Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

In my column for this week on page 5, I write about God’s closeness to us. Nowhere is God’s intimacy with us expressed more profoundly than in our celebration of Christmas. Here we see the almighty God, maker of all things visible and invisible, reduced to the most vulnerable of creatures: a little child born in the homelessness and poverty of a manger and surrounded by shepherds and domestic animals.

God gave up everything in order to become one with us. You can’t get closer than that. He comes to us, and stays with us, through the gift of his body and blood, which we receive in the holy Eucharist. His birth, an actual event in human history, is renewed each year in our celebration of the Christmas miracle! As I write in my column this week, “This is not an absent, remote or disconnected God. This God is one with us and draws us close to him through the intercession of a simple Hebrew woman chosen by God to be his Son’s mother.”

We might say that Christmas is the feast of “closeness.” It is the time when family and friends who are separated—by geography, by hurt or anger, or simply by the distances created by time—come together again to celebrate this joyous feast, and to renew their bonds with one another and, we hope, with Christ and his Church.

Christmas reunions can be wonderful. They can also open old wounds and bring back painful memories. To make Christmas joyful, we must be able to forgive one another. And we have to let go of past injuries—real and imagined.

This year, we celebrate the Holy Year of Mercy, a jubilee year proclaimed by Pope Francis to help all of us seek and find forgiveness.

What a wonderful way to approach Christmas! The greatest gift any of us will receive this year is the certainty that God forgives us, that he is close to us always, and that he loves us no matter what. The greatest gift that any of us can give to family members, friends, neighbors, fellow countrymen and strangers is the assurance that we will be merciful, too.

Christmas celebrates God’s closeness to us. It invites us to welcome God’s love and mercy into our hearts, and it challenges us to share this merciful love with others throughout the New Year!

My prayer for you, and for all our brothers and sisters in central and southern Indiana, is that you will feel God’s closeness this Christmas and share it generously with others!

Feliz Navidad! Merry Christmas!

Most Rev. Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R.
Archbishop of Indianapolis
Mesaje de Navidad del Arzobispo Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R.

En mi columna de esta semana que se encuentra en la página 5, reflexiono acerca de la cercanía de Dios con nosotros. Esta intimidad de la que gozamos con Dios alcanza su máxima expresión en la celebración de la Navidad. En este día, Dios todopoderoso, creador de todo lo visible e invisible, reducido a la más vulnerable de todas las criaturas, en un pequeño niño nació sin hogar, en la pobreza de un pesebre, rodeado de pastores y animales domésticos.

Este es un día para hacerse uno con nosotros; nada podría ser más íntimo que esto. Él acude a nosotros y permanece con nosotros a través del obsequio de Su cuerpo y Su sangre que recibimos en la sagrada eucaristía. Revivimos cada año su nacimiento—un hecho plasmado en la historia humana— a través de la celebración del milagro de la Navidad. Tal como lo expresé en mi columna de esta semana: “No se trata de un Dios ausente, distante o apartado. Este Dios es uno con nosotros y nos acerca a Él a través de la intercesión de una humilde muchacha elegida por Dios para ser la madre de Su Hijo.”

Podríamos decir que la Navidad es la festividad de la “cercanía.” Es la época en la que familiares y amigos separados por distancias geográficas, de dolor u odio, o simplemente por la distancia que genera el tiempo, se acercan nuevamente para celebrar esta alegría festividad, renovar los lazos que les unen, así como también, los lazos que les une a Cristo y a su Iglesia.

Las reuniones de Navidad son maravillosas, pero también pueden abrir viejas heridas y evocar recuerdos dolorosos. Para que la Navidad sea una ocasión alegría, también debemos poder perdonarnos unos a otros y debemos deslazarlas de las heridas del pasado, tanto las reales como las creadas.

Este año celebramos el Santo Año de la Misericordia, un año de jubileo proclamado por el papa Francisco para ayudarnos a buscar y encontrar el perdón. Que mejor forma de acercarnos a la Navidad! El mayor regalo que podemos recibir este año es gozar de la seguridad de que Dios nos perdonó, de que siempre está cerca de nosotros y de que nos ama incondicionalmente. El mayor regalo que podemos darle a cualquier familiar, amigo, vecino, paisano e incluso a los extranjeros es la seguridad de que nosotros también seremos misericordiosos.

La Navidad es la celebración de la cercanía de Dios que nos invita a recibir el amor y la misericordia de Dios en nuestros corazones y nos da la oportunidad de compartir ese amor misericordiosos con el prójimo durante todo el nuevo año.

Mi oración para usted y para todos nuestros hermanos y hermanas del centro y del sur de Indiana es que sientan la cercanía de Dios durante la Navidad y la compartan generosamente con los demás.

¡Feliz Navidad!

Reverendo Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R.
Arzobispo de Indianaálidos

Dr. Ray Guarendi, Archbishop Tobin guest speakers for Catholic radio event in Columbus

There is a final frontier in south central Indiana, in a region stretching from approximately Nashville to Greensburg and Seymour to Greenwood. "Geographically, we are one of the last frontiers of Indiana without Catholic radio," says Eileen Hartman, president of Gabriel Radio. She hopes to change that fact by purchasing land and erecting a tower in order to transmit Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN) Global Catholic Radio Network programming on Columbus-based WGPI 93.5 FM, a ministry of the Word Television Network (EWTN) Global Catholic Radio Network.

To raise the $400,000 needed to purchase the land and erect the tower, a fundraising event will be held at St. Bartholomew Church, 1308 27th St., in Columbus from 6-8:30 p.m. on Jan. 6. Guest speakers include Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin, EWTN Radio general manager David Vacharesse, and EWTN radio host Dr. Ray Guarendi, who is our annual Christmas schedule.

The purpose of the Jan. 6 event is to "raise money, which is used as matching funds for money to be raised in each parish in our listening area," she explains. "More than 15 parishes fall within the station’s region of reception. The event will start with a reception offering hors d’oeuvres, desserts and beverages in the lower level of the church at 6 p.m., and will move to the church sanctuary at 7 p.m. to hear the guest speakers. Those wishing to attend the event are asked to RSVP by Dec. 30 by calling Verda Redman at 317-847-3825, or by sending an e-mail to GabrielRadio@goangels.org. Those who wish to contribute but cannot attend may log on to www.goangels.org and donate money designated for Gabriel Radio, or may send a check to The Gabriel Project, P.O. Box 1233, Columbus, IN 47202. "We hope to have a home for our antenna very soon," says Hartman. "Then we can proclaim the Gospel of Life over the airwaves with Catholics and non-Catholics alike in south central Indiana now and for many years to come."
A pastoral letter from the bishops of Indiana which called the needs of the poor priority was one of the local news stories of 2015—followed closely by religious freedom legislation in the state of Indiana, and our local youth’s encounter with Pope Francis during his visit to the U.S.

Other stories of note included the biannual National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC), the opening of the Holy Year of Mercy, the resettling of a Syrian refugee family against the request of the governor and the elimination of annulment fees in the archdiocese.

The following tradition of other news agencies, The Criterion editorial staff votes each year for the top 10 local stories that were published in our newspaper.

Many of the top 10 stories selected this year were written in multiple articles. Read this article online at www.CriterionOnline.com to browse the links to all the original coverage.

Among the hundreds of locally produced news stories during 2015, here is our “Top 10” list:

1. In pastoral letter, Indiana bishops say needs of the poor must be a priority.

The five Catholic bishops in Indiana have issued a pastoral letter on poverty in Indiana that challenges the state to make the needs of the poor a priority, and to take action to reduce the effects poverty has on Indiana.

The letter, titled “Poverty at the Crossroads: The Church’s Response to Needs of the Poor” was released in March and signed by Indianapolis Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin and the other four bishops of the archdiocese. It was also made available in Spanish.

A 2015 report by the Indiana Institute for Working Families showed that more than 1 million Indiana residents are living in poverty.

The bishops said it was their hope that Catholics throughout the state will read the pastoral letter, reflect on it and help the bishops consider how the Church should respond. The letter contained several questions for reflection, and included an online forum for further discussion.

2. Religious Freedom legislation becomes Indiana law; is revised amid controversy.

During the final week of March, Indiana enacted a state-level version of the federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), with Gov. Mike Pence putting his stamp of approval on it on March 26. Nineteen other states had passed similar laws in the past.

“This bill is not about discrimination,” Pence said at the signing ceremony.

“If, and it thought it legalized discrimination in any way in Indiana, I would have vetoed it,” Pence added. For more than 20 years, the federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act has never undermined our nation’s anti-discrimination laws, and it will not.

The move was not without controversy, as the bill was introduced to counteract RFRA’s intent. Glenn Tebbe, executive director of the Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC), said that the new language in the bill still raised some questions.

The bishops of Indiana also issued a statement, calling for “mutual respect” in discussion about the law as “to ensure that no one in Indiana will face discrimination whether it is for their sexual orientation or for living their religious beliefs.”

3. Archbishopioses flock to the East Coast to pray with Pope Francis on his first journey to the U.S.

When Pope Francis visited the U.S. in September, he was a busy man: he spoke to a joint session of Congress, canonized St. Junipero Serra in Washington, visited the Sept. 11 memorial in New York and participated in the World Meeting of Families (WMOF) in Philadelphia.

Archdioceses and parishes were there nearly every step of the way. Various groups—including 46 people who traveled on a pilgrimage to the WMOF—made their way through traffic and crowds to see the pope.

Marla Pimentel-Gannon, a member of St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis, was among the audience when the Holy Father delivered an address to a joint session of Congress. “It was an incredible, awe-inspiring experience. My heart pounded, and I started to cry when he was introduced. He walked in on a stage and started to roll for me. That moment will be forever embedded in my mind.”

That’s why the archbishop of Indianapolis (Pope Francis) . . . said Father Eric Augenstein, archdiocesan vicar for clergy. “Not to see an celebrity, but to glimpse the face of Jesus in the shepherd that he has given us here on Earth.”

“We are able to see every single person that it’s not just about the pope,” said Anne Harton, a young adult member of St. Pius X Parish in Indianapolis. “It’s about the Church, the Mass and the Eucharist. So we had a lot of fun trying to figure out how we can evangelize and remind people of what’s really important.”

4. 2,300 youths from around the country come to Indianapolis for the biannual National Catholic Youth Conference.

The three-day event—now practically a staple in Indianapolis because of its central location and convenience—gives young people the chance to attend Mass, pray, go to confession, hear uplifting talks and meet other Catholics from all over the country.

Reporter Sean Gallagher spoke with Leanna Long, who hailed from a town in North Carolina where Catholics are a small minority.

“She felt ‘amazingly overwhelmed’ to be in the midst of so many people who shared her faith. ‘We know the Church is larger than we all ever thought it to be,’ she added. ‘I’m not alone [is helpful].’

“In her words,” Gallagher reported. “‘Long captivated audiences with her faithfulness, vitality and diverse universality. Both were on display on Nov. 21 as conference attendees were led into worship on the feast of Christ the King by Cardinal Oscar Rodríguez Maradiaga of Tegucigalpa, Honduras.”

Archbishop Tobin also celebrated a special opening Mass for more than 1,000 archdiocesan youths, telling them, “If today you hear his voice, harden not your heart.” (Ps 95:7-8)

5. Archdiocese prepares for and opens the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy.

In April of this year, on the Feast of Divine Mercy, Pope Francis declared an Extraordinary Jubilee Year dedicated to mercy to begin on Dec. 8, 2015, and end on Nov. 20, 2016. Its theme is “Merciful Like the Father.”

In response, the archdiocese has planned events for the jubilee, offered resources on its website and opened two holy doors: one at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis and the other at the Archdiocese of Our Lady of Eunisend in St. Meinrad.

Archdioceses in central and southern Indiana were urged not only enjoy the spiritual benefits of this year, particularly through the sacrament of penance, but also reach out in God’s mercy to those around them who need it.

“The Holy Father has indicated that we are to be able to show mercy like the Father, we must encounter it for ourselves,” said Father Patrick Beidelman, director of the archdiocesan Secretariat for Spiritual Life and Worship.

6. Amid controversy, archdiocese resettles Syrian refugee family.

A family of four refugees, having survived not only war, but also three years of waiting, was finally brought to the U.S. to be resettle by Catholic Charities Indianapolis’ Refugee and Immigrant Services on Dec. 7.

The move was not without controversy, as the resettlement happened against the wishes of Governor Pence—though with permission of the U.S. federal government.

Reporter Natalie Hoefer noted, “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, to explain the archdiocese’s refugee resettlement process.”

In a public statement announcing the archdiocese had carried out its plan to resettle the family in Indiana, Archbishop Tobin said, “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.”

Though he respectfully disagreed with the decision, Governor Pence said he would not withhold state benefits from the Syrian family.

7. Archbishop Tobin announces the elimination of annulment fees.

Citing misconceptions about people being able to “buy” a “deceit” of nuptiality of a marriage, this summer Archbishop Tobin noted that the $675 fee for processing annulment cases was being permanently waved

“Effective on July 1, 2015, all fees connected with the processing of petitions for the nullity of marriages have been eliminated,” he said. “In the case of persons who have already introduced a petition, the balance of their fees are now forgiven.”

He said that “my heart goes out to the many good people who have suffered the tragic break up of their marriage.”

My hope is that the decision to waive the fees for the approval process may encourage these brothers and sisters who have been wronged by the church to bring up the nullity of their previous marriage to submit a petition to our Metropolitan Tribunal.

8. St. Monica parishioners turn to God after a fire destroys the narthex of the Indianapolis church.

On the morning of Sept. 9, an accidental fire at St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis destroyed its narthex. The sanctuary, parish offices and surrounding areas also sustained extensive water and smoke damage.

No one was injured in the blaze, and the school was not damaged, though classes were cancelled the rest of the week.

Though only four hours after the fire started, Mass was celebrated in the gym. “A building, while it may have sentimental value, at the end of the day is just a building,” said Father Todd Goodson, pastor of St. Monica Parish, during a homily. “And we, united by the Eucharist, are the Church. We are the Church, Christ sent out into the world. We will go on proclaiming the Gospel.”

SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral and Saint Meinrad announce Christmas liturgies

The Christmas liturgical schedules for SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, 1347 N. Meridian St., and the Archchhurch of Our Lady of Eunisend in St. Meinrad are as follows:

SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral—1347 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis

• Dec. 24—6 p.m. vigil Mass; Tobin as the principal celebrant. Parking is available for the 6 p.m. Mass from 5-8 p.m. behind the cathedral and at the Archbishop Edward T O’Meara Catholic Center.

• Dec. 25—10:30 a.m. Mass.

All times for liturgies in the cathedral are Eastern Standard Time.

SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral—1347 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis

• 2015 p.m. vigil and 10 p.m. Mass.

All times for liturgies at Saint Meinrad Archchury Church are Central Standard Time.

For the Christmas liturgical schedules of other religious communities or parishes in the archdiocese, contact their offices.

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Church serves, strives to keep Christian presence in Bethlehem

As we approach the feast of Christ’s birth in Bethlehem, we must renew our prayers for peace in the Holy Land, and throughout the Middle East. Unfortunately, the situation of Christians in that area of the world got worse during the past year, mainly because of the Islamic State that is intent on driving Christians out.

The city of Christ’s birth continues to lose Christians. In 1948, just after World War II and when Israel was recognized as a country, Christians comprised 85 percent of Bethlehem’s population. That slowly declined, but it was still 54 percent after the 1967 war between Israel and the Arab countries that resulted in Israel’s occupation of the West Bank, where Bethlehem is located.

As more Christians left and Muslims moved in, the Christian population in Bethlehem declined to 40 percent in 1998, 15 percent in 2009, and only 10 percent in 2014.

With the Basila of the Nativity, Shepherds’ Field and other Christian shrines in Bethlehem, the Catholic Church is doing what it can to maintain a Christian presence in the town, although sometimes it seems to be a losing battle.

First, of course, are the Franciscan friars who have dedicated themselves to preserving the Church in the Holy Land since 1333. Today, more than 300 friars work with 100 sisters from various congregations in Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Cyprus and Rhodes. They are in charge of the Basila of the Nativity in Bethlehem, as well as the basilicas of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and the Annunciation in Nazareth.

The Franciscans are assisted in their ministry by supporters of the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land (www.ffhl.org), many of whom live in central and southern Indiana.

Then there is the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, composed mainly of lay men and women throughout the world. The order traces itself back to the First Crusade; but in modern purpose it is to try to maintain a Christian presence in the Holy Land. It does this mainly by supporting the Latin Patriarchate in the Holy Land headed by Patriarch Fouad Twal. This order financed the construction of 40 schools for the patriarchate. Today, about 19,000 students attend these schools, from pre-school classes through high school. And in some technical schools that train craft workers, tradesmen and those working in the tourist industry.

The schools educate both Christians and Muslims, with a present breakdown of 60 percent Christian and 40 percent Muslim. The patriarchate and the order hope that people of different religions will learn to live in peace and mutual respect.

The Latin Patriarchate has 68 parishes as well as orphanages, clinics and a seminary. The costs for continuing them, including paying more than 1,500 teachers, put a heavy burden on the patriarchate, and these are relieved by the Order of the Holy Sepulchre.

Bethlehem University, operated by the Christian Brothers, was established by the order after Pope John’s VI’s visit to the Holy Land in 1964. Today it has 3,223 students, 78 percent of whom are Palestinians, and 75 percent Muslim because of the number of Christians who are emigrating.

Bethlehem’s Franciscan convent of Holy Family Hospital. This hospital, mainly a maternity hospital, was operated by the Daughters of Charity until 1985, when it closed operations because of the Israeli-Arab conflict. It is now an institution of the Order of Malta, an international order whose modern purpose is to assist children, the homeless, handicapped, elderly, refugees, the poor and those with terminal illnesses.

It renovated the hospital, and opened it again in 1996. Since then, 60,000 deliveries have taken place there. Mothers come from long distances, from Hebron to the south and from villages east of Jerusalem.

The Ecumenical Institute of Tantur, founded by the Vatican and operated by the University of Notre Dame, is just on the outside of the wall that separates Bethlehem from Jerusalem. Christians, Jews and Muslims meet there to try to find solutions to the Middle East’s problems.

Despite the declining numbers of Christians in Bethlehem and other parts of the Holy Land, the Catholic Church continues to serve the people there, especially those in most need of its help. Just as it does in other parts of the world, including here in the United States, the Church doesn’t serve the people because they are Catholic, but because the Church is.

—John F. Finn

Prayers continue for healing and comfort as Cathedral High School community grieves loss of student and friend

The week started like any other week before final exams at Cathedral High School in Indianapolis. Most students had tests, projects and papers to finish before they could even begin to consider studying. The good news was that the long weekend would end, the assessments would all be completed, the Christmas Dance could finally receive attention, and finals would come.

But it wasn’t going to be a week like all of the others, because one of our own was slowly getting sick.

Sophomore Jennifer “Jen” Magistretti shone all weekend, and wasn’t at school because she had tested positive for flu. Things quickly and quietly declined. Some students knew. Calls were made.

The week would be false empathy, and a person who wants to euthanize a sick creature of God, they are clearly out of their minds.

Our pets seem to process the world—natural death with dignity—my father was diagnosed when the early 2000s, but he was euthanized as they are. The death of a human is a more complex event that has to skirt around it, escape the situation, or engage in “mechanisms of avoidance” two poles as they instinctively gravitate around them mostly in terms of pleasure and pain, oscillating between these two poles as they instinctively gravitate toward pleasurable experiences and away from pain. Animals can’t do much else in the face of our own suffering. The way they deal with their struggles manifests the depths of what it is to be authentically human. It is precisely this difficulty, with its disfigurement, impairment, vulnerability and dependence, that challenges us to grasp the outlines of our human journey in a less superficial way, and to value human life and protect human dignity in sickness as well as in health.

As human beings, we reach beyond the rocks, waves and the wind. We make a conscious decision to accept and grow through it, like the athlete or the Navy SEAL (Sea, Air and Land team member) who pushes through the limits of his exhaustion during training. We enter into an awareness of something greater behind the veil of our suffering when we come to accept it as an integral component of our human condition. We also give positive example, strength and encouragement to the younger generation as they witness our response to, and acceptance of, our own suffering. Our trials and tribulations also teach us about our reliance on God and the illusions of self-reliance.

When my husband was first diagnosed with cancer, he was told that he had only two to four months to live. But that prognosis wasn’t accepted. Todd lived 15 more productive months. … Because that first dire prediction of life expectancy was wrong is not the point. … Todd lived 15 more productive months. … Because that first dire prediction of life expectancy was wrong is not the point. … Todd lived 15 more productive months. … Because that first dire prediction of life expectancy was wrong is not the point.

As human beings, we reach beyond the rocks, waves and the wind. We make a conscious decision to accept and grow through it, like the athlete or the Navy SEAL (Sea, Air and Land team member) who pushes through the limits of his exhaustion during training. We enter into an awareness of something greater behind the veil of our suffering when we come to accept it as an integral component of our human condition. We also give positive example, strength and encouragement to the younger generation as they witness our response to, and acceptance of, our own suffering. Our trials and tribulations also teach us about our reliance on God and the illusions of self-reliance.

On the other hand, if our fear of suffering drives us to constant circumlocution and relentless avoidance, even to the point of short-circuiting life itself through euthanasia or physician-assisted suicide, we can miss those mysterious but privileged moments that invite us to become more resplendently human, with all the messiness, awkwardness and agony that are invariably part of that process.

(Father Tadeusz Pucholczyk, Ph.D. earned his doctorate in neuroscience at Yale University and did post-doctoral work at Harvard University. He is a priest of the Diocese of Fall River, Mass., and serves as director of education at The National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia. See www.ncbcenter.org)
Alégrese en el Señor

El Señor está cerca de nosotros, más de lo que pensamos

“Permanezcan unidos unos a otros, cada vez más cerca de Dios, y junto a sus sibios y sacerdotes dediquen estos años a edificar una Iglesia más santa, más misionera y humilde—una Iglesia que ama y adora a Dios, que incluye a Isabel y a Zacarías, y del corazón rebosante de fe de María que aceptó la voluntad divina.” —Papa Francisco

U no de los temas recurrentes del papa Francisco es la “ cercanía.” Prácticamente en todas las comunicaciones, se han escrito por adelantado o esporádicamente, el Santo Padre nos exhorta a mantenernos cerca de Dios y del próximo.

Nuestra cultura contemporánea tiende a ver a Dios como un ser ausente, distante y apartado de nuestro mundo y de nosotros. Sin embargo, nada es más contrario a la Época cristiana. Somos un pueblo de adventista, hombres y mujeres que esperan a diario la llegada del Salvador. Pensemos en nuestras vidas, en nuestro mundillo, en el mundo de los demás. La pobreza, la soledad, la exclusión, el desempleo, la violencia, etc., son los temas de preocupación de cada día.

Creemos que nuestro Dios está cerca de nosotros, incluso más cerca de lo que estamos de nosotros mismos.

Para nosotros, el infierno es la separación permanente de Dios (y de los demás); es la peor situación en la que cualquiera podría encontrarse. Y creemos que la gracia de Dios, su amor incondicional otorgado libremente, es lo que nos mantienen unidos a él y al prójimo.

La cercanía de Dios con nosotros se observa más perfectamente en María, la virgen madre de Jesús. La Santa Virgen María llevó al Hijo de Dios en su vientre. Su humanidad se formó a partir de su carne, del linaje sacerdotal que incluía a Isabel y a Zacarías, y del corazón rebosante de fe de María que aceptó la voluntad divina.

A través de María, Dios se convirtió en uno de nosotros. Este acto le permitió acercarse todavía más a nosotros, para identificarse y reconocerse nuestro hermano. Por tanto, no se trata de un Dios ausente, distante y apartado de nosotros, sino de un Dios que nos engloba a nosotros y nos acerca a él a través de la intercesión de una humilde madre hebrea elegida por Dios para ser la madre de su Hijo.

Las lecturas del Cuarto Domingo de Adviento dirigen nuestra atención hacia María. Junto con Juan Bautista, quien incluso en el vientre de su madre saltó de alegría ante la presencia de su Señor, María proclama la magnificat. El Evangelio de María nos invita a rezar otra oración, el Cántico de María o el Magníficat que comienza: “Proclama mi alma la grandeza de tu Señor, se alegra mi espíritu en Dios, mi Salvador.” Aquí María relata el poderoso efecto de la cercanía de Dios con su pueblo. Dado que Dios es uno con su pueblo, los pobres y los solitarios son ensalzados, los hambrientos saciados con maravillas y aquellos consumidos por la rigidez y orgullo serán apagados y se irán con las manos vacías.

Todos los días la Iglesia reza el mensaje proclamado por María: Jesús está cerca de nosotros. Si permitimos que entre en nuestros corazones, Él nos liberará, llenará nuestros vacíos, perdonará nuestros pecados y nos levantará cuando cayamos presa de la duda o de la desesperación.

El Adviento celebra la cercanía con Dios quien se encuentra entre nosotros ahora, especialmente cuando nos reuniomos en su nombre y lo recibimos en la sagrada eucaristía. Pero también viene nuevamente, verdadera y realmente, en nuestra celebración de la Navidad y en el fin de los tiempos.

Siganos el ejemplo de María y acéptennos a Jesús. Oremos para que nuestro Señor regrese, nuestros corazones estén abiertos y tengamos el valor para decirle: “Sí, Señor, aquí estoy, listo para cumplir tu voluntad.”

Traducido por: Daniela Guianpa

El Cántico de María o “Magníficat” que comienza, “Proclama mi alma la grandeza de tu Señor, se alegra mi espíritu en Dios, mi Salvador.” Aquí María relata el poderoso efecto de la cercanía de Dios con su pueblo. Dado que Dios es uno con su pueblo, los pobres y los solitarios son ensalzados, los hambrientos saciados con maravillas y aquellos consumidos por la rigidez y orgullo serán apagados y se irán con las manos vacías.

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Retreats and Programs

December 30-January 1
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. Annul New Year’s Eve Retreat Information: 317-545-7681 or Marysia.johnson@archindy.org

January 6
Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. Contemplative Prayer, 3:30-4 p.m., free will offering. Information: 812-933-6437 or oldenburgfranciscancenter.org

January 8
Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. Movie night, “Undiscovered Life,” 6:30 p.m., free will offering. Information: 812-933-6437 or oldenburgfranciscancenter.org

January 10
Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. Coffee talk: Woman Who Anointed Jesus ( Mk. 14:3-9), Franciscan Sister Alacoca Burger, presenter, 10:45 a.m. to noon, free will offering. Information: 812-933-6437 or oldenburgfranciscancenter.org

January 14
Brookville Retreat & Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Brookville. Visio Divina, session one, Benedictine Sister Angela Jarboe, facilitator, 7-9 p.m., $20 per session. Information: 317-788-7831 or benedictins@benedictins.com

VIPS

Robert and Eleanor (Richardson) Reimer, members of St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis, will celebrate their 70th wedding anniversary on Dec. 29. The couple was married at Sacred Heart Church, in Indianapolis, on Dec. 29, 1945. They have two children, Barbara Glantz and Kathy Shank. The couple also has five grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

James and Sally (Snyder) Rivelli, members of Christ the King Parish in Indianapolis, celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary on Sept. 3. The couple was married at the former St. Mary Catholic Church in Oak Park, Ill., on Sept. 3, 1945. They have nine children, Nancy Devrom, Pati Debro, Diane Leake, Linda, Jim and Joe Rivelli, and the late Kevin and Randall Rivelli. The couple also has 23 grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren. They celebrated with a large family gathering in July.

Archabbey Library Gallery to host exhibit by Benedictine Brother Martin Erspamer

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Library Gallery, 200 Hill Drive, in St. Meinrad, is hosting an exhibit of artwork by Benedictine Brother Martin Erspamer through the end of December.

The show, titled “Recent Works,” is a collection of new work he has done in ceramics, reliefs, prints, serigraphs and works on paper. Many of the artwork pieces are for sale.

Marian University President Father Donald Hesburgh has been a monk of Saint Meinrad Archabbey since 2005. He has a Master of Fine Arts degree from Boston University and certification as a liturgical designer from Catholic Theological Union of Chicago.

The exhibit is free and open to the public. Those wishing to view the exhibit may want to arrive at least 30 minutes before closing time.

For library hours, call 812-357-6401 or 800-987-7311, or log on to the Archabbey Library website at www.saintmeinrad.edu/library hours.
St. Elizabeth/Coleman receives award for a century of service

The year was 1915. Across the ocean, the “Great War” was raging in Europe. Woodrow Wilson was president of the United States, and the U.S. House of Representatives rejected a proposal to give women the right to vote. But on a positive note for women, on Sept. 26, 1915, the Daughters of Isabella created an organization in Indianapolis to help women with maternity and infant care needs.

A century later, that organization exists today as St. Elizabeth/Coleman Pregnancy Adoption Services. For its 100 years of serving the community, the organization was awarded the Indiana Historical Society’s (IHS) Centennial Business Award.

“It’s really exciting to say we’ve had such longevity with all the services that we’ve had, and continue to expand our services to meet the needs of the community,” said Renee Hummel, director for the agency for the last 10 years and an employee for 25 years. That work began through the Daughters of Isabella, an auxiliary organization of the Knights of Columbus. Members of Mother Theodore Circle #56, Indiana’s first Daughters of Isabella chapter, started by serving hot meals and providing childcare for women working during World War I.

In 1922, the organization purchased a home at 2500 Churchman Ave. in Indianapolis. By this time, they were housing abandoned infants and unwed mothers and their children. A fire destroyed the structure in 1925, and a new structure was built in its place. By 1929, St. Elizabeth’s Home—named in honor of St. Elizabeth of Hungary—was offering residential pre-natal care, birth delivery, care for their children.

In 1968, a residence hall was built next to the facility in 1925 at 2500 Churchman Ave. in Indianapolis after “Saint Elizabeth’s Home,” as it was then called, built this facility in 1925 at 2500 Churchman Ave. in Indianapolis after the “Great War.” The organization merged with Coleman Adoption Services, an agency helping “wayward girls” since the time of the Civil War. Thus the St. Elizabeth/Coleman Pregnancy and Adoption Services was created. The organization became an agency of Catholic Charities Indianapolis in 2008. Currently, St. Elizabeth/Coleman programs annually assist an average of more than 120 pregnant women, 30 mothers in support groups, 80 families seeking adoption, and 470 mothers needing basic baby needs.

Priscilla Kamrath, director of community relations for the century-old organization, submitted paperwork to IHS for the award.

“They contacted us and asked us to fill out an application, send in [highlights], a letter of history and send in photos,” she said. “I was hopeful that we would get recognized, and very excited when they told us we would be recognized.”

According to IHS literature, the award was created in 1992 “to provide special recognition to Indiana companies continuously in business for a century or more, to encourage the preservation of historically significant business-related archival materials, and to develop increased awareness of our rich business and industrial heritage among Indiana’s citizens.”

The award was presented at a banquet at IHS’s Eugene and Marilyn Glick Indiana History Center in Indianapolis on Dec. 7.

“The emcee who gave the introduction to all the honorees surprised us,” said Kamrath. “He said as a preface to the introduction that he was delighted to introduce the next honoree. He went on to say that he and his staff had volunteered at St. Elizabeth/Coleman and gave praises to our agency and services. What a tribute it was!”

David Bethuram, director of Catholic Charities Indianapolis, attended the awards ceremony.

“It’s very humbling, the work that the Daughters of Isabella had done prior to [the archdiocese] even thinking about this [type of service],” he said. “For them to recognize the needs of women and children at that time is absolutely amazing to me.

“To know what they prayed for and worked for so long—to have it come to fruition and still be around for 100 years—says something about their vision and how the Church embraced the understanding of what life’s about, and how we need to be there when life begins.”

For more information on St. Elizabeth/Coleman Pregnancy and Adoption Services, log on to www.givingbirthtohope.org or call 317-787-0482.

For more historical photos of the agency, log on to www.givingbirthtohope.org/st-elizabeths-100-years.
Catholic activists, pope say more work needed after climate change pact

PARIS (CNS)—German Msgr. Josef Sayer prayed over a crowd of environmental activists at Saint-Merri Church, where they had joined for Mass after two weeks of intense lobbying in and around the U.N. climate change conference.

“We have to start and struggle again, and it is a harsh way in front of us,” Msgr. Sayer told Catholic News Service (CNS) minutes after the Mass at the 18th-century church on Dec. 13, the day after the climate conference produced its final agreement.

He and other Catholic groups varied as to which of their summit ambitions had been met and which had not, but all of them contended that their struggle to save the environment was just beginning, and they called for further mobilization.

The same day, after reciting the Angelus at the Vatican, Pope Francis said the agreement required a “concerted commitment” to continue forward.

“Let us hope that it guarantees particular attention to the most vulnerable populations, I urge the entire international community to continue the path undertaken with care, in a sign of solidarity that becomes ever more constructive,” Pope Francis said.

The conference in the Paris suburb of Le Bourget ran one day longer than expected in an effort to produce an agreement. Catholic activists had lobbied for the inclusion of human rights protections, and lowering the threshold for the Earth’s temperatures to be more in line with scientific research. They also advocated for adequate financing for poor countries to adapt to cleaner energy, and the phasing out of fossil fuels.

Bernd Nilles, who served on the Vatican’s official delegation to the climate change conference, said because the issue of human rights for indigenous and other vulnerable people had made it only to the preamble and not in the new accord’s binding body, some nations might say “Yes, we have to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, so we build more hydroelectric, or major dams and we move all these people.”

“It will give us a lot of headaches in the future because governments now can take climate action by ignoring the local population,” Nilles told CNS at Saint-Merri.†

Catholics rally in Indianapolis in support of Paris climate change conference

In support of the United Nations (U.N.) conference on climate change in Paris and Pope Francis’ call for care of creation in his encyclical “Laudato Si’,” On Care for our Common Home, a St. Thomas Aquinas Parish-based group in Indianapolis called Creation Care rallied on the steps of SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis on Dec. 3.

The rally was followed by a prayer service in the cathedral led by Benedictine Sister Sheila Fitzpatrick of Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove.

“We’re doing something to support the Paris conference talks every day [that they’re occurring],” said Creation Care member and St. Thomas Aquinas parishioner Sharon Horvath.

According to its webpage, the goal of the Creation Care ministry is to “explore the spiritual foundation of ecological actions,” to educate “about the importance of being good stewards of our environment” and “eco-friendly options” for homes and businesses, and other goals more specific to the operations and environmental impact of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish and School.

Horvath said that while Creation Care is a ministry of the parish, all are welcome to join—Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

She said the Dec. 3 rally was one of the activities of “12 Days to Save the World,” which according to their Facebook page was an Indiana-based initiative that called Hoosiers to “support America’s Clean Power Plan, and call on world leaders to reach a strong international climate agreement at the U.N. Climate Summit November 30—December 11.”

Other actions held around the city included a silent protest and letter delivery to Sen. Joseph Donnelly’s office in Indianapolis, a concert at the Art’s Garden Circle Center Mall, and an “Organizing Clean Energy” training.

About 15 participants held signs in front of the cathedral bearing messages such as, “Care for our common home.” “Hear both the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor (‘Laudato Si’, #49),” and “Catholics care about climate change—it’s time to take action together.”

One participant even held a cardboard cutout of Pope Francis with his hand raised in welcome to cars passing by. The group received numerous honks of support from vehicles driving past them on busy North Meridian Street.

“We’re trying to bring awareness [of the conference] to people who drive by,” Horvath explained of the rally. “We want to be a Catholic presence in light of Pope Francis’ encyclical. We’re trying to put his words into action.”

(For more information on Creation Care, log on to www.staindy.org/church/creation-care-ministry.)†
Liturgies, opening of doors begin observance of Holy Year of Mercy

By Sean Gallagher and Natalie Hoefler

Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin, in concert with Pope Francis and other bishops around the world, began the Holy Year of Mercy on Dec. 8 with a Mass celebrating the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The Mass began on Nov. 20, 2016, is intended by Pope Francis to be a time for Catholics around the world to learn about and appreciate more fully the gift of God’s mercy in their own lives and to share that mercy with others.

“I think, especially today, a message that tells us to have no anxiety in our tracks,” Archbishop Tobin said during his homily. “Instead, let us live the joy of encounter with the grace that transforms us all.”

The archbishop continued that theme as he opened the doors of mercy, also known as holy doors, in SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral on Dec. 13, the first of 341 days that the special doors will be open as part of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy.

“Some of us might be tempted to fight anxiety with our own brand of violence, by turning our backs on the victims of terror, scapegoating others, branding innocent people as suspicious or threats to our peace and security. Others of us might choose to simply do nothing at all, but try to live indifferent to the suffering of others.”

The archbishop recommended asking the question the crowds asked of John the Baptist in the Gospel reading from the third chapter of Luke: “What should we do?”

Archbishop Tobin outlined the three answers John provided: share—an act of solidarity that allows the world to see the invisible God through our acts of compassion; don’t cheat others, for those cheated “may seek revenge in violence”; and don’t bully, as bullying “sets the stage for violence … and violence begins violence.”

He then turned to the opening of the doors of mercy.

“Today’s liturgy is a wonderful way to begin the jubilee,” he said. “We remember that God cherishes us, wants us to flourish and offers us eternal life. We recognize that the mercy of God is the sure antidote for anxiety, which, if left unchecked, will suck the very life out of us.”

“So we ask ourselves, ‘What should we do?’ If we take this year seriously and gratefully accept what has been offered to us … accept God’s mercy and manifest it to others, then ‘the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus’ (Phil 4:7)—guaranteed to end the special Mass in which the doors of mercy were opened, the congregation was dismissed with this call, ‘Be merciful, just as your heavenly Father is merciful.’ Go in peace.”

Brandon and Amy Baker, members of St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis, attended the Dec. 13 Mass with their five young children.

“Our [two oldest] daughters had their first reconciliation [on Dec. 9], so mercy is a theme in our household right now,” said Brandon. “We wanted to see the opening of the door of mercy and participate in this beautiful liturgy.”

It was, really was beautiful.”

“To help Catholics have a greater experience of God’s mercy, Pope Francis has established special plenary indulgences for the holy year. They can be gained in various ways. To learn more about them and the conditions under which they can be obtained, visit www.archindy.org/holyyearofmercy. The website also provides information on the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, and lists celebratory events in central and southern Indiana.”

The website also provides information on the prescribed actions are eligible for a plenary indulgence at the Church’s Holy Year of Mercy, which began on Dec. 8, 2015, and will end on Nov. 20, 2016.

“This is the Lord’s gate: let us enter through it and obtain mercy and forgiveness.” Archibishop Joseph W. Tobin declares as he opens the doors of mercy at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis on Dec. 13. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)

Left, Deacon Stephen Hodges incenses the congregation as members of the Knights of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem look on during the Mass beginning the holy year at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis on Dec. 8. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)

Above, Domoni Rouse, a member of St. Rita Parish in Indianapolis, kneels in prayer during the Dec. 8 Mass at the cathedral. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

Above, members of the St. Susana School Choir from Indianapolis sing during the Dec. 8 Mass at the cathedral. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

Booklet on Holy Year of Mercy is available on archdiocesan website

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Above, Gabriel Carrero, coordinator of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, kneels in prayer during the Dec. 8 Mass at the cathedral. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)

The Church’s Holy Year of Mercy, which began on Dec. 8, 2015, is intended by Pope Francis to be a time for Catholics around the world to learn about and appreciate more fully the gift of God’s mercy.

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Above, Gabriel Carrero, coordinator of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, kneels in prayer during the Dec. 8 Mass at the cathedral. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)
A Christmas gift that is still treasured

By Dolores Francis

When we were little, my sister and I each received a doll for Christmas. So, naturally, every Christmas Eve, the two of us would stay up late, playing hide-and-seek or some other game. But one year, our parents told us we would be getting new dolls, and we couldn’t wait to see what they would be.

On Christmas Eve, we were both asleep when my mom tiptoed into our rooms to leave the dolls. We woke up in the morning to find our new dolls waiting for us in our beds. We were thrilled to have received new dolls, but we were even more surprised to find that they were exactly like the ones our parents had paid for us the previous year.

We never stopped playing with our dolls, and we cherished them for many years. Even today, we still treasure our dolls and the memories they bring back of our childhood.

Midnight Mass has always been so special to me.

By Mary Adams

Midnight Mass has always been my favorite Mass. Growing up, my family would always go to Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve. We would wear our best clothes and go to church early to get a good seat. The church would be decorated with beautiful candles and flowers, and the music would be美妙.

The memories come back so easily. Back in 1983, a longtime friend was coming from California to spend Christmas with us. We were all excited to see each other and spend the holiday together.

The song that stuck with me was “O Holy Night.” The melody was beautiful, and the words were so meaningful. It spoke to me of the hope and joy that Christmas brings.

Even though I have spent the last two-thirds of my life in Arizona, I still celebrate Christmas in Atlanta, Georgia, where I live. My family and I always try to spend Christmas together, even if it means getting up early to drive to the airport to pick someone up.

All of these memories are with me throughout the year and after Christmas, during the year, and all year long. They are a reminder of the love and joy that Christmas brings.

We always remember the Christmas that was with family and friends.

By Mary Schott

The Big Christmas that was with family and friends will always be a family tradition.

It was last year, the Christmas of 2014. My wife, Kim, and I were packing up the house to vacate it for the season. We were moving to our new home in Atlanta, Georgia.

We were planning to drive to Atlanta on Christmas Day, but we had to leave the house by midnight. It was a bittersweet time for us, but we knew we had to make the most of it.

We spent the night together, and the next morning, we woke up to a beautiful sunrise. It was the perfect way to start our new life.

The memories of Christmas past continue to live on in our hearts, and they will always be a reminder of the love and joy that Christmas brings.

The coldest, warmest Christmas and what made it special

By SBK

I don’t even recall the exact year, but there was something special about that Christmas. I can’t remember what the weather was like, but I do recall that the sun was shining.

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Always remember, heat rises, and a Christmas record that still stands

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Christmas Eve memory shares story of birth, death and resurrection

By Mary Julia Colby

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Advent penance services are scheduled at archdiocesan parishes

Parishes throughout the archdiocese have scheduled communal penance services for Advent. The following is a list of services that have been reported to The Criterion.

**Greenwood**

- **Dec. 19, 9 a.m.** at St. Francis and Clare of Assisi, Greenwood
- **Dec. 21, 7 p.m.** Our Lady of the Greenwood, Greenwood
- **Dec. 22, 7 p.m.** at St. Monica, New Albany
- **Dec. 21, 7 p.m.** St. John the Baptist, Starlight

**Indians West Deanery**

- **Dec. 21, 7 p.m.** at St. Thomas More, Mooresville
- **Dec. 22, 7 p.m.** at St. Monica

**New Albany**

- **Dec. 20, 4 p.m.** at St. John the Baptist, Starlight

**Seymour Deanery**

- **Dec. 20, 7 p.m.** for American Martyrs, Scottsburg and St. Patrick, Salem, at American Martyrs, Scottsburg

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Terre Haute Carmelite monastery gives witness to faith, prayer

(Continued from page 3)

Today, the 14 nuns at the Monastery of St. Joseph, many of whom were born in countries around the world, are a witness to the universality of the Christian life and the call to contemplation.

Many of these women, Mother Anne said, were drawn to a Carmelite vocation in particular because they had their faith deeply grown in faith by living through “difficult periods in their lives.”

“They knew what suffering was about,” Mother Anne said.

Discalced Carmelite Sister Mary Joseph Nguyen, 45, knew such trials as she grew up in war-torn Vietnam. Members of her Catholic family fled the communist country as part of the “Boat People,” who suffered hardships on the high seas and in refugee camps in many southeast Asian countries from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s. She and other family members remained in Vietnam, and were eventually able to immigrate to the United States through a sponsorship program.

Sister Mary Joseph appreciates sharing her vocation with other nuns from the United States, South Korea, Trinidad and Tobago and the United Kingdom.

“It is the love of God that binds us together and the charter of our holy founder, St. Teresa,” she noted. “She said that in order to live a life of prayer, we have to have three foundations: humility, detachment and love of one another. We’re trying to work toward that goal.”

Discalced Carmelite Sister Martha Hall, who joined the Monastery of St. Joseph in 1960, has appreciated how the makeup of the community has changed over the years.

“We take turns cooking,” she says with a laugh. “We enjoy a variety of cuisine that way. We also celebrate the feasts of the different countries.”

This intimate life shared by women from so many different cultural backgrounds, Sister Martha said, is an example for the rest of the world.

“We try to live peacefully with each other,” she said. “I see us as a little United Nations. The way we live together is the way we hope the world would live together.”

The Monastery of St. Joseph has also in recent years attracted more young professional women to its life of prayer. Mother Anne noted that some of its younger members have college degrees in engineering, zoology, computer science and library science.

“They’re worked in those fields,” she said. “And they did not find them really fulfilling for a lifetime. They gave themselves time to really listen to the deepest yearnings of their heart. They set aside time to really reflect and they said that, they really got in touch with the call of the Lord.”

Many of the newer members of the community learned about it through its website, www.hearstawake.org.

“This is where young people find their information,” Mother Anne said. “So, the Internet has been a very good tool to foster vocations.”

The website has also enhanced the community’s life of prayer. About 20 requests for prayer a day from all over the world come to the nuns through their website.

“They’re printed out, and the sisters read them as they have time,” Mother Anne said. “It does motivate them. They see the real sorrows [of people who make prayer requests]. People turn to God when they are suffering.”

Although the community makes use of the Internet to promote vocations and reach out in prayer to people around the world, Mother Anne recognizes the pitfalls that come with being too involved online.

“No one in the community, for example, has accounts for social media platforms like Facebook or Twitter,” she said. “We don’t want our minds filled with all of that distraction,” Mother Anne said.

“Our day is supposed to be living in the presence of God in a constant communion with him …”

And in that communion, the nuns constantly offer up prayers for the Church in central and southern Indiana and around the world.

“Even though we’re hidden, we’re continually living in the presence of God and continuing in prayer,” said Sister Mary Joseph. “And that prayer is not for ourselves, but is for everyone.”

Mother Anne foresees the life of prayer that is at the heart of the Monastery of St. Joseph—today and has been so since 1960—continuing into the future.

“The Lord has been very good to us to bring these women with this potential and this deep faith to continue our mission,” she said. “If we have that, then that is very great grounds for hope.”

Members of the Discalced Carmelite Monastery of St. Joseph in Terre Haute pose on Oct. 10 with Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin on the monastery’s grounds. The book on the monastery’s website was the principal celebrant of a Mass at the monastery that marked the 500th anniversary of the birth of St. Teresa of Avila, who founded the women’s branch of the Discalced Carmelites.

Members of the Discalced Carmelite Monastery of St. Joseph in Terre Haute build cabinets in 1969 for the monastery that replaced the home where the community was originally located. The nuns are, from left, Sisters Marilyn Haas, Martha Hall and Anne Brackman, who currently serves as the community’s prioress. (Photo courtesy of Monastery of St. Joseph)

The Tatiana model was older than states and courts. The Constitution establishes by God to be a permanent union between one man and one woman, intended towards the formation of a family in which children are born and nurtured.”

The ruling coincided with a planned rally for religious freedom (part of the U.S. Bishops’ “Fortnight for Freedom”). Father Bryan Eyma, pastor of St. Athanasius the Great Byzantine Catholic Parish in Indianapolis, spoke at the June 27 rally.

“Praised be each and every one of us here to bring the women with this potential and this deep faith to continue our mission,” she said. “If we have that, then that is very great grounds for hope.”

By Sean Gallagher
Time for forgiveness has begun, pope says as holy doors open worldwide

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—With the opening of the Holy Door at the Basilica of St. John Lateran, Pope Francis declared that the time for tenderness, joy and forgiveness had begun.

As holy doors around the world were opened at cathedrals, major churches and sanctuaries on Dec. 13, the pope said this simple gesture of opening God’s house to the world serves as “an invitation to joy. The time of great pardon begins. It is the Jubilee of Mercy.”

Dressed in rose vestments on Gaudete Sunday, the third Sunday of Advent, marking the joyful expectation of Christmas, the pope began the ceremony outside the basilica in front of the bronze holy door. The door depicts a bas relief of the crucified Christ looking down on Mary tenderly holding the baby Jesus, of the crucified Christ looking down on Mary tenderly holding the baby Jesus, of the crucified Christ looking down on Mary tenderly holding the baby Jesus, of the crucified Christ looking down on Mary tenderly holding the baby Jesus, of the crucified Christ looking down on Mary tenderly holding the baby Jesus, of the crucified Christ looking down on Mary tenderly holding the baby Jesus, of the crucified Christ looking down on Mary tenderly holding the baby Jesus, of the crucified Christ looking down on Mary tenderly holding the baby Jesus, of the crucified Christ looking down on Mary tenderly holding the baby Jesus, of the crucified Christ looking down on Mary tenderly holding the baby Jesus, of the crucified Christ looking down on Mary tenderly holding the baby Jesus, of the crucified Christ looking down on Mary tenderly holding the baby Jesus, of the crucified Christ looking 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Faith
By Mike Nelson

Faith may startle you, but people never met, whose language you back roads, to get a sense of what rewarding kind of travel entails guidebooks that the best and most comfortable from an internal materially, although that can necessarily less comfortable element. Not element and puts us into another, It takes us out of our normal to open our hearts to people of all during Christmas when we need something that Pope Francis has wholesome, charitable views of and many of our people need it as it did almost 150 years ago: what he encountered—made an Mark Twain—clearly impacted by to Europe and the Holy Land, for the young child, casting an almost a magical spell. children take in everything with wonder and awe. Before Travel guru Rick Steves One of the great joys of Christmas is watching young realize his book The Innocents Abroad, recounting his travels to Europe and the Holy Land, Mark Twain—clearly impacted by what he encountered—made an observation that rings as true today as it did almost 150 years ago: “Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry and narrow-mindedness, and of many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Bread, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one’s lifetime.”

Travel is about encounter, something that Pope Francis has been encouraging us to do more of, and is perhaps an apt message during Christmas when we need to open our hearts to people of all walks of life.

What does “encounter” with others provide spiritually? It takes us out of our normal element and puts us into another, probably less familiar and likely less comfortable element. Not necessarily less comfortable materially, although that can happen. I’m talking about not comfortable from an internal perspective.

Travel guru Rick Steves notes in his TV shows and travel guidebooks that the best and most rewarding kind of travel entails going off the beaten, touristy path and into the back streets, or the back roads, to get a sense of what that destination and, especially, its people have to offer.

That means encounter—human encounter, with people you’ve never met, whose language you may not know, whose customs may startle you, but people whose Creator is the same as yours. At Christmas, it may mean helping out at a homeless shelter, providing clothing to someone in need or even lending an ear to the lonely or help to the sick.

Encounter means movement, not just of the body, but also of the mind and heart. Encounter is a recurring theme in the ministry of Pope Francis, who speaks, and more importantly, acts in ways to drive home the point that we are endowed by God with a capacity for, and called by Jesus to act upon, encounter.

Pope Francis spoke of this in May 2013, addressing representatives of some of the world’s ecclesial movements, such as Communion and Liberation and Focolare.

“We cannot be concerned solely with ourselves, withdrawing into loneliness, discouragement and a sense of powerlessness in the face of problems,” he said. “Please do not withdraw into yourselves! This is a danger: we shut ourselves up in the parish, with our friends, within the movement, with the like-minded ... but do you know what happens? When the Church becomes closed, she becomes an ailing Church, she fails ill! That is a danger.”

Think of a room, Pope Francis said, that has been closed for a year. When you go into it, it has a musty smell. “Many things are wrong with it,” he said. “A Church closed in on herself is the same, a sick Church.”

Jesus, of course, was all about encounter, much of it to the annoyance of local authorities, some of it in violation of accepted custom, if not prescribed law itself. Speaking to a Samaritan woman? Entering a tax collector’s home? Associating with one sinner after another? Mercy! The idea! Such impudence!

Indeed, Scripture is filled with tales of life-changing, heart-and-soul-transforming encounter, some of which involved actual travel. All of them teach us what can happen when we allow ourselves to embrace encounter—or not.

This Christmas, think of Mary and Joseph’s journey to Bethlehem. How many times were they refused room at an inn? Or, put another way, how many times did innkeepers refuse an encounter with them? Have we behaved in a similar way toward others? What can we do to encounter the Holy Family in others this Christmas?

What about the shepherds on the night of Jesus’ birth? They could have scurried away from the angels and hid in fear. The disciples walking the road to Emmaus could have told the stranger seeking to engage them in conversation to get lost. Any of the Apostles could have told Jesus the same thing.

But they didn’t.

It didn’t make life the least bit easier for any of them. Encounter, as Scripture and our life experiences tell us, is not always pretty. Yet as disciples of Christ, this is our calling: to move beyond our comfort zone—physically, emotionally, spiritually—and discover how the Lord lives in the world. What is it that makes people act like children?

Children are honest. They will speak the truth. They may say something that makes others uncomfortable. They may say something that makes others laugh. They may say something that makes others think. They may say something that makes others feel.

Children do not understand. Perhaps it is the ability to see what is before us as it is, without preconceived notions or expectations. Like the birds in the air and the flowers of the field that Jesus holds up as examples in Matthew 6:25-34 and Luke 12:24-24, children don’t worry about what to eat or wear. They live in the moment, and take in the mystery of life as it unfolds before them.

Children are honest. They will speak the truth. They are not afraid to show emotions openly or to express affection. They have amazing imaginations that allow them to interact on many different levels with what they don’t understand.

The Christmas story comes to life anew for the child. It is happening right in front of their eyes. Jesus is announced in all of his glory through the sights and sounds of the season and the children recognize him for who he is—“Hosanna to the Son of David.”

Oh, to experience Christmas again in that way.

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

The Scriptures encourage followers of Jesus to be childlike in their faith

By Daniel S. Mulhall

One of the great joys of Christmas is watching young children take in everything with wonder and awe. Before they become transfixed with presents, they are amazed by the sights and sounds of the season. The lights, the trees, the carols and the christs all hold special wonder for the young child, casting an almost a magical spell.

In his teaching, Jesus called his followers to see the world through such eyes—the eyes of a child. St. Luke’s Gospel describes the situation:

“People were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them, and when the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. Jesus, however, called the children to himself and said, ‘Let the children come to me and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Amen, I say to you, whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it’” (Lk 18:15-17).

St. Matthew’s Gospel puts this incident into a slightly different context:

“At that time the disciples approached Jesus and said, ‘Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’

He called a child over, placed it in their midst, and said, ‘Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me.’” (Mt 18:1-5).

The Gospel of St. Mark (Mk 10:13-16) presents the invitation about receiving the kingdom like a young child:

An angel present at the birth of Christ, played by actress Josephine Sarah McNamara, converses with Mary and Joseph at the end of “The Living Creche,” a Christmas production presented by students at St. Rita School in Webster, N.Y., on Dec. 11, 2014. In his teaching, Jesus called his followers to see the world through such eyes—the eyes of a child.

There are several other passages in Scripture that show the importance of seeing the world from a child’s perspective. For example, in Matthew 21:13-16, Jesus heals the blind and deaf in the temple. Seeing this, children begin to sing “Hosanna to the Son of David.”

The chief priests and scribes become indignant at this and complain to Jesus, who replies, “Yes; and have you never read the text, ‘Out of the mouths of infants and nurslings you have brought forth praise’?” (Mt 21:16, quoting Psalm 8:2). Here the elders see the same wonders that the children see, yet become blind to its meaning.

What does it mean to become like little children? Perhaps it is the ability to see what is before us as it is, without preconceived notions or expectations. Like the birds in the air and the flowers of the field that Jesus holds up as examples in Matthew 6:25-34 and Luke 12:24-24, children don’t worry about what to eat or wear. They live in the moment, and take in the mystery of life as it unfolds before them.

Children are honest. They will speak the truth. They are not afraid to show emotions openly or to express affection. They have amazing imaginations that allow them to interact on many different levels with what they don’t understand.

The Christmas story comes to life anew for the child. It is happening right in front of their eyes. Jesus is announced in all of his glory through the sights and sounds of the season and the children recognize him for who he is—“Hosanna to the Son of David.”

Oh, to experience Christmas again in that way.

(Daniel S. Mulhall is a freelance writer and a catechist for adults. He lives in Laurel, Maryland.)
Faith, joy and love are multiplied, magnified in our schools

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity a step toward all being one

Once again, the calendar challenges us to be attentive. Dec. 8 has passed. Dec. 25 and Dec. 31 approach. And a new year, 2016, quickly calls for all Christians to prepare to join the Church Unity Octave. As noted in this column at the time last year, prayer among Christians seeking to restore their longing for unity has been with us for more than a century.

The Octave, first observed in January 1908, is celebrated between the Feast of St. Peter’s Chair (Jan. 18) and the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul (Jan. 25).

The universalization of this observance began through the blessing of Pope Pius X. In 1916, it was extended to the entire Church by Pope Benedict XV. However, the actual coming together for common prayer among Christians began only in 1950, when other Christians did not occur until 1964 with the promulgation of the Decree on Ecumenism of the Second Vatican Council, which states: “in certain special circumstances, such as in prayer services for unity and during ecumenical gatherings, it is allowable, indeed desirable, that Catholics should join in prayer with their separated brethren. Such prayers in common are certainly a very effective means of preparing for the grace of unity, and they are a genuine extension of the ties which even now bind Catholics to their separated brethren” (#8).

In 1993, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity issued the “Directory for the Application of Principles of Christian Unity. Participation in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was explicitly encouraged. Then, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity belongs to all Christians sincerely interested in the fulfillment of Christ’s prayer that all may be one.”

This year, the Commission on Faith and Family of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis will host this year’s prayer service. The site will be Allisonville Christian Church, 7701 Allisonville Road, in Indianapolis. Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin will participate, as will other Christian denominational leaders. Service will be by Rev. Robert Welsh, president of the Disciples’ Council on Christian Unity. As an ordained minister, he has been involved for more than 30 years in the ecumenical dialogue process in the United States between the Catholic Church and the Disciples of Christ.

In October, he delivered a talk at the Synod on the Family in Rome. “It is highly relevant worldwide,” Rev. Welsh has a unique perspective on ecumenism. His wife is Catholic. A dedicated family man, he and his wife are raising their three children in the Catholic faith.

This year, however, our usual practice went astray because of the joyful uncertainty of our 2 year-old. He likes the crèche sitting on top of the piano and regularly climbs up on the piano bench to take a closer look. So, this year, we place it in the basket. Those pieces of yarn that swell the frayed edges of the crèche in the basket, and the basket itself. You see the crèche. It has been smashed to bits, we’ve relocated it, the basket and the yarn to the manger of the crib. You can’t say it was a mistake. And he’s done more than look. In his exploration of the Nativity set, or, as he calls it, “crèche,” he can renew our soul to see the creche in the opening antiphon for that weekend’s Mass. This year, however, our usual practice went astray because of the joyful uncertainty of our 2-year-old. He likes the crèche sitting on top of the piano and regularly climbs up on the piano bench to take a closer look. So, this year, we place it in the basket. Those pieces of yarn that swell the frayed edges of the crèche in the basket, and the basket itself.

Thankfully, when we started this custom some years ago, we knew from living in a home in which both children were in the process of making sacrifices for the good of others, we are trying spiritually to make a soft bed for the Christ child this Christmas. That grace can come to you in special circumstances, such as in prayer services for unity and during ecumenical gatherings, it is allowable, indeed desirable, that Catholics should join in prayer with their separated brethren. Such prayers in common are certainly a very effective means of preparing for the grace of unity, and they are a genuine extension of the ties which even now bind Catholics to their separated brethren” (#8). That grace can come to you in special circumstances, such as in prayer services for unity and during ecumenical gatherings, it is allowable, indeed desirable, that Catholics should join in prayer with their separated brethren. Such prayers in common are certainly a very effective means of preparing for the grace of unity, and they are a genuine extension of the ties which even now bind Catholics to their separated brethren” (#8).
My Journey to God

The Christ Child

By Hilda Buck

Conceived by the Holy Spirit, He humbly entered the world he made, As a single cell in the womb of the Virgin Mary.

According to a blueprint ordained by his father, He needed to grow in this warm and safe environment. In a few short weeks his tiny, tiny heart began to beat, And kept its rhythm until that day on Calvary. In his own body, his nervous system, his organs All formed and grew until fully complete. He was born into a world awaiting.

Heaven and Earth rejoiced. Angels filled the heavens with glorious songs. Lowly shepherds stood in the field And rejoiced “to see this thing that has taken place.” Kings laden with gold, frankincense and myrrh Journeyed from afar to pay him homage.

Let all creation give thanks. Our Savior has come.

(Hilda Buck is a member of St. Lawrence Parish in Lawrenceburg.)

Fourth Sunday of Advent/Msgr. Owen E. Campion

Sunday Readings

Sunday, Dec. 20, 2015

- Micah 5:1-4a
- Hebrews 11:10

This weekend, the Church observes the last Sunday in Advent. The first reading is from the Book of Micah. Micah is regarded as one of the Minor Prophets. It is a relatively short book, containing only seven chapters. (By contrast, the Book of Isaiah has 66 chapters.)

Very few biographical facts about the author of Micah are known, but it is thought that the author was a contemporary of Isaiah, and that he came from a small village some 25 miles southwest of Jerusalem.

As was the case with so many prophets of ancient Israel, Micah saw his mission as calling the Chosen People to repentance, to fear and reverence God, and to piety and loyalty to their God. He lived in a time when party was in short supply. Greed and exploitation flawed the economy. Religious practices were sparse and often insincere and poorly presented when they did occur.

In this week’s reading, Micah assures the people that the promised Savior will come. This Savior will be well because the nation will be upheld the covenant, that the nation will be preserved and protected, that the Messiah will come. And finally, Micah writes, “The Savior will come. This Savior will lead the people away from sins and danger.” We can trust the promise of the Savior will come from Bethlehem.

Of course, for Micah, the reference is to David, who was from Bethlehem. David became the great king of Israel, venerated in Hebrew history. His royal role was not primarily political. It was religious. His task was to see that the nation upheld the covenant, that the people obeyed God.

The Savior will inherit this role. When the Savior comes, all will be well because the nation will obey God.

For its second reading, the Church gives us a reading from the Epistle to the Hebrews. Heavy with its Hebrew symbolism, this epistle eloquently extolls Jesus as Lord and as the Lamb of God.

Very few biographical facts about the author of Hebrews is known. This epistle eloquently extolls Jesus as the Hebrews. This epistle eloquently extolls Jesus as the Hebrews.

In Hebrews, Jesus appears as the perfect victim and priest. His sacrifice on Calvary was sublime, perfect and utterly unique. It was final because its effects are eternal, providing for humanity’s reconciliation with God. The result will never cease, so no other sacrifices are necessary. All has been accomplished.

St. Luke’s Gospel furnishes the last reading. It is the story of the Visitation. Mary travels from her own home to a place in the hills of Judah. Traditionally, it has been thought that this place is the site now called Ein Karem. Once a few miles from Jerusalem, it has been absorbed by the sprawl of the city, and for all practical purposes is today a part of Jerusalem.

Mary travels to meet her cousin, Elizabeth, the wife of Zechariah. Elizabeth herself is pregnant. Her unborn child will be John the Baptist. John had a special destiny. He would prepare the way for Christ.

Since Elizabeth was past the childbearing age for a woman, her conception was regarded as miraculous.

Elizabeth knows that Mary is expecting a child, and additionally she realizes that Mary’s child will be the Messiah.

Elizabeth is a mother of an unborn infant. Thus, even before Mary’s conception, she realizes that Mary’s child will be the Messiah.

Reflection

It is the last Sunday of Advent. Christmas preparations are hectic. Everyone is in a hurry, and most are excited.

Less and less attention is given the spiritual preparation for Christmas, but the Church calls us to reality.

On Christmas Day, the Church encourages us to look to the future—Christmas Day.

The Christ Child

Pray for terrorists while supporting action that would stop their violent attacks

Q What is the Christian response to the Islamic State? (Virginia)

A The Christian response to the Islamic State is to deplore their violence, and to seek the most effective means to stop it.

In March, 2015, in what was seen as an unusually blunt endorsement of military action, the Vatican’s representative to the United Nations in Geneva called for an international force to stop the “so-called Islamic State.”

Archbishop Silvano Tomasi said that any anti-Islamic State coalition should include the Muslim states of the Middle East and unaffiliated under the sponsorship of the United Nations.

Archbishop Tomasi noted that everything possible ought to be done first to achieve a political settlement without violence, “but if that is not possible, then the use of force will be necessary.”

Pope Francis described the Islamic State as the “greatest evil” of our time.

The Islamic State has admitted that it would stop their violent attacks if the Islamic State would stop their violent attacks.

Fr. Kenneth Doyle

Q I am the mother of three adopted children, ages 5 to 15. We live in a small house with no extra space. A year ago, we came to my mother-in-law’s rescue when she was having some problems and offered her temporary shelter until she could get back on her feet.

Now, though, she is still with us and depends on us to do everything for her. She just sleeps, eats and talks on her cellphone. She interferes in the life of the family, and refuses to help with any chores of the house. I am on disability myself, our family life is unhealthy and the children are suffering from her presence in our midst.

My question is this: Would it be uncharitable of me to tell her to go live on her own, and to leave this house before I go crazy? (City of origin withheld)

A Your first obligation is to your husband and your children. If, as you say, your mother-in-law’s presence is seriously impacting your family’s health and happiness, you need to turn to leave. And you need to quickly, to have an honest conversation with your husband as to how to accomplish this in as kind a manner as possible (keeping in mind that there is, of course, no perfect way.)

Can you help to guide your mother-in-law into an alternate living arrangement? (Perhaps a local parish priest or Catholic social services agency could advise you on some suitable alternatives that would address her physical and psychological concerns.) Far from prohibiting this course of action, charity in fact demands that you take this courageous step—for the greater good of your entire family.

Question Corner

Daily Readings

Monday, December 21
St. Peter Canisius, priest, doctor of the Church
Song of Songs 2:8-14 or Zephaniah 3:14-18a
Psalm 33:2-3, 11-12, 20-21
Luke 1:39-45

Tuesday, December 22
1 Samuel 1:24-38 (Response) 1 Samuel 2:1, 4-8d
Luke 1:46-56

Wednesday, December 23
St. John of Kenty, priest
Malachi 3:1-4, 23-24
Psalm 25:4-5b, 8-10, 14
Luke 1:57-66

Thursday, December 24
2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16, 19, 26, 27, 29
1 Macc 1:57-79
Vigil of the Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)
Isaiah 62:1-5
Psalm 44:14-5, 16-17, 27, 29
Acts 13:16-17, 22-25
Matthew 1:1-25 or Matthew 1:18-25

Friday, December 25
The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)
Night
Isaiah 9:1-6
Psalm 96:1-3, 11-13
Titus 2:11-14
Luke 2:1-14
Matthew 2:1-10
Isaiah 62:11-12
Psalm 97:1, 6, 11-12
Titus 3:4-7
Luke 2:15-20
Menorah
Isaiah 52:7-10
Psalm 98:1-6
Hebrews 1:1-6
John 1:1-18 or John 1:1-5, 9-14

Saturday, December 26
St. Stephen, the first martyr
Acts 6:8-10, 7:54-59
Psalm 31:3cd-4, 6, 8ab, 16bc, 17
Matthew 10:17-22

Sunday, December 27
The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph
Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14 or 1 Samuel 1:20-22, 24-28
Psalm 128:1-5 or Psalm 84:2-3, 5-6, 9-10
Colossians 3:12-17 or Colossians 3:12-17 or Colossians 3:1-21, 21-24

Luke 2:41-52
Monday, December 28
The Holy Innocents, martyrs
1 John 1:5-22
Psalm 124:2-5, 7c-8
Matthew 2:13-18

Tuesday, December 29
Five within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord
St. Thomas Becket, bishop and martyr
1 John 2:3-11 or 1 John 2:3-13, 5-6
Luke 2:22-35

Wednesday, December 30
Sixth Day within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord
Christian
St. Sylvester I, pope
1 John 2:18-21
Psalm 96:1-2, 11-13
John 1:1-18

See Daily Readings, page 20

Questions may be sent to Father Kenneth Doyle at askfatherdoyle@gmail.com and 40 Hopewell St. Albany, N.Y. 12208.
William Marcotte, father of Fathers David and Douglas Marcotte, died on Dec. 13

William “Bill” Joseph Marcotte, the father of Fathers David Marcotte and Douglas Marcotte, died on Dec. 13 at the Villas of Guerin Seminary, 2500 Cold Spring Road, Indianapolis, IN 46222, or to The Villas of Guerin Seminary, 1257 South Drive, Indianapolis, IN 47112. 

Young adults encouraged to use digital media to spread the Good News

By Mike Knies

Digital media offers the Catholic Church another opportunity to spread the Good News, which is what our faith calls us to do, Bishop Christopher J. Coyne recently told a national gathering of young adults in Indianapolis.

“The Church has done this from the beginning, using whatever means and communications that we could, from the letters of [St.] Paul to the printing press, to radio to television, to even to the Internet and digital media,” he told nearly 300 young adults on Nov. 21 at the downtown Marriott. “The Church has seen these things as tools to spread the Good News.”

Bishop Coyne, shepherd of the Diocese of Burlington, Vt., and chairman of the Committee on Communications of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), was a keynote speaker during the National Catholic Collegiate Conference (NCCC), which is open to people ages 18-25 and held simultaneously with the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) that was sponsored by the National Catholic Young Adult Ministry Association and the National Federation for Youth Ministry.

In his talk titled “Sharing the Good News: Using Social Media and other forms to Evangelize,” Bishop Coyne, a former auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, called digital media a “neutral tool.” It’s the content that men and women truly need to hear.

That content, he continued, is more than just the Internet, its websites and videos, blogs, podcasts, images and text. It also includes text messaging, livestreaming, Facetime and Skype. “It is global and it is local. It is fast, instant, intense and gigantic. More than 1 billion people are on Facebook,” he noted. “More than 100 million people use Instagram every month, there are 304 million monthly active users on Twitter, and there are 2,500 pieces of social media content, posts and retweets using their hashtags. "They had 1.65 million video views, and they had 5.1 billion tweets and retweets using their hashtags."

The Holy Father’s visit, he added, “clearly shows that the use of digital media is a means to spread the Good News is not just a possibility but is in fact a reality” among young people. “We may never know how the seeds will grow, but that’s not your worry. Your worry is just the sooner, you just spread the Good News.”

Bishop Coyne was known for her “little way,” would be a good spiritual guide for those involved in digital media, he added.

“Much of the time you will spend in digital media,” Bishop Coyne said, “is in the small moments—e-mails, tweets, posting pictures, links to videos and websites, answering questions. They’re small moments. But they’re small moments to love."

Bishop Christopher J. Coyne addresses young adults on Nov. 21 at the National Catholic Collegiate Conference in Indianapolis. (Photo by Mike Knies)

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

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New online publication highlights values of Catholic schools

Criterion staff report

The archdiocese’s Office of Catholic Schools has created a special publication that highlights the faith-based, values-oriented approach to Catholic education that makes a difference in the lives of nearly 24,000 students and their families. The online publication can be viewed at www.archindy.org/OCS-Special-Publication-Fall-2015.

In an introduction to the publication, Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin noted: “From New Albany to Indianapolis and from Terre Haute to Richmond—and everywhere in between—some 24,000 young people and their families are growing closer to one another and to Christ through the ministry of Catholic schools.

“Accompanying them on the journey of faith from early childhood through young adulthood, Catholic schools support young people and their families and communities in recognizing, accepting and living Christ’s invitation to life in abundance. These are more than educational institutions—they are formational and transformational ministries that are integral to the life of the Church and the mission of the archdiocese.”

The 32-page publication celebrates the educational success stories of Catholic schools in central and southern Indiana while also sharing personal testimonials of how a Catholic education enriches the lives of students.

One of the testimonials was written by a student at Our Lady of Providence Jr./Sr. High School in Clarksville. Justin noted that his Catholic school “provides an environment that strengthens the whole person and gives students and faculty the opportunity of a lifetime by strengthening our Catholic faith. I look forward to coming to school every day because I feel as if I’m at my second home.”

Black Catholic Ministry Coordinator

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Indianapolis is seeking a full-time Black Catholic Ministry Coordinator to facilitate opportunities that foster full participation of the African-American and African communities in the life of the Catholic Church. Responsibilities include collaborating in the development, implementation and evaluation of a Black Catholic Pastoral Plan, serving as a resource for parishes and agencies to promote more equitable outreach to Black Catholics, coordinating leadership training, promoting youth ministry and social ministry, and representing the Archdiocese at the local, state, regional, and national levels.

Applicants should be proficient and practicing Catholics with knowledge of Church teachings and the needs, cultures and traditions of Black Catholics. A bachelor’s degree or relevant experience in a related field and at least 5 years of experience in diocesan or parish ministry in a paid or volunteer capacity are required. Some college level coursework in theology, religious studies, or a similar field is preferred.

Please e-mail cover letter, resume, and list of references, in confidence, to: Carla Hill, Archdiocese of Indianapolis, 317-236-1548 or 800-382-9836, ext. 1548, lhill@archindy.org.

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YOUTH MINISTER

Holy Spirit at Geist Parish

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 to keep the present youth minister has taken another position within the parish.

Applicants should have, be 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 computer 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 10150 Glaser Way Fishers, IN 46037

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—Process invoices and issue payments
• Communications Secretary
—Basic Skills working with E-mail, Facebook, Website and other social media
—Good communication skills, including spelling and grammar

Position Requirements

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3. Excellent organizational skills
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6. Basic skills working with Word and Publisher programs or the ability to learn programs
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11. Practicing Catholic is recommended, no required

Position Education/Training/ Experience

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Pope Francis: The Church needs this Holy Year of Mercy

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—The Catholic Church needs the extraordinary Holy Year to become an effective witness of God’s divine mercy, Pope Francis said.

“The jubilee is a favorable time for all of us, so that in contemplating divine mercy, which surpasses every human limitation and shines in the darkness of sin, we may become more convinced and effective witnesses,” the pope said on Dec. 9 during his weekly general audience.

One day after inaugurating the Year of Mercy, the pope dedicated his audience talk to the significance he hopes the year will have for the Church, saying that it is a time to experience the “sweet and gentle touch” of God’s forgiveness and his presence in difficult times.

“God’s forgiveness and mercy are always going to be necessary, for in this world we will always be slaves,” said the pope.

The work of reforming the Church’s institutions and structures, he noted, also offers a living experience of God’s mercy that allows it to shine forth in the world. Without mercy, the pope said, any reform would be in vain because “we would become slaves of our institutions and our structures. No matter how renewed they may be, we would always be slaves.”

Only mercy can truly contribute to a “more human world,” the pope said, particularly at a time where forgiveness is “a rare guest in the areas of darkness of sin, we may become more convinced and effective witnesses,” the pope said. “In the end, it was because he had someone to forgive. This is beautiful! To forgive is God’s joy; the being of God is mercy. For this reason, in this year, we should open our hearts so that this love, this joy of God may fill us with this mercy.”

Pope Francis stressed the importance of recognizing one’s sins during the Holy Year in order to “strengthen within us the certainty to avoid falling into self-love, which can often be ‘disguised in Christian objectives, he said, rediscovering divine mercy and forgiveness is essential to our lives.”

The 4th-century doctor of the Church “St. Ambrose would ask himself: ‘But why does it say very good? Why does it say that God is so happy after the creation of man and woman?’ ” the pope said. “In the end, it was because he had someone to forgive. This is beautiful! To forgive is God’s joy; the being of God is mercy. For this reason, in this year, we should open our hearts so that this love, this joy of God may fill us with this mercy.”

Monday, January 4
St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, religious
1 John 3:22-4:6
Psalm 72:1-4, 7-8
Mark 6:34-44

Tuesday, January 5
St. John Neumann, bishop
1 John 4:7-10
Psalm 72:1-4, 7-8
Mark 6:34-44

Wednesday, January 6
St. André Bessette, religious
1 John 4:13-18
Psalm 72:1-2, 10, 12-13
Mark 6:45-52

Thursday, January 7
St. Raymond of Penafort, priest
1 John 4:19-5:4
Psalm 72:1-2, 14, 15bc, 17
Luke 4:14-22a

Friday, January 8
1 John 5:13
Psalm 147:12-15, 19-20
Luke 5:12-16

Saturday, January 9
1 John 5:14-21
Psalm 149:1-6a, 9b
John 3:22-30

Sunday, January 10
The Baptism of the Lord
Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7
or Isaiah 41:10-15, 9-11
Psalm 29:1-4, 9-10
or Psalm 104:1b-4, 24-25,
27-30
Acts 10:34-38
or Titus 2:11-14, 3-4, 7-8