Land. Many died on the way, and some were sold into slavery. It must be considered amazing that this was permitted to happen. †

Cornucopia/Cynthia Dewes

Christmas: Our greatest gift, our beauty, our joy

The only certainty in life is change. It's inevitable. We change as we age, from helpless baby to confident teen to busy adult to helpless geezer. We change schools, jobs, friends and sometimes (sigh!) husbands or wives.

We change our tastes. If we once read only mystery novels, now we may like biographies better. Or maybe we couldn't stand to eat cauliflower, but now we think it's pretty tasty. We used to hang out with the party animals, but now we prefer our reading club.

The older we get, the less we seem to like change, probably because "what is" is more comfortable than "what might be" if something changes. Some may think of this as the wisdom that comes with age, but I think it's more like fear. While it's true that age can bring experience that supports our opinions, we need to make sure that it is supported by hope. As in the hope that Christmas represents.

For example, celebrations of Christmas have changed over the years that I've enjoyed them. What used to be modest gift-giving in honor of God's great gift to us of salvation has morphed into

commercialization that is widely criticized. Black Friday, the day after Thanksgiving in all kinds of stores, is a bigger event than Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve.

Children learn early on that Santa Claus and his bag of gifts is the chief hero of the Christmas event. Of course, they're too young to understand the mystery of Christmas (who does?), which they'll hear about later. But maybe they should know that Santa is St. Nicholas, representing the generosity of God.

Decorating for Christmas can also distract us from remembering the true "reason for the season," as they say. We hear about the poor zealot who decorates his home and lawn so brilliantly that he's being sued by his neighbors. On the other hand, his display must bring a lot of joy to some of the people passing by.

Sometimes, decorators even get carried away in church. We've experienced Christmas Masses where the poinsettias almost overwhelmed the manger scene at the altar. Or the hired choir singers, beautiful as they sounded, were more of a distraction than an asset.

We need to keep in mind the basis of the Christmas celebration, which is God's love for us. Thus we have the gift

exchanges, the free community dinners, and the distribution of gifts to the poor. We sing about goodwill to all, forgiveness and reconciliation at this holy season.

Now, it's easy to feel and express love for those who love us, as Scripture tells us. And at Christmas we may even feel and express love for strangers or people we would ordinarily ignore. But maybe we need to continue that effort throughout the year.

We could volunteer once a month at St. Vincent de Paul, or serve food at a soup kitchen or help with the Church or community food pantry. We might visit homebound people, or give them a ride to church or the grocery store. We might just visit with them on the phone now and then.

Whatever we're inspired to do will be based on the example of Christmas. Trendy changes to the celebration can be chalked up to human invention since our current culture seems to be anti-religious. But Christians will understand what it really means when they wish each other a "Merry Christmas!"

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

For the Journey/Effie Caldarola

Looking for Mary, our Mother, in a priceless rosary

My husband and I once lived in an apartment for several months before moving on to a permanent home in another state.

We stored the bulk of our possessions in a warehouse, and movers would eventually transport them to a house when we were settled. Traveling with us were just the essentials and a few small things of value, such as good jewelry.

When the day arrived to head out of state to our new home, it wasn't difficult to pack. Clothes, toiletries, a few pots and pans, and a small television we had purchased for our apartment life were loaded into our two cars. Since I was reluctant to drive alone across country, my brother had flown in to help with the driving and had spent the night on our couch.

We were excited and eager for a new life. The three of us grabbed our coffee, did a quick inventory of the apartment's closets and cupboards, and prepared to take off.

But something drew my husband back for one last look. I'll never guess how he managed to find them, but tucked away, hanging on a nail, out of sight, around the

corner of my closet, were five beautiful sterling rosaries I had hidden there. I had forgotten about them.

"Do you want these?" he asked with a smile.

One of them was my mother's, a gift from my father decades ago. She had valued it deeply, and prayed with it all of her life. She loved it so much that she gave one to each of my three children, inscribed with their initials, and when she realized I loved them, she gave me one, too. They were all in my possession, and I'd almost left them behind.

I will never forget how I felt when I saw my husband holding them out. It wasn't the monetary value, although my parents were not wealthy people and purchasing sterling was an indication of the importance of the gift. It was the immeasurable value of my parents' love, and the significance of the rosary itself that would have made the loss devastating.

Like many women of my generation, I've evolved through various stages of Marian devotion in my life. When I was young, the religious sisters used to frighten us, in that Cold War era, with apocalyptic visions associated with Fatima.

Our family prayed the rosary together,

and I yearned for Mary as a source of solace and not fear. Later, as I explored Scripture and theology, I yearned to know the real woman in Mary. Scripture gives us so little insight, although the words ascribed to her in the *Magnificat* are among the most powerful spoken by any saint.

Nevertheless, even today I struggle to know her. The saint I greatly admire, Ignatius of Loyola, was dedicated to her, as is Pope Francis and a host of other notables whose insight I value.

So I still search for this mysterious woman. When my youngest child was born looking gray and still, I spontaneously began to say the Hail Mary aloud over and over. Today, that baby, whom we named Maria, is beautiful and healthy at 25.

Like countless others, I go to Mary in times of trouble.

My rosary lies beneath my pillow, and in moments of nighttime anxiety, I cling to it as to a rope thrown from a ship to a drowning woman. That's exactly how it seems to me in the dark hours of the night.

Mary, Mother of God, pray for us and help us to know you.

(Effie Caldarola writes for Catholic News Service.) †

Twenty Something/

Christina Capecchi

Thirteen sons, no daughters, no reality TV shows

The wedding that Tyler Schwandt and his fiancée are planning could've been broadcast on national TV. But he's perfectly content with a quieter, more intimate wedding Mass.

The 23-year-old Catholic from Rockford, Mich., has the distinction of being the firstborn of 13 boys, the

family whose improbable boy streak went viral with the 12th pregnancy and generated another round of stories when a 13th son arrived in May. Crews from "The Today Show" and "Good Morning America" were at the Schwandts' six-bedroom brick home before they had returned from the hospital, citing statisticians who set the odds of 13 consecutive boys at 1 in 8,000.

Each boy has felt like a one-in-a-million blessing to Jay and Kateri Schwandt, whose openness to life is rooted in their Catholic faith.

Ty absorbed those values his entire life, and considers his family the best marriage-prep he could've hoped for. He's been changing diapers since third grade, and has a knack for getting a baby to sleep. When asked what he wants to do when he grows up, Ty has always offered the same answer: be successful, be happy and be a dad.

Growing up with so many brothers brought a series of practical jokes and broken windows, including one instance when the family's pole barn didn't have a single intact window, thanks to errant hockey pucks. Stuffed with backpacks and bunk beds and mounds of hockey pads, their house has been likened to a locker room by Kateri. Ty loves it.

He and his fiancée, Bailey, a 20-year-old college junior, plan to learn natural family planning before their July 2016 wedding. She has one sibling and used to imagine having two kids of her own one day, but has since raised it to four—a number Ty still considers far too low. "God has a plan for us," Ty said. "I'll be happy with whatever we're blessed with. Every time we get on that subject, Bailey says, 'Please, just give me one little girl.'"

After the birth of their 12th son in 2013, TLC offered the Schwandts a reality show. Jay and Kateri sat down to discuss the prospect with their older sons one autumn evening before supper, hashing out the pros and cons.

"I was never intrigued," Ty said. "I liked the attention, but I never loved the attention, and it almost lasted a little too long for me. I'd rather live a simple, happy life. You see 'Kate Plus 8,' and the Duggars and all those other shows. They make a good run and then, in the end, they come crashing down. It wasn't worth trying to be the exception."

The money TLC offered didn't justify the cost it would come at, Ty felt.

Surely the camera crew would've gravitated toward the handsome firstborn, turning his engagement into a major storyline and reducing the wedding sacrament to a heavily-marketed, special episode.

No thanks, says Ty. "We want our wedding to be intimate. I'm glad we're able to keep this in the family."

Just reading the online comments strangers have written about his family is enough to make his stomach turn. Saying no to reality TV, as he sees it, is a yes to privacy, serenity and family. He has total confidence—and a measure of relief—in their decision to decline.

"I'm very thankful for it because I don't know how well I'd be able to take it. My biggest concern would be all of the little boys. They would grow up in front of cameras. I feel like they would never become who they really are."

Watching their lives unfold as he begins a family of his own leaves nothing to be desired. It is the adventure of a lifetime.

(Christina Capecchi is a freelance writer from Inver Grove Heights, Minn., and the editor of SisterStory.org.) †

Third Sunday of Advent/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

Sunday Readings

Sunday, Dec. 13, 2015

- Zephaniah 3:14-18a
- Philippians 4:4-7
- Luke 3:10-18

This weekend, the Church observes the Third Sunday of Advent. The Book of Zephaniah furnishes the first reading. It



is a short book, only three brief chapters. Little is known about this prophet, beyond what can be assumed from the writing itself. This much, however, is known.

Zephaniah was the son of Chusi and traced his ancestry to

Hezekiah, presumably King Hezekiah of Judah.

It appears that the book was written between 640 BC and 609 BC, or during the reign of King Josiah of Judah. Josiah was a reformer, and his reforms were religious in intent and in impact. Such is not surprising. The kings saw themselves, if they viewed themselves properly, as representatives and agents of God. Aside from all else, their duty was to draw the people more closely to God.

Zephaniah, obviously, supported this effort.

This weekend's reading is an exuberant and bold exclamation of joy. When the people are faithful to God, peace and prosperity ordinarily follow closely behind. So, if they draw more closely to God, if they are more attentive to their covenant with him, their good fortune will be assured. Their enemies will be turned away. They will be secure.

For the second reading on this weekend, the Church presents a passage from St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians. Philippi was a city, in what today is Greece, founded centuries before Christ and named to honor King Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great.

By the time of the first century, it was an important center in the Roman Empire and the location of a major military base.

It hardly is surprising that Philippi included a Christian community. Important cities always drew people from

everywhere in the Roman Empire. Visitors and newcomers brought with them their ideas and values, such as Christianity.

As was the reading from Zephaniah, this reading is filled with excitement and joy. The coming of the Lord is predicted, and this victorious coming will be soon. Such was the assumption of many of the early Christians.

When Jesus would come again, all wrongs would be righted. Evil would be defeated. It would be a glorious event and utter change.

To prepare, Christians should conform themselves as much as possible and in every respect to the Lord. Paul proclaims that this holy transformation has occurred. He delightedly declares that the Christians of Philippi are unselfish.

St. Luke's Gospel is the source of the last reading. In this reading, John the Baptist appears, urging the man with two coats to give one to the poor.

John also tells a tax collector to assess only the fixed amount. The Roman system of taxation was, in effect, legalized extortion. Tax collectors profited by adding to the assessed tax their own demands. The law required the taxpayers to meet these demands.

Locals collected taxes since Roman authorities were not able, or even inclined, to send citizens of Rome into the far reaches of the empire to collect taxes.

Tax collectors were turncoats. Not surprisingly, the people regarded them as the lowest of the low.

It was a terrible time.

John foretells the coming of the Messiah, insisting that when he comes, righteousness will reign.

Reflection

This weekend is called *Gaudete* Sunday, because of the first word of the original Latin version of the entrance antiphon, "*Gaudete*" ("Rejoice").

Joy is in order not because a penitential season is ending, but because Jesus soon will come again.

How? While the Scriptures look forward to a sudden, dramatic return of Jesus in glory, these readings this weekend also remind us that Jesus will come into our hearts, our lives and our communities if we turn to God and follow the Gospel.

Living the Gospels effectively is the purpose of Advent. †

Daily Readings

Monday, December 14

St. John of the Cross, priest and doctor of the Church
Numbers 24:2-7, 15-17a
Psalm 25:4-5b, 6, 7bc, 8-9
Matthew 21:23-27

Tuesday, December 15

Zephaniah 3:1-2, 9-13
Psalm 34:2-3, 6-7, 17-19, 23
Matthew 21:28-32

Wednesday, December 16

Isaiah 45:6b-8, 18, 21b-25
Psalm 85:9ab, 10-14
Luke 7:18b-23

Thursday, December 17

Genesis 49:2, 8-10
Psalm 72:1-4b, 7-8, 17
Matthew 1:1-17

Friday, December 18

Jeremiah 23:5-8
Psalm 72:1-2, 12-13, 18-19
Matthew 1:18-25

Saturday, December 19

Judges 13:2-7, 24-25a
Psalm 71:3-4a, 5-6b, 16-17
Luke 1:5-25

Sunday, December 20

Fourth Sunday of Advent
Micah 5:1-4a
Psalm 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19
Hebrews 10:5-10
Luke 1:39-45

Question Corner/Fr. Kenneth Doyle

Different perspectives can be held in debate on designation of historical periods

Q To mark dates, why are people now using C.E. (the Common Era) and



B.C.E. in place of A.D. and B.C., which have been in use for hundreds of years? I was told by a Catholic teacher in our area that this change is intended to foster better relations with non-Christians. This is too "politically correct" for me to accept

without further explanation. Please help. (Somerville, New Jersey)

A The teacher you spoke to holds one reasonable perspective in the debate on this topic. The reason some have adopted the use of C.E. rather than A.D. ("*Anno Domini*" or "In the year of Our Lord") is to ease the minds of non-Christians who might object to this implicit acknowledgement of Jesus as Lord. Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who is himself a Protestant, has said: "The Christian calendar no longer belongs exclusively to Christians. People of all faiths have taken to using it simply as a matter of convenience. There is so much interaction between people of all faiths and cultures—different civilizations, if you like—that some shared way of reckoning time is a necessity. And so the Christian Era has become the Common Era."

In 2011, an op-ed piece in the Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano* criticized the British Broadcasting Corporation for abandoning the traditional A.D. in favor of C.E. "To deny the historically revolutionary function of the coming of Christ on the Earth, accepted even by those who do not recognize him as Son of God," wrote the author, "is enormous nonsense."

Some critics of the change point out that many commonly accepted designations have a basis in religious beliefs. (They note, for example, that "January" comes from Janus, who was the Roman god of gates and of doorways.)

To me, there is a certain silliness to the entire discussion. Even those who opt for the new designation as an ideological protest still adopt the traditional date of the birth of Christ as the basis for numbering the years.

If you really wanted a secular calendar, why not use the founding of Rome as the focal point of human history—which is what the Roman Empire did for centuries.

Q The older I get, the more this is on my mind. I grew up in the Methodist Church but became a Catholic when I married my husband more than 60 years

ago. We raised our children in the Catholic Church, and my husband passed away in 2006.

Now, at the age of 84, I feel a strong desire to attend the Methodist Church of my childhood. I don't know that I really want to rejoin that church after all these years. I think it's more just wanting to go to their services a few times. I have friends who belong to our local Methodist parish, and they would be happy to have me accompany them.

What do you think of this? Am I just longing for the past, or is it a sign that I am not completely satisfied with the Catholic Church? I don't know that I will act on this wish—my kids would be shocked if I did—but the thought is very often on my mind. (Iowa)

A To be a Catholic is to be committed to certain core principles of faith. Among them are the centrality of the Eucharist and the conviction that Jesus has entrusted to Peter and his successors the task of guiding the Church, with the guarantee of doctrinal purity.

Since you publicly accepted those principles of faith for 60 years, I would find it surprising if you were ready to forsake them now. In my mind, it's more likely—as happens when each of us age—that you are experiencing a nostalgic longing for some of the experiences and surroundings of the past.

I don't see any harm in your accompanying your friends to an occasional service at a Methodist church while abstaining from participating in any communion ritual there. But I would think it wise—perhaps even before you do that—to talk with a priest who might help you to sort out your feelings.

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

My Journey to God

Advent Adoration

By Gina Langferman

Oh Jesus, Lord Divine,
You became the Bread and Wine
A sacrifice of love
Sent from the Father above.

How can the Lord of all
Become a baby so small?
And you humbled yourself even more
To become the Bread we adore.

A heavenly mystery
But a wonderful one to see—
The Lord of heaven and earth
Incarnate through the Virgin's birth
Became the Bread we receive.
All we need do is *believe*.



(Gina Langferman is a member of St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis. The Blessed Sacrament is exposed in a monstrance during the National Catholic Youth Conference during adoration on Nov. 19.) (Photo by Natalie Hofer)

Readers may submit prose or poetry for faith column

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

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

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

Rest in peace

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

BRAECKEL, John A., 81, St. Luke the Evangelist, Indianapolis, Nov. 24. Husband of Karen Braeckel. Father of Cynthia Larco, Keely Underhill and Kurt Braeckel. Brother of Celia Sieglinger. Grandfather of four.

CASHMAN, Robert A., Jr., 73, Holy Spirit, Indianapolis, Oct. 10. Brother of Kathy Albers, Peggy McIntosh, Jan Waldron, Theresa Wirey and Jim Cashman.

DAVIS, Stephen L., 68, St. Mary, Greensburg, Nov. 25. Husband of Kathie Davis. Father of Jenny Smith, Jeff and Kevin Buhr, Ben, Daniel and Tim Davis. Son of John and Gladys Davis. Brother of Cheryl Bass, Joyce Crane and Gary Davis. Grandfather of 16.

DILL, Helen O., 87, St. Lawrence, Indianapolis, Nov. 19. Mother of Marcha Kissel, Cindy Kramer and John Dill. Grandmother of five.

EINTERZ, Francis, 86, St. Matthew the Apostle, Indianapolis, Nov. 24. Husband of Cora Einterz. Father of Anne Lewandowski, Katherine Owen, Cora Randall, Johanna Webber, Theresa Willard, Nancy Woolf, Diana, Dr. Ellen, Andrew, George, Michael and Dr. Robert Einterz. Grandfather of 49. Great-grandfather of 17.

ENGLE, Melvin C., 90, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, New Albany, Nov. 29. Husband of Lillie Engle. Father of Marsha

O'Conner, Barbara Peter and Dwayne Engle. Brother of Robert Engle. Grandfather of five. Great-grandfather of one.

ERNSTBERGER, Gilbert Franklin, 82, St. Anthony of Padua, Clarksville, Nov. 20. Husband of Agnes Ernstberger. Father of Mary Fahey, Cathy Stotts, Rose Turnbow, Pat, Tim and Tom Ernstberger. Grandfather of 12. Great-grandfather of eight.

GREMORE, Francis H., 92, St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower), Indianapolis, Nov. 24. Stepfather of Donna Coe. Brother of Robert Gremore. Grandfather and great-grandfather of several.

HILLMAN, Wilma, 90, St. Mary, Greensburg, Nov. 24. Mother of Jane Hockaden, Rita Phelps, Dennis, Larry and Terrence Hillman. Grandmother of six. Great-grandmother of two.

HOEING, Maurice D., 87, St. Mary, Greensburg, Nov. 25. Father of Barb Bullard, Nancy Fogg, Ron and Wayne Hoeing. Brother of Delores Bruns, Marieta Koors, Dorine Rosfeld, Alfred, Carroll, Jerome and Sheldon Hoeing. Grandfather of eight. Great-grandfather of two.

HOLMES, Elnora, 90, Christ the King, Indianapolis, Nov. 21. Wife of John Holmes. Mother of Carol Forbes and Kathy Sheek. Grandmother of nine.

HORNBERGER, Patricia Lou, 85, Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Indianapolis, Nov. 23. Wife of Paul Hornberger. Mother of Diane Anderson, Debbie Carter, Denise Farrell, Donna Goebes, Danny, Darrin, David, Dean, Dennis, Donny and Doug Hornberger. Sister of Jody Barker. Grandmother of 35. Great-grandmother of 33.

KAVANAUGH, Maureen, 71, St. Luke the Evangelist, Indianapolis, Nov. 22. Sister of Rosemarie Eden and Mary Virginia Kavanaugh.



Reflecting on Advent

Capuchin Franciscan Father Raniero Cantalamessa, preacher of the papal household, Pope Francis and others who serve at the Vatican pray on Dec. 4 during the first Advent homily for 2015 at the Redemptoris Mater Chapel in the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican. (CNS photo/L'Osservatore Romano)

KIRCHGESSNER, Mary (Korbe), 86, St. Mary-of-the-Knobs, Floyd County, Nov. 27. Wife of Emil Kirchgessner. Mother of Donald, Irvin, Melvin, Merrell, Robert and Vernon Kirchgessner. Sister of Martha Gesenhues and Catherine Sutherland. Grandmother of 21. Great-grandmother of 21.

MARIEN, Ruth Marie (Kress), 78, St. Roch, Indianapolis, Nov. 12. Wife of Richard Marien. Mother of Cynthia Cheek, Deborah Lane, David and Michael Marien. Sister of Barbara Meisberger, Robert and Thomas Kress. Grandmother of 10. Great-grandmother of three.

MILLER, Terrance Leo, 56, All Saints, Dearborn County, Nov. 24. Husband of Pamela Miller. Father of Mallory Sterwarf and Matthew Miller. Son of Marjorie Wendel. Stepson of Harold Wendel. Brother of MaryBeth Ballard, Janet Freese, Marilyn Laudick, Barbara Pierson, Geraldine White, Michael and Patrick Miller. Stepbrother of Connie Flashpohler and Steve Wendel.

PETERIK, Daniel Michael, 43, St. Luke the Evangelist, Indianapolis, Nov. 26. Son of Gerald Peterik. Brother of Steven Peterik.

PINELLA, Dorothy, 92, St. Matthew the Apostle, Indianapolis, Nov. 22. Mother of David, John and Paul Pinella. Sister of David Kriplen. Grandmother of four.

RETZNER, Liana Claire, 62, St. Agnes, Nashville, Nov. 22.

SANDHAGE, Elizabeth Jean, 76, St. Bartholomew, Columbus, Nov. 23. Wife of Henry Joseph Sandhage. Mother of Linda Baxter, Cheryl Pollert and Denise Scroggins. Sister of Marie Herbert, Lucille Youngman, Donald and Frank Schreiner. Grandmother of seven.

SMITH, Norma Jean, 84, St. Joseph, Corydon, Nov. 25. Mother of Tamarya Crawford, Danny and Michael Smith. Sister of Janet Stevens, Charloette Umber and Roy Smith Jr.

STALLO, Esther, 92, St. Nicholas, Ripley County, Nov. 25. Mother of Patricia Dietz and Anita Modesitt. Sister of Charles Wright. Grandmother of four.

YANICH, Paul T., 87, St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower), Indianapolis, Nov. 26. Father of Paula Downs, Candice, Daniel and John Yanich. Grandfather of eight. Great-grandfather of one. †

Advent penance services are scheduled throughout parishes in the archdiocese

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. 16, 7 p.m. at St. Michael the Archangel, Brookville
- Dec. 17, 7 p.m. at St. Catherine of Siena, Decatur County, at the Enochsburg campus

Bloomington Deanery

- 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 St. John the Apostle, Bloomington
- Dec. 20, 1:30 p.m. at St. Charles Borromeo, Bloomington

Connersville Deanery

- 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 of Lima, Knightstown

Indianapolis East Deanery

- Dec. 14, 7 p.m. Holy Angels and St. Rita at St. Rita
- Dec. 16, 7 p.m. at St. Mary

Indianapolis North Deanery

- Dec. 13, 2 p.m. deanery service at St. Luke the Evangelist
- Dec. 14, 7 p.m. deanery service at St. Luke the Evangelist
- Dec. 15, 7 p.m. deanery service at St. Luke the Evangelist

Indianapolis South Deanery

- 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. our Lady of the Greenwood, Greenwood

Indianapolis West Deanery

- Dec. 15, 7 p.m. at St. Ann
- 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. 15, 7 p.m. at Our Lady of Perpetual Help, New Albany
- Dec. 16, 6:30 p.m. for St. John Paul II, Clark County, 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. 13, 2 p.m. for Holy Trinity, Edinburgh, and St. Rose of Lima, Franklin, at 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. 13, 2 p.m. at St. Paul, Tell City

Terre Haute Deanery

- Dec. 16, 7 p.m., deanery service at Sacred Heart, Clinton †

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Diversity of Church on display at annual St. Martin de Porres Mass

By Victoria Arthur

Special to The Criterion

At a recent Mass on the south side of Indianapolis, Franciscan Brother Moises Gutierrez came full circle.

One of his first assignments with the archdiocese years ago had been orchestrating the feast day Mass for St. Martin de Porres, a man known for bringing people of different cultures together.

Now, after dedicating the last five years to the same purpose, Brother Moises found himself at another St. Martin de Porres Mass, surrounded by a diverse group of grateful Catholics from across the archdiocese.

"This Mass helps us to find the beauty of all the different cultures in our archdiocese," Brother Moises said moments before the vibrant Nov. 3 liturgy celebrated at St. Mark the Evangelist Church in Indianapolis. "I love celebrating this beautiful feast that brings all people together. It's at a different parish every year, and I still get excited about it."

But that marked the final St. Martin de Porres Mass for Brother Moises, director of the archdiocese's Office of Intercultural Ministry, before he leaves Indianapolis to embark on earning a doctorate at Gonzaga University in Spokane, Wash.

Father Todd Riebe, one of the concelebrants of the Mass and pastor of St. Mark Parish, took the opportunity to thank Brother Moises for all he has done for the many ethnic groups that call the archdiocese home.

At St. Mark alone, there is a rapidly growing Burmese community, which Father Riebe calls "a great blessing." The overall minority population of the school is nearing 40 percent, and the newcomers are welcomed with open arms by longtime parishioners.

"How right it is to thank this man of amazing energy and imagination," Father Riebe said of Brother Moises to those gathered for the St. Martin de Porres liturgy.



Above, Nathalie Godinot, left, a member of the French-speaking ministry of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, shares a light moment with Franciscan Brother Moises Gutierrez before the annual St. Martin de Porres Mass on Nov. 3. (Submitted photos by Victoria Arthur)

Left, Marilou Eria, center, a native of the Philippines and now a member of Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish in Greenwood, shares a quiet moment of devotion before a banner depicting St. Martin de Porres on Nov. 3. A Mass honoring the saint was celebrated that evening at St. Mark the Evangelist Church in Indianapolis.

In his homily, he also introduced the congregation to the saint whose feast day was being celebrated—a man who, like Brother Moises, dedicated his life to mutual understanding and appreciation of all cultures.

St. Martin de Porres was born in Lima, Peru, in 1579, the illegitimate son of a Spanish knight and a freed African slave. He grew up in poverty and struggled with the stigma of being of mixed race in a time of great prejudice. But he showed great compassion for all people, no matter their race or background, Father Riebe said.

He began working with Dominican friars in the city at age 15, and eventually ran their infirmary, where he lovingly cared for the sick and the dying. This included Africans, who had just endured the most inhumane conditions aboard slave ships.

By the time of his death in 1639, his holiness was well known, Father Riebe explained. St. Martin de Porres was canonized in 1962 by St. John XXIII, and

is the patron of people of mixed race and those who work for social justice.

"We call St. Martin de Porres a saint for everyone," Brother Moises said. "This Mass began [in the archdiocese] 12 or 13 years ago as an opportunity to bring African-Americans and Hispanics together. That was the initial intention, as St. Martin de Porres was black and Hispanic. Now we take it a little further, bringing all cultures and ethnicities together."

The Mass at St. Mark drew a cross-section of people from throughout the archdiocese, including Africans and African-Americans, Hispanics, Filipinos, Burmese, Vietnamese, Koreans and others. Readings and hymns were delivered in multiple languages. And after the Mass, many of the faithful approached the altar to touch the commemorative banner depicting St. Martin de Porres.

At the reception that followed, attendees had the chance to sample a vast array of ethnic foods.

"The more opportunities we offer

Catholics to come together, the more we witness the beauty and the goodness of diversity," Brother Moises said. "How great that we can use role models, such as St. Martin, who have taught us throughout history that communion is possible, that unity in diversity is possible, and that it is our call as Catholics."

Before the Mass, Brother Moises reflected on the time between his first St. Martin de Porres Mass in the archdiocese, and this, his last one.

"I have been in the archdiocese five and a half years, and I have loved every minute," he said. "It's been a great time for growth for me."

"This experience has helped me to become a better person and a better minister. I can only be grateful to God, to the archdiocese and to all the people I have encountered during all these years."

(Victoria Arthur is a freelance writer and a member of St. Malachy Parish in Brownsburg.) †

Before preaching Gospel, Church must first evangelize itself, pope says

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—To be able to fulfill its mission of preaching the Gospel, the Church must first evangelize itself, Pope Francis said.

"Mission, in fact, is a force capable of transforming the Church within itself even before it does so in the life of peoples and cultures," the pope told participants of the plenary assembly of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.

The plenary assembly, which commemorated the 50th anniversary of "Ad Gentes," the Second Vatican Council's decree on the Church's missionary activity, focused on missionary awareness and the work being done in regions of the world that have been evangelized most recently.

Recalling his visit to Africa on Nov. 25-30, the pope said that he experienced "firsthand the spiritual and pastoral dynamism of so many young Churches in that continent, as well as the harsh difficulties lived by most of the population."

"I have seen that where there are needs, there is almost always a presence of the Church ready to heal the wounds of the neediest in whom they recognize the wounded and crucified body of our Lord Jesus," he said.

The pope said that by its very nature, the Church evangelizes; however, it must always begin by evangelizing itself in order to have the "grace of the Holy Spirit" as its foundation and safeguard its "apostolic freshness and urgency."

In this way, he said, "the Holy Spirit transforms those who are believers by habit only into disciples [and] alienated disciples into missionaries, pulling them out of their fears and closures and sending them in every direction, to the ends of the world."

Pope Francis said that in evangelizing young Churches, missionaries are called to a step-by-step, "kerygmatic approach to faith," and that missionaries must learn to listen to the cry of the poor and the marginalized.

"Let us pray and work so that the Church is always more along the lines of the Acts of the Apostles," which describes the lifestyle and missionary enthusiasm of the first Christians, he said. "Let us be inspired by the power of the Gospel and the Holy Spirit." †

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Mission trip offers chance to share God's transforming love

By John Shaughnessy

She keeps coming back, despite the horror she has seen and the heartbreak she has felt.



Virginia Maher

What draws her and the others back, she says, is that "our lives and hearts are changed by their faith, resilience, joy and suffering."

In those words, Virginia Maher offers an insight into the experience of nearly everyone who has ever gone on a medical mission trip in the hope of making a difference in the lives of people who desperately need health care.

It's certainly the experience that Maher had during a recent journey to the Dominican Republic—the third mission trip she has made to that country in the Caribbean.

"This place has caused our team such

extreme anguish, agony and grief over the past three years," says Maher, a member of SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral Parish in Indianapolis who made the mission trip with a group from the University of Indianapolis. "Yet this year, the public hospital was also the source of glimpses of humanitarian actions and hints of change which gave us cause for joy and hope."

A touching moment of humanity occurred shortly after the Indianapolis team instructed the local staff in how to provide care and comfort when babies are dying.

"On our first morning there, our team witnessed a severely pre-term baby—who would have survived in most other countries—who was left alone to die in a hospital room," recalls Maher, a certified nurse-midwife. "That day, we brought his mom to hold her son. [And when the mom left for the day] we witnessed a nurse holding the hand of that dying baby, no longer alone."

Another memorable, more joyful moment developed from a situation that initially seemed hopeless. The moment

involved a mother of four, who was hemorrhaging after an operation.

"Her anesthesiologist threw up his hands in surrender after an emergency hysterectomy stopped the bleeding, but could not replace her massive blood loss," Maher recalls.

"Her husband, in heartbreaking desperation, was denied blood products because he could not afford them. Yet this woman was alive the next day, saved by our team's purchase of three units of blood on a day that we just happened to be in the Dominican Republic's public hospital."

Maier also witnessed a change that offered hope.

"There was the changing attitude of the public hospital administration and staff, who three years ago initially refused our team's entry to their facility. This year, they welcomed us to participate in births, and to demonstrate kinder and safer birth techniques.

"They seemed to be soaking up examples of more humane care in their interactions with patients—who are typically Haitians, who live in poverty,

and whose husbands and male relatives work long, hot days in the sugar cane fields for meager wages."

During the mission trip, the medical team performed 26 surgeries and 69 Pap smears, and assisted with childbirth, post-partum and post-operation care. The group also distributed shoes and soccer balls, and provided health education to more than 200 people.

It was all part of an experience where heartbreak and hope were always just a moment away.

"In the face of the best and the worst of these human experiences, our team cried, consoled, laughed and hoped together," Maher says.

"The lasting impact that this experience had for me is that our team could have been immobilized and demoralized by such extremely tragic circumstances and utterly shocking conditions. Rather, we were emboldened to act in ways that literally saved a life, comforted and cared for many, and allowed us to share God's love and to experience the transformation of that love in a real way." †

Vocations, Catholic community life must serve each other, Pope Francis says

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Vocations to the priesthood and religious life are born within the Christian community, are meant to build up the Christian community and rely on the community for support, Pope Francis said.

"The Church is the house of mercy, and it is the 'soil' where vocations take root, mature and bear fruit," the pope wrote in his message for the 2016 observance of the World Day of Prayer for Vocations, which will be celebrated on April 17 in most dioceses.

"The Church, mother of vocations" is the theme Pope Francis chose for the day.

While God calls individuals, and individuals have a duty to discern in prayer the vocation to which they are called, the call to priesthood or religious life comes

because one has been baptized into the community of the Church, the pope said. "The ecclesial dynamism of the call is an antidote to indifference and to individualism."

Vocations are born within the Church community, so "indifference is vanquished by love, because it demands that we go beyond ourselves and place our lives at the service of God's plan, embracing the historical circumstances of his holy people," the pope wrote.

As women and men prepare for service in religious life or the priesthood, the pope said, their knowledge of and love for real Christian communities must grow.

While a vocation may be born in a particular parish, diocese or Catholic movement, God's call is to serve the entire Church, he said. Already starting in a seminary or novitiate, candidates need experiences that help them

"learn to know and to love their brothers and sisters who pursue paths different from their own, and these bonds strengthen in everyone the communion which they share."

The community aspect of vocations, he said, also means that every Catholic and all of them together have a responsibility to pray for vocations, to help identify and encourage individuals suited to the priesthood or religious life and to give every priest and religious the care and support they need to continue their service faithfully.

Pope Francis ended his message with a prayer to the "Father of mercy," asking God to "grant us Christian communities which are alive, fervent and joyous, which are fountains of fraternal life and which nurture in the young the desire to consecrate themselves to you and to the work of evangelization." †



Retirement Fund for Religious

During her first year of teaching, Precious Blood Sister Ann Hipp, 95, had 40 students in four grades. "It was only by the grace of God that I got through that first year," she recalls, laughing. Sister Ann would go on to spend 50 years in the classroom and continues in volunteer ministry today. She and some 33,000 senior Catholic sisters, brothers, and religious order priests benefit from the Retirement Fund for Religious. Your generosity helps provide prescription medications, nursing care, and more.

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Photos: (left) Sister Ann Hipp, CPPS, 95; (above from left) Brother Anselm Allen, OSB, 76; Sister Luanna Brucks, CPPS, 90; Sister Rosemary Zaffuto, ASCJ, 87. ©2015 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, DC. All rights reserved. Photographer: Jim Judkis.