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

By Natalie Hoefer

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.

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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 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)

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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 so that the world could 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 long been based on fossil fuels, which have contributed to the destruction 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.

“As many scientists and economists are warning, the longer we wait, the more difficult it will be to rectify by the environmentally responsible measures that are necessary—and the more damage and suffering the delay will cause,” Cardinal Turkson told the gathering of 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 challenge, 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 short-sighted economic and political choices. As a result, the cities 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.

“Many developed countries 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 finance, technology, capacity building and the different countries involved in the Paris negotiations including the integration of the wide range of perceptions and contributions to 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 others—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. It is up to us not to succumb in securing current narrow interests,” he appealed to his audience.

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

“For us all and indeed must do much better, transforming ourselves by way of an ecological conversion,” he said.

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 international collaboration; the challenge is 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.”

Cardinal Peter Turkson

Do you have something exciting or newsworthy you want to be considered to be printed in The Criterion? E-mail us: criterion@archindy.org

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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, Bangladesh [from Nepal], Africa—all of them have gone through the same process this Syrian family has gone through.”

By this per 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 and, 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 and presence. “As Pope Francis told world leaders assembled at the United Nations’ General Assembly 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 society. The letter calls for a change of heart to protect the Earth and all its inhabitants.

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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 Villafuertes celebrate their first Christmas 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 became a reality 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 connection to 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 how being brought up in the area was a part of this

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 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 to be stable. We love this house. It’s beautiful.”

Sauter also feels hopeful that the difference the house has meant to the family.

“I think this is 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 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 we’ll be in our home.”

That sense of home also extends to the one they have found at Sacred Heart Parish, she says. 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 homcoming 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.’"

“Sauterindy@yahoo.com or contact John Sauter at santerindy@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.”

(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 santerindy@yahoo.com.)
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 all that we 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 memoria of Our Lady of Guadalupe, 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 she truly 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 has created all things. He is in all places. He is Lord of Heaven and Earth. Through the grace of this 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 Our Lady of Guadalupe, 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 joinThanking 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 grace 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 birth of the newborn king. Mary stands behind and generously accepts all that is asked of her. She speaks the words of many of these critics was to call to task politicians who use gun control measures, or call for what the ones favored by the critics. Because I’m not opposed in principle to increasing gun control measures, I believe the dialogue needs to happen in a way that is open, respectful and grounded in fact. The public conversation on that topic can be helpful. I just think praying is not an effective way to do this. Seen from a merely political perspective, the sharp condemnation of prayer by Weingarten and the Daily News and others might intimidate many people across the country who might otherwise be the critical of gun control opponents as they are. I suspect there are many people of faith across the country who would really value the public debate and give it a chance.

As a deeper level, such widespread and open scorning of prayer by members of the mainstream media is suggestive of the erosion of civil society where the public shaming of religious voices by influential people is more widespread.

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, the 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 get 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 technical cost of supplying shoes to low-income youngsters in winter.

Maureen Pesta
Brownstown

(Editor’s note: Donations may be made through our website: 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 Cummins, 815 South Chestnut, Seymour, IN 47274.)
The Lord is coming again in glory

As the 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.

Jesus Christ is the Lord of history.

What do we mean when we say that Jesus Christ is the Lord of history? How can we claim that Jesus Christ is coming again? Does this mean that however much we believe in his resurrection and ascension, we still wait for him, our dear Lord? Does this mean that, while he is the goal or the end of time?

Christ lived among us as a man two thousand 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-anticipated Saviour 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 in 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.’”

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 believe 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 share with them our confident hope that the Lord is coming, now and at the end of time!

Traducido por: Daniela Guanipa
December 12
Benedit Inn Retreat and Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. Shop Inn-Spired Christmas Sale, 9 a.m.–3 p.m. Information: 317-787-2387.
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: 317-926-0519 or dradam53@yahoo.com.
The Slovenian National Home, 100 B, W. 10th St., Indianapolis. Christmas party, food, music, 5–p.m., music and dance will follow. Information: 317-783-0619 or mccmics2014@gmail.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., person per. Information: 812-535-2932 or msvps@gmail.com.
December 13
Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, 1530 Union St., Indianapolis. Advent Christmas concert, 2 p.m., reception following concert, no charge. Information: 317-630-6811 or stcharles@shof.org.
Most Holy Name of Jesus Church, 89 N. 17th Ave., Beech Grove. Christmas Concert #52, 5–p.m., adults $5, seniors $3, children free. Information: 317-784-5454 or alfrancis@omaha.com.
St. Michael the Archangel Church, 3354 W. 30th St., Indianapolis. Mass in French, 1 p.m. Information: 317-532-9303 or afndrd2014@gmail.com.
St. Therese of the Infant Jesus Church (Little Flower Church), 4720 E. 13th St., Indianapolis. Longest Married Couple, 6:30 p.m., monthly gathering, 6 p.m. Mass, optional dinner afterward. Information: 317-408-6396.
December 14
Catholic Benedictine Chapel, 435 W. Troy, Indianapolis. Monthly Mass followed by Remembrance Tree prayer, 2 p.m. Information: 317-574-8898 or t掞a@mrc.buchanangroup.org.
December 17
St. Joseph Church, 1375 S. McPherson 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 Havenstic Road, Indianapolis.
Monthly Mass followed by Remembrance Tree blessing, 2 p.m. Information: 317-787-2387 or stpatrickadorationchapel@buchanangroup.org.
December 18-19
St. Michael the Archangel Church, 126 W. Georgia St., Indianapolis. Christkindl Village, along west side of St. Georgia St. and St. John parking lot, 5:9 p.m. Dec. 18, noon-9 p.m. Dec. 19. Live nativity animals, kids’ activities, gifts, handcrafted gifts, beer garden, music. Information: 317-635-2021 or www.christkindlindy.com.
St. Michael the Archangel Church, 3354 W. 30th St., Indianapolis. Holy Family Parish, 126 W. Georgia St., Indianapolis. Christmas Eve Masses, 5:30–9:30 p.m., $5 per person. Information: 317-574-8898.
St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) Church, 4720 E. 13th St., Indianapolis. Longest Married Couple, monthly gathering. Information: 317-408-6396.
December 21
The Criterion www.archindy.org/events
Events Calendar
For a list of events for the four weeks as reported in The Criterion, log on to www.archindy.org/events

Annual Christmas food basket program still needs volunteers

For 47 years, the Hammann 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 Connection 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 with grief. They miss loved ones, and find usual traditions and bright lights serve only to heighten their struggle with grief. They miss loved ones, and find usual traditions and bright lights serve only to heighten their struggle with grief.

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, 1572 Schiller 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 wwwmelmc2015@gmail.com or dickanddiane66@dickanddiane66.com; by regular mail to Dick and Diane Baumbach, 8924 Puerto Del Rio Drive, Suite 402, Cape Coral, FL 33920; by calling 239-613-5180; or by logging onto www.mme.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.mme.org.

New Providence Associates
On Nov. 14, the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods welcomed 28 new Providence Associates in a ceremony at 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 ddf@dillow@spsmw.org, or log on to spsmw.org. (Submitted Photo)

Christmas gift 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 card or certificate, 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 Karen Krider at retreats@benedictinn.org or by calling 812-923-8817. The 2016 retreat listing will soon be available at www.benedictinn.org.

• Mount St. Francis Retreat Center, 101 St. Anthony Drive, Mfr. St. Francis. Gift cards are available for one year from the date of purchase by contacting Karen Krider at retreats@mountsaintfrancis.org or by calling 812-923-8817. The 2016 retreat calendar is available at mountstfrancis.org/retreat-offerings.

• Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 1500 E. North Street, Oldenburg. Gift cards are available in any amount by e-mailing center@oldenburgproof.com or by calling 812-936-4353. A 2016 calendar of retreats is available by logging onto www.oldenburgfranciscancenter.com.

• One Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5355 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. Gift cards are available in any amount by visiting the facility bookstore or by calling 317-247-7681. A 2016 calendar of retreats is available by logging onto www.mysistersofmary.org.

• Providence Spirituality and Conference Center, the Sisters of Providence, 1 Sisters of Providence, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. Gift cards are available by contacting Jeannie Frost at frostj@spwescon.org or by calling 812-535-2924. A 2016 calendar of retreats is available by logging onto www.providencecenter.org/spwescon.

• Saint Meinrad Archabbey, 200 Abby Drive, St. Meinrad. Gift certificates are available by calling retreat guest services at 800-581-6905. Note that Saint Meinrad Archabbey falls in the Central Time zone, and a 2016 calendar of retreats is available at www.saintmeinrad.org/retreats/list-all-retreats.
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, Chas 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 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 Cathedral 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 help their loved ones lift 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 Tahshib 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 protection to the families 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 stayed 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, Trena, 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 Bernetta Bethdal, 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, Bethdal, 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.”

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 gunman opened fire during a free event at a center for people with developmental disabilities.

(CNS photo/Mario Anzuoni, Reuters)
“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, and in any event God’s judgment, and in any event God’s mercy. Let us allow ourselves to be caressed by God. The Lord is so good, than his mercy. Let us allow ourselves to be caressed by God. The Lord is so good, and he forgives everything.”

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.”

“testify to a great advance in faith,” but the council, said the council documents, “set out once again with enthusiasm with the Second Vatican Council urging the Church to come out from self-enclosure 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.”

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 includes a special social gathering events. Please bring friends with you or share the invitation with others who may be interested in joining us.

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.

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

"I noticed the number of friends I had who were getting married, and then they were getting divorced," she said. "My husband and I were talking about getting married and putting our hopes in the future, and they were getting divorced,"

But the couple's schedule didn’t leave room for a weekend retreat or special celebration.

"We needed something quick, down and dirty to re-energize us," she said.

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

"I knew that 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’s not ‘love’.

The event, which includes music by Catholic musician George Kincsburg and features Allen Hunter, a former Protestant minister of Atlanta’s largest mega-church who has written extensively about the full communion of the Church in 2008, has been sailed at Atlanta’s East Atlanta 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 attending the event, hosted the event.

"The event is set for the event to be held on 31 Undeniable Secrets of Marriage, a compact disc set titled Love, Sex and Marriage information on how to lead a praying, lived, married, 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] tells about, and we’re in his home, and not as devastating as it could have been.

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Scott Seibert, archdiocesan 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. People change—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 group to heaven.”

“I hope that people come to appreciate those things that

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 Brian 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.

**VATICAN CITY — in pace—Go in peace.**

With the proclamation of Pope Paul VI to the Second Vatican Council on December 8, the Feast of Mary’s Immaculate Conception. In a colorful outdoor ceremony attended by approximately 50,000 spectators, 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缫nexceeding in religious, government heads, priests, foreign ministers and other dignitaries from more than 80 nations occupied places of honor as the council Fathers in copes and mitres moved from inside the basilica out in the square. Many wore the simple gold rings the pope had given them as a council mementos.**

• Body gets new name: Pope Paul VI decrees Holy Office reforms

• At historic service: We’re on unity road, pope tells others

• Postconciliar jubilee to begin January 1st

• Twin rites end ancient diocesan

• Says priests can solve crisis in vocations

• U.S. represented at council closing

• Archdiocesan School Board is reorganized

• Lay missioner elected mayor

• Parish school boards

• Laymen lead new church

• Growth in Cursillo surprises leader

• Symposium emphasizes lack of understanding of rhythm

Elizabeth and Gregory Schmidt, members of Reactivity Of Our Lord Jesus Christ Parish in Indianapolis, look adoringly at each other during a service reaffirming their marital vows in Casa 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 Marriage event at St. Luke the Evangelist Parish on Jan. 30, 2016. (Photo by Natalie Hoefner)

**Praesidium for Marriage will be held at St. Luke the Evangelist Church, 7357 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 Dynamic Catholic.org/Indianapolis or by calling the Dynamic Catholic Institute at 844-515-2955. Information about the Passion and Purpose Marriage event can also be found on www.DynamicCatholic.com/Indianapolis.**

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.
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 5-4 decision.

Anderson, citing the work of many historians, shows how the 1967 U.S. Supreme Court’s *Loving v. Virginia* ruling, which overturned interracial marriage bans, was perceived—wrongly according to Anderson—as trampling on the civil rights of the LGBT community. He said 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, 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 Weininger, 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,” Weininger 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.

**WASHINGTON—** The U.S. Supreme Court has granted a petition to review the constitutionality of a federal law that extends hate crimes protections to gender identity, reports the National Catholic Reporter.

The petition, brought by a transgender washing machine technician in Delaware, asks that the high court consider whether the law unconstitutionally extends hate crimes protections in federal courts to gender identity.

The law, known as hate crime bill **2013** or the **2013** **hate crime bill**, was signed into law by President **2013** in December of that year.

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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 outside 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 humility of Christ’s presence.

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 daily lifestyle practiced in Benedictine communities and many religious orders.

“Concealed in the life of a person 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 what the Church’s laypeople from those in the consecrated life. Typically, however, the community among all Church members in consecrated life “that dialogue to consider 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. 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 synonomy” with people called to other vocations in the Church, (2015 apostolic exhortation “Vespasianus”),

The tradition of consecrating people and objects is rooted in Scripture

By Daniel S. Mulhall

While in the wilderness, the tending of the sheep of the 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 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—as 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.”

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, on “heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. And over all these put on love, that is, on” (5:12-15).

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” (Gen 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 remembering the consecration of the bread and wine at Mass, the Israelites are told by the Lord in Exodus 13:2-3 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. 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 synonomy with all other vocations in the Church,” including the laity.

One goal in this is to spread what is called the “spirituality of consecration.” 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” (105).

(David Gibson served on Catholic News Service’s editorial staff for 37 years.)
Looking for Mary, our Mother, in a priceless rosary

By Effie Calderola

My husband and I once lived in an apartment for several months before moving on to a permanent home. We stored the bulk of our furnishings in the basement of our building. One day, a landlord entered our apartment without our permission, thinking we had just vacated it. When he found that we were still living there, he offered to rent us the space for about half of what we were paying. We decided to stay and turn our third bedroom into a modern living room. We spent much of that time reorganizing our lives, finding new homes for all of our possessions that we no longer needed. We were excited and eager for a new life. The three of us grabbed our coffee, did a quick inventory of our apartment’s closets and cupboards, and prepared to take off. But something drew my husband back for one last look. I’d 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.

One of them was my mother’s, a gift from her parents when she was a child. She had valued it deeply, and prayed with it all of her life. She loved it so much that she gave it to me when she realized she was too old to pray with it anymore. Her display must bring a lot of joy to some of the people passing by. Sometimes they go even get carried away in church. We’ve experienced Christmas Masses where the poinsettias overwhelmed the manger scene at the altar. Or the hired choir singers, beautiful as they were, more of a distraction than anything else.

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 “Joy to the World” with forgiveness and reconciliation at this holy season. Now, it’s easy to feel and express love for strangers in our own lives, for our children, For Christmas we can also distract us from remembering the true “season of our lives,” 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 they go even get carried away in church. We’ve experienced Christmas Masses where the poinsettias overwhelmed the manger scene at the altar. Or the hired choir singers, beautiful as they were, more of a distraction than anything else.

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Third Sunday of Advent/Asgr. Owen F. Campion

Sunday Readings

Sunday, Dec. 13, 2015

• Zephaniah 3:14-18a
• Philippians 2:5-11
• 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 one of the 12 minor prophets, who 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 exhortation and bold exclamation of joy. When the people are faithful to God, peace and prosperity will come. As the psalmist assures, “The Lord is my helper; I shall not fear.” The psalmist continues: “Your eyes have seen my distress.”

For the second reading on this weekend, the Church presents a passage from St. Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians. This reading is an exuberant celebration of the transformation that the Christian faith has wrought. Paul proclaims that “Our confidence in life through Christ resides not in the things we see. For what we see is transitory, but what we cannot see is eternal.”

The 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, 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 turnovers. 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 Gaudeite Sunday, because of the first word of the original Latin version of the entrance antiphon, “Gaudeite” (“Rejoice”). Joy is in order not because a pentecostal 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, the reading this weekend also reminds 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. +

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 throughout your life.

Became the Bread we receive.
All we need do is believe.

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

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, 7b, 8-9
Matthew 21:23-27

Tuesday, December 15
Zephaniah 3:1-2, 9-13
Psalm 34:2-7, 17-19
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
Gentle 49.2, 8-10
Psalm 72:1-4b, 7-8, 17
Matthew 1:1-17

Friday, December 18
Jeremiah 3:5-8
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 3:1-4a
Psalm 82:2-3, 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. (Before Common Era), instead 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)

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 religious term. The word “common” is a secular term. Formed by the 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—to 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 basis for numbering the years?

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 accept 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 divine truth from the same time. 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 likely—as happens when each of us

Readers may submit prose or poetry for faith column

The Criterion invites readers to submit original works of 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 phofer@archindy.org.

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

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Einterz. Grandfather of 49.
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Diana, Dr. Ellen, Andrew,
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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 was organizing 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 enroll in 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, 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.

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, 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 Church and to all the people I have encountered during all these years.”

(Victoria Arthur is a freelance writer and a member of St. Malchus 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.

“Missionaries are called to a step-by-step, ‘kerygmatic approach’ to faith,” the pope said in his homily at Mass on Oct. 27 before a large crowd at the Basilica of the Holy Spirit in Philadelphia. “In this way, he said, “the Holy Spirit transforms those who work for social justice. They become a better person and a better minister.”

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 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 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 safeguarding 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. “This is inspired by the power of the Gospel and the Holy Spirit.” ♦

For more information, please log on to
www.archindy.org/layministry

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The Archdiocese of Indianapolis has partnered with the University of Notre Dame and Catholic Distance University (CDU) to offer non-credit online theology classes:
- Courses on the Catechism of the Catholic Church from CDU
- All 12 classes for a Certificate in Lay Ministry available online
- 20% discount for all employees, volunteers, and parishioners
- Employees also receive reimbursement upon course completion

Online Lay Ministry Formation

For more information, please log on to
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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 photo 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.

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Youth Minister

The Youth Minister is responsible for LifeTeen nights, Confirmation formation, mission trips, recruitment of volunteers, retreat programs and other ministries within the parish. The position is present only because the present Youth minister had taken another position within the parish.

Applicants should be the working on, or be willing to work on an advanced degree, and have experience in working with other staff members. There are six staff at Holy Spirit Parish who work in faith formation and social media skills are desired. This is a full-time position with benefits.

Please send application to:
Search Committee
Holy Spirit Parish at Geist
10350 Glaser Way
Fishers, IN 46037

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Fishers, IN 46037
Vocations, Catholic community life must serve each other, Pope Francis says

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 heartbeat she has felt.

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.

“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 her 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.

“She had, 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.”

Maher 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, 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, are fonts of fraternal life and which nurture in the young a “Father of mercy,” asking God to “grant us Christian communities that will know how to consecrate themselves to you and to the work of evangelization.”

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.