



The Criterion

Serving the Church in Central and Southern Indiana Since 1960

CriterionOnline.com

December 16, 2016

Message of mercy

Grotto provides ‘place for people to go and be with Jesus,’ page 10.



Vol. LVII, No. 11 75¢



Since arriving in the United States a year ago after being granted political asylum, Ahmed Al-Darraj, right, of Iraq has embraced American life so much that he teaches a Catholic Charities Indianapolis class that helps refugees and immigrants pursue their dream of becoming American citizens. Here, he poses with Zing Tial, a Burmese refugee, as they hold a copy of "The Star Spangled Banner." (Photo by John Shaughnessy)

Immigrants, refugees escape persecution and poverty for the promise of a better life

By John Shaughnessy

The volunteer teacher from Catholic Charities Indianapolis points to the copy of the Declaration of Independence on the classroom wall, stressing the words “Life” and “Liberty” that he has written in big, bold, black letters.

For the 14 immigrants and refugees who have enrolled in this class to pursue their dream of becoming American citizens, those two words have become the essence of their lives.

When the teacher explains the role of the Declaration of Independence in the birth of the United States as a nation, the students hear a story marked by courage, sacrifice and hope.

As the students’ nods seem to show, it’s a story that these immigrants and refugees understand and appreciate, knowing how it dovetails with their own efforts to escape persecution and poverty for the promise of a better life.

It’s also the story of their volunteer teacher, a 40-year-old man from Iraq who gained hope when he was granted asylum in the United States, a husband and father who also experiences the heartbreak of being separated from his wife and two small children.

And so on an evening in a strip-mall classroom on the south side of Indianapolis, the dream and the challenge that is America comes to life again.

‘America is a dream come true’

It was just about a year ago when Ahmed Al-Darraj—a dentist in Iraq—used a visa to attend a dental conference in New York City.

Before he left his homeland, he told his wife of his plan to seek asylum. He also arranged for her and their daughters to move to “a safe place” with her relatives in another part of Iraq.

“I escaped from Iraq because they threatened me,” he said about the Iraqi government before the beginning of class. “They wanted me to cooperate against my friends, my neighbors.”

After he lived a short while in New York, his cousin in Indianapolis

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Cardinal Tobin encourages Catholics to ‘dream the dreams of God’ at African Mass

By Natalie Hoefer

Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin may have Irish in his blood, but he has ties to Africa as well—since June of 2013, he has served as chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ (USCCB) subcommittee on the Church in Africa.

Yet in his four years as Archbishop of Indianapolis, he has not had an opportunity to celebrate the annual African Catholic Mass for the African community of the archdiocese.

He fit that pleasure in just weeks before leaving for his new role as Archbishop of Newark, N.J.

As African Catholic Community coordinator Sally Stovall told the congregation at the Mass on Dec. 4, “We asked for the archbishop, and

we got a cardinal!”

The Mass was celebrated on that day at St. Rita Church in Indianapolis. Joining Cardinal Tobin in concelebrating were 10 priests from around the archdiocese, including several serving as missionaries from Africa.

The Mass was punctuated by traditions of African Catholic worship—drums, rousing music, children leading processions with African dance, and the carrying of a

See AFRICAN MASS, page 8

Miranda Stovall, a member of Holy Angels Parish in Indianapolis, leads the Global African Children dancers during the opening procession of the archdiocesan African Mass on Dec. 4 at St. Rita Church in Indianapolis. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

Violence fixes nothing; world needs politics of peace, pope says

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Calling for a new style of politics built on peace and nonviolence, Pope Francis also called

for disarmament, the eradication of nuclear weapons and an end to domestic violence and abuse against women and children.

“Violence is not the cure for our broken world,” he said in his annual message for the World Day of Peace on Jan. 1.

“It is a challenge to build up society, communities and businesses by acting as peacemakers. It is to show mercy by refusing to discard people, harm the environment or seek to win at any cost,” he added.

The message, released by the Vatican on Dec. 12, said building a world of peace requires a “willingness to face conflict head on, to resolve it,” and to make it part of a new process of choosing solidarity and building friendships.

“Active nonviolence is a way of showing that unity is truly more powerful and more fruitful than conflict,” the pope said. While differences will sometimes lead to difficulties, “let us face them constructively and non-violently,” so that tension and opposition can turn into “diversified and life-giving unity,” preserving “what is valid and useful on both sides.”

His message, which the Vatican sends to heads of state around the world, invited everyone “to banish violence from our hearts, words and deeds, and to becoming nonviolent people and to build nonviolent communities that care for our common home.”

Building a new politics of nonviolence starts in the human heart and the home, he said.

It is in the family that people can learn how to communicate, be generous and caring, and resolve conflicts “not by force but by dialogue, respect, concern for the good of the other, mercy and forgiveness.”

From within the family, “the joy of love spills out into the world and radiates to the

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IMMIGRANTS

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encouraged him to move close to him.

"He's helped me a lot," Al-Darraj said. "I have a car, a driver's license and an apartment. He makes things easier for me. America is a dream come true—well, almost a dream come true. My family is not with me."

He took a deep breath before he continued, "It's very difficult for them and for me. My younger daughter is always crying for me. I suffer."

That pain has motivated him to help other refugees and immigrants.

"I don't want them to suffer. When they come to a different country, they need a lot of help. I try to help. Catholic Charities can't do it by themselves."

Al-Darraj is helping a family from Burma and another family from Syria in making their transition to life in America. He also teaches a citizenship class, after completing one himself.

"We cover the history of the United States and some geography," he said about the 10-week class that meets twice a week in two-hour sessions. "We study the United States as a country of laws. The test is three parts—general information, writing and speaking."

Passing the naturalization test is part of the process of becoming an American citizen for immigrants and refugees. They also must apply for permanent residency in the United States. And they can become American citizens after they have been in the country for five years.

"I tell them America is open to all of you," Al-Darraj says.

A deep sense of gratefulness'

As the director of immigration legal services of Catholic Charities Indianapolis, Tim Winn is often humbled by the immigrants and refugees he helps to become American citizens.

"I know of clients from Burma who waited over 10 years in a refugee camp for the chance to come to the United States," Winn said. "And once they're here, they must wait another five years to be citizens. When they come, they have to learn a new language, which is not easy, and learn to navigate the complexities of transportation, health care and employment."

"I have other clients from Somalia and Sudan who have not seen their spouse and children for over five years—in

some cases, over 10 or 15 years. I cannot imagine how difficult it would be to live your life in one country, to try to move forward with your life, while constantly looking back because your family is not with you."

Refugee and Immigration Services of Catholic Charities Indianapolis helped about 1,800 refugees and immigrants in 2015, providing support that includes housing, food, clothing and job readiness classes.

The Catholic Charities program also offers direction on the path to American citizenship. The staff assists about 10 people a month in completing the naturalization application, collecting documents, educating the person on the naturalization process, and offering citizenship classes.

"To them, naturalization means completion," Winn said. "It means they can finally fully participate in the rights and privileges of the United States, and lawfully accept the responsibilities that come with citizenship. Despite the hardships they faced in the past, all of these clients have a deep sense of gratefulness for what the United States provides them."

Helping the immigrants and refugees has also deepened Winn's appreciation for his country.

"Many have lived lives that we in the United States will never have to experience—no food, fear of death, walking for days across a country or multiple countries."

"It is greatly satisfying to know the stories of what brought them to the United States, and to know that this country has opened the door for them to live a peaceful life and to seek their dreams."

That leads to the story of one of the people that Winn has helped to become an American citizen.

I feel like I'm home'

Prisco "Paco" Limon will never forget the joy of becoming an American citizen on June 23 this year, sharing that milestone day in Indianapolis with people from China, Germany, Guatemala, Italy, Mexico and Peru.

"Everybody was excited. Everybody was taking pictures," Limon, 38, recalled with a smile. "I was really enjoying it. I called my parents in Mexico and told them, 'I'm an American citizen!' It was emotional. This is a great country, and this is a dream for a lot of us. I feel I'm a part of the country now."

His journey to his dream began 20 years ago when he joined his two older brothers

Many have lived lives that we in the United States will never have to experience—no food, fear of death, walking for days across a country or multiple countries. It is greatly satisfying to know the stories of what brought them to the United States, and to know that this country has opened the door for them to live a peaceful life and to seek their dreams.'

—Tim Winn, director of immigration legal services of Catholic Charities



The Criterion

Phone Numbers:

Main office: 317-236-1570
Advertising: 317-236-1454
Toll free: 1-800-382-9836, ext. 1570
Circulation: 317-236-1454
Toll free: 1-800-382-9836, ext. 1454

Price: \$22.00 per year, 75 cents per copy

Postmaster:

Send address changes to *The Criterion*,
1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367

Web site : www.CriterionOnline.com

E-mail: criterion@archindy.org

Published weekly except the last week of December and the first week of January. Mailing address: 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367. Periodical postage paid at Indianapolis, IN. Copyright © 2016 Criterion Press Inc. ISSN 0574-4350.

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Prisco "Paco" Limon, an immigrant from Mexico, will never forget the joy of becoming an American citizen on June 23 of this year, a dream made possible with the help of Catholic Charities Indianapolis. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)

in Anderson, Ind. For much of his life in America, he has worked in the landscaping business. It's also the country where he met his wife, and where the couple has created a family.

"Where we came from, everyone was poor. My father had to work from sun up to sun down, and still didn't make enough money," Limon said. "Since we came here, we're not struggling anymore. We can put bread on the table. We work hard every day. We have our health. That's when I know we are rich."

At the same time, his family's journey has been marked by heartbreak. Their oldest child, Lee, died in a car accident in 2010 when he was 18.

"We became closer to God after we lost him," said Limon, a member of St. Mary Parish in Anderson in the Lafayette Diocese. "We go to Mass every Sunday. We feel that's where we need to be. Right now, our faith is our priority. Being good with God is helping us, blessing us."

He also feels blessed by the help of Winn and Catholic Charities Indianapolis in helping him become an American citizen.

"These are people I trust," he said. "I feel

much support from the Catholic Church."

He also thanks God for his life in America.

"It's where I met my wife. Our children were born here. And it's where I work. I feel like I'm home."

This is a wonderful country'

Limon's reality of becoming an American citizen is the dream that everyone in the citizenship class taught by Al-Darraj hopes to attain someday.

Ten years have passed since 24-year-old Zing Tial and her older brother fled Burma as teenagers to escape that country's oppression and civil war. Now, she is part of an ever-growing community of Burmese refugees who have made a home on the south side of Indianapolis.

Learning what she needs to know to become an American citizen will mark the fulfillment of a goal she has sought for a decade.

"I want to live here forever," Tial said. "And I want to get my parents to live here."

Her teacher has the same dream for his wife and two daughters.

"This is a wonderful country," Al-Darraj said. "It's all about freedom." †

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., in Indianapolis and the Archabbey Church of Our Lady of Einsiedeln of Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad are as follows:

SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

Dec. 24—6 p.m. vigil Mass, and Midnight Mass with Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin as the principal celebrant. It will be the last Mass he celebrates in the archdiocese. 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, 1400 N. Meridian St. For the midnight Mass, parking is available at both locations from 10 p.m.-2 a.m.

Dec. 25—10:30 a.m. Mass.

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

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Church

Dec. 24—7 p.m. vigil and 10 p.m. Mass.

Dec. 25—9:30 a.m. Mass.

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

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

The Criterion (ISSN 0574-4350) is published weekly except the last week of December and the first week of January.

1400 N. Meridian St.
Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367
317-236-1570
800-382-9836 ext. 1570
criterion@archindy.org

Periodical postage paid at Indianapolis, IN.

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Criterion Press Inc.

POSTMASTER:

Send address changes to:

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1400 N. Meridian St.
Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367

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Jennings County parish celebrates 175 years of faith

By Sean Gallagher

JENNINGS COUNTY—St. Anne Parish in northern Jennings County has never been teeming with parishioners.

From its founding 175 years ago in 1841, it has been the spiritual home of the Catholic farming families with German roots living in and around the hills and fields surrounding the faith community in south central Indiana.

Several generations later, many of the descendants of those settlers remain in the parish and maintain its family atmosphere.

The close-knit nature of St. Anne was on full display on Nov. 6 when then-Cardinal-designate Joseph W. Tobin was the principal celebrant of a Mass to celebrate its historic anniversary.

As it turned out, the Mass was historic in itself, being the last Mass celebrated by Cardinal-designate Tobin as the shepherd of the Church in central and southern Indiana.

The next day, he was introduced as the new archbishop of Newark, N.J., at which time he ceased to be archbishop of Indianapolis. Rumors of the impending announcement had been widely reported throughout the weekend of the Mass.

In emotion-filled remarks at the end of the liturgy, Cardinal-designate Tobin told the worshippers at St. Anne Church, "If I was to celebrate my last Mass as the archbishop of Indianapolis, I'd be really blessed to celebrate it with you."

One of those worshippers was David Gasper, 24, who grew up just down the road from the parish and counts as his ancestors some of its founding members.

Although he went away to study engineering at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Ind., Gasper was happy to return to his parish with his wife Jessica, whom he married last year.

"It is a place where I feel at home," Gasper said. "You're part of a family there. It's such a small, tight-knit



Some 200 worshippers fill St. Anne Church in Jennings County for a Nov. 6 Mass that celebrated the 175th anniversary of the founding of the Seymour Deanery faith community.

(Photos by Sean Gallagher)

community. Everyone knows each other. It's basically an extended family."

Many of the priests who have served at St. Anne over the years have become part of its family of faith.

Father John Missi made with his own hands many of the bricks of the parish church, which was built in 1866, a year after the conclusion of the Civil War.

Father John Bankowski, who died in 1996, lived in retirement at St. Anne in the 1970s, often doing handyman repairs to the church and rectory.

Gasper recalls as a boy going rabbit hunting with now-Archbishop Paul D. Etienne of Anchorage, Alaska, when he served as sacramental minister of the parish from 1996-98 while an archdiocesan priest, and hunting frogs, known as "frog gigging," with Father Jonathan Meyer when he served at St. Anne from 2008-14.

"He did it to meet some folks and, boy, he really felt like part of the family after that," Gasper said of Father Meyer. "It's a way for the [priests] to connect with these down-to-earth families."

Rita Elmore, 55, is a lifelong member of the parish. She grew up as a Daeger, one of its founding families from which later came Archbishop Albert T. Daeger of Santa Fe, N.M., a son of the parish who died in 1932.

As Elmore grew up, being involved in the parish was a family affair. Her grandfather played the organ, and she and many of her siblings and cousins sang in the parish choir.

They also helped clean the parish and laundered its linens.

St. Anne Church in Jennings County was built in 1866. As a parish, St. Anne was founded in 1841. Descendants of many of its founding families are still among its members today.

"Americans reject the status quo of abortion on-demand, especially painful late-term abortions," she said in a Dec. 8 statement. "Instead, voters and lawmakers are recognizing the humanity of the unborn child: its heartbeat around six weeks and the pain the child can feel at 20 weeks."

Once the bills reach Kasich's desk, he will have 10 days to decide whether to sign or veto them. If he vetoes them, three-fifths of the state House and Senate would have to vote to override the veto.

The American Civil Liberties Union and the president and CEO of Planned Parenthood Advocates of Ohio objected to the measures.

"For the second time in a week, the Ohio Legislature has inserted itself into women's private and personal health care decisions," said Iris E. Harvey, Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio's president and CEO. "These bans are a deliberate attempt to make abortion illegal in the state of Ohio."

Dannenfelser said: "Both the heartbeat bill and the Pain-Capable bill aim to

"If something needed to be done, the priest would say, 'Can you do this?' and everybody just jumped in," Elmore said. "And they still do that. If something needs to be done, the next thing you know the ball is rolling."

That cooperation now includes helping build up the faith in Jennings County as a whole. Starting in 2009, Father Meyer began service as pastor of all three parishes in the county: St. Mary in North Vernon and St. Joseph in Jennings County, in addition to St. Anne.

Members of St. Anne Parish have done much, says Father Jerry Byrd, its current pastor, to convert its rectory into a youth ministry center that serves young Catholics from across Jennings County.

"They did the work of painting, getting the house ready, building a fire pit, putting in a new air conditioner and furnace—all that stuff," he said. "That's dedication. They're using what they have. Otherwise, that house would sit empty. Now it's being used frequently."

Many St. Anne parishioners also take hours in a perpetual adoration chapel at St. Mary Parish. Gasper, who prays for an hour at 4 a.m. on Sundays, gives its founding much of the credit for the continued vitality of his faith community.

"That might be the key to our success, regardless of the pastors we've had," Gasper said. "It's making us thrive the way we are. There was almost a sense of the revitalization of the faith when we



Leo and Patty Gasper, members of St. Anne Parish in Jennings County, kneel in prayer during the Nov. 6 Mass. The Gaspers trace their roots back to a founding family of the faith community.

opened its doors."

Elmore also appreciates the close connection among the Jennings County parishes.

"It just seems like we're all one family now," she said.

Father Byrd welcomes how much St. Anne parishioners value and care for their 150-year-old church building.

"But they also recognize that their identity is not just in a church building," he said. "They know that they're part of something that's bigger than just little St. Anne's."

"That's the Catholic ideal. We're part of something that's bigger than us. And they celebrate the little piece that they are [of it]."

Ohio lawmakers send governor two bills restricting abortion

COLUMBUS, Ohio (CNS)—The Ohio Legislature has sent two abortion bills to Gov. John Kasich for his signature.

On Dec. 8, lawmakers passed a measure to ban abortions in the state after 20 weeks, or five months of pregnancy. On Dec. 6, they approved legislation that would ban abortions when a fetal heartbeat can be detected, which is usually at about the sixth week of pregnancy.

Current law bans abortions after a fetus has begun its 20th week of gestation, unless a doctor determines that the fetus isn't viable outside the womb. The latest measure, the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act, or S.B. 127—would eliminate the viability test and simply ban abortions past 20 weeks. The current exception for the woman's health would still apply.

"The bold pro-life action taken by the Ohio Legislature is reflective of the message the voters sent on Election Day, and that is a rejection of the status quo," said Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of Washington-based Susan B. Anthony List.

humanize our law. Should either of these bills land in the courts, the courts should take the opportunity to catch our laws up with public opinion, science and basic human decency."

Meanwhile, Planned Parenthood affiliates in Missouri filed a federal lawsuit on Nov. 30, asking the court to stop state laws that require abortion providers to have admitting privileges at local hospitals and upgrade their facilities to meet the standards of ambulatory surgical centers. Similar lawsuits were filed in Alaska and North Carolina.

The lawsuits followed a U.S. Supreme Court 5-3 decision in June that struck down similar abortion laws in Texas, but pro-life advocates in Missouri believe their state's laws will be upheld as constitutional.

"We are not surprised by this lawsuit, but are hopeful that Missouri law will in fact be upheld because of its distinction from Texas law," said Mike Hoey, executive director of the Missouri Catholic Conference (MCC), the public

policy arm of the state's Catholic bishops. "The MCC will continue to support pro-life legislation in the coming session as it has for the past 50 years."

Missouri was the first state in the nation to enact such laws since the *Roe v. Wade* decision. Pro-life advocates say they serve as safety measures to protect women who seek services at abortion clinics. If Missouri's laws are struck down, Planned Parenthood facilities in Springfield, Joplin, Columbia and Kansas City would be able to offer abortions. Right now, Planned Parenthood's St. Louis center is the only location in Missouri to provide abortions.

"No abortion clinic will ever be safe for unborn children, but the common-sense safety requirements Planned Parenthood is challenging are designed to protect women from undue harm at the hands of abortion providers," said Karen Noltemper, executive director of the archdiocesan Respect Life Apostolate of the Archdiocese of St. Louis. †

OPINION



The Criterion

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Editorial



A seminarian from St. John's Seminary in Brighton, Mass., holds a rosary as he prepares to participate in a "Grill the Seminarians" discussion with members of a youth group from St. Patrick Parish in Providence, R.I. Recent studies show some men and women are unable to pursue religious or priestly vocations because of significant college debt.
 (CNS photo/Chaz Muth)

Debt and religious vocations

It's not widely recognized, but one of the reasons many men and women don't pursue a priestly or religious vocation has nothing to do with spirituality. It has a lot to do with finances. They have substantial debts from student loans or on credit cards.

You can understand that most religious orders and dioceses can't be expected to pay off the loans that applicants have racked up. Only about four in 10 religious institutes take on that responsibility. Often, they have no choice but to tell the applicants to pay off the loans and then apply again. And it has become more and more difficult to pay them off.

There was a time when young people could work their way through college, paying for their tuition, room and board while working at jobs. That time seems to be gone as college expenses have skyrocketed. Today those expenses are usually met by a combination of payments by parents, scholarships, students' jobs and loans.

Those loans can sometimes seem astronomical, especially if they cover both bachelor and graduate degrees. The average debt of borrowers with a graduate degree is now more than \$40,000.

Studies have been made concerning how this is affecting religious and priestly vocations, but they are a few years old. In January 2014, the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) polled the seminarians and brothers and sisters who entered religious life in 2013. It found that 10 percent of them had had to postpone their entrance by an average of two years. They had an average of \$31,100 in educational debt when they applied.

These figures, however, seem low. A different study found that 42 percent of individuals wanting to test their vocations are blocked because of outstanding student loans.

CARA had a better survey in 2012 when it surveyed 47,113 men and women religious and young people who had inquired about entering religious life. This study found that financial debt not only delayed some of them from entering religious life, but prevented many of them from applying at all.

We found these statistics in an article in the Nov. 14 issue of *America* magazine. The author, Jesuit Father Sean

Salai, pointed out that debt not only affects men and women who feel a call to religious life, but also young people who delay marriage because of their financial obligations. That is true, and it's one of the reason why some young people live together instead of marrying. But that is for another editorial. This one is focused on religious and priestly vocations.

Fortunately, there are a couple organizations that have recognized the problem and are trying to do something about it. One is the *Mater Ecclesiae* Fund for Vocations, which operates two programs: the St. Joseph Student Debt Relief Grant Program for religious life and the St. John Vianney Student Debt Relief Grant Program for the diocesan priesthood.

Founded in 2007 by Corey Huber, these programs have helped 150 men and women follow their vocations by giving them grants to pay off their student debts. That's the good news. The bad news, according to the fund's webpage, is that it had to turn away more than 100 young people who applied for grants.

The other organization is the Laboure Society. Founded in 2003 by Minnesota businessman Cy Laurent, it has helped more than 240 men and women enter formation for the priesthood or religious life. In this case, the average applicant for grants has about \$60,000 in loans.

Naturally, for both organizations, if the applicants begin formation in religious institutions or a seminary and then decide that the priesthood or religious life is not for them, they must resume their own debt payments.

According to the Laboure Society's director of advancement, Bill LeMire, there are about 4,000 men and women seriously discerning the priesthood or religious life, but they have outstanding student loans. If this is true, the work of these two organizations, while extremely helpful, is only skimming the surface. Much more should be done to make it possible for these people to enter seminaries or religious communities than is now being done.

Anyone who would like to help can find the website for the *Mater Ecclesiae* Fund for Vocations at fundforvocations.org. The Laboure Society's website is labouresociety.org.

—John F. Fink

Be Our Guest/Archbishop William E. Lori

Advancing the freedom to serve

Religious freedom issues have certainly been in the news in the U.S. over the past several years—from the Little Sisters of the Poor, to the freedom of organizations to hire people who aim to serve the mission of the organization.

The federal government has played an unfortunate role in attempting to coerce people of faith to violate their consciences.

Take the mandate from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services—also known as the HHS mandate—that forces Catholics like the Little Sisters to facilitate drugs and devices that can cause an abortion, among other morally objectionable "services."

If the Little Sisters—who operate nursing homes for the elderly poor—do not comply with the HHS mandate, the federal government could impose financial penalties against them in the millions of dollars.

The Little Sisters have admirably served others here in the U.S. since 1868. They should be able to continue their good work as they always have without facing the prospect of draconian fines.

In another example, the federal government seeks to restrict the hiring practices of faith-based organizations that partner with the government to provide needed services, especially to our military service members around the globe.

Chaplains in the military contract with providers of religious goods—such as eucharistic supplies like chalices—in order to allow the men and women who serve our country to continue to practice their faith, including when they are in harm's way.

President Barack Obama's Executive

Making Sense of Bioethics/Fr. Tad Pacholczyk

'It's not wrong, if it feels right!'

Many people today believe that moral judgments and values are merely expressions of sentiment. They deny that

moral values are fixed or universally true, and instead argue that we have changing emotions that may or may not correspond to the moral feelings of those around us.

This can play out in various real-life situations when

people say, for example, "You can't really know what it's like to have an unexpected pregnancy if you haven't been in the situation yourself, so you can't tell me it's wrong to get an abortion." The morality of terminating a "problem pregnancy," according to this view, depends on "being in the moment," and experiencing the mother's desperation, fears and sentiments.

Most of us, in fact, have probably granted our emotions leeway to trump our better moral judgment somewhere along the line. We can relate to stories of friends who make various solemn declarations like: "You don't know how hard it's been for me in this painful marriage, and you don't understand how it feels to fall in love with somebody who really cares for you, so you can't say it's wrong for me to be in a relationship with someone else."

Philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre notes that this emotive approach to moral thinking has gained broad societal approval: "To a large degree, people now think, talk and act as if emotivism were true, no matter what their avowed theoretical standpoint may be. Emotivism has become embodied in our culture."

Order 13672 would restrict faith-based organizations from being able to hire people who agree with the mission of the organization if they have a contract with the federal government. Faith-based organizations should not be excluded from working with the government to provide much-needed services.

President-elect Donald Trump can alleviate the current financial and regulatory burden that weighs heavily on people of faith.

First, the president-elect can—and should—rescind executive orders that effectively exclude faith-based organizations from partnering with the federal government, such as Executive Order 13672.

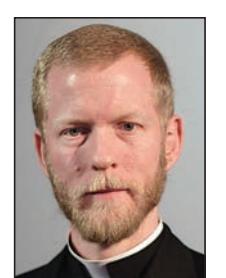
Second, the president-elect should direct the head of HHS to place an immediate moratorium on the HHS mandate. Then the next administration should rescind the HHS mandate. Contraceptives are not preventive "health care," and indeed are associated with adverse health outcomes.

Rescinding the HHS mandate would ensure that people of faith like the Little Sisters can, without threat of massive fines, offer health insurance that comports with their religious values.

The president-elect should also direct HHS to stop enforcing its "transgender mandate" issued under the purported authority of Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act. Catholic hospitals are currently being sued by those seeking coverage of "gender reassignment" surgeries. The federal government has issued regulations stating that such surgeries cannot be denied, or it is "discrimination."

Doctors and hospitals should be free to use their best medical judgment to treat patients who experience gender dysphoria. Health care providers should not be told by the federal government that they must

See **FREEDOM**, page 16



In light of our tendency to try to justify our misdeeds, it can be appealing to imagine that ethics are always "first person"—from my vantage point—and to suppose that no one else can identify moral obligations regarding another's situation.

"How do you feel about it?" becomes the guiding principle, and leads to the view that morals are relative, context dependent, and subject to emotional confirmation.

Reducing ethics to feelings, however, is a seriously deficient approach to thinking about right and wrong. It also, in the final analysis, doesn't work.

Imagine what would happen to the practice of medicine if physicians could treat patients only if they personally experienced and felt the diseases their patients had.

Consider the miscarriage of justice that would occur if judges ruled only when they could feel and experience everything the perpetrator felt and experienced at the time the crimes were committed, and had to decide cases in line with those feelings. Such sentimentalism completely misses the objective foundations and concerns of morality.

Those objective foundations begin with the recognition that all men and women have a shared human nature, so whatever is always morally bad for one of us will also be bad for any of us. If it is immoral for me to steal the electronics out of your house, it will likewise be wrong for you to rob me or anyone else, and it will be equally wrong for the president of the United States or the pope to do so.

See **MORALS**, page 16



REJOICE IN THE LORD

ALÉGRENSE EN EL SEÑOR

God is with us, even when we don't know how or why

"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means 'God is with us'" (Mt 1:23).

The Gospel for the Fourth Sunday of Advent (Mt 1:18-24) tells the story of how Joseph of Nazareth responded to the news that Mary, his bride to be, was "with child through the Holy Spirit" (Mt 1:18). Imagine his surprise, his anger, but above all his deep concern for the woman he loved, when he first discovered that Mary was pregnant. Joseph's decision to "divorce her quietly" (Mt 1:19) was made unselfishly in order to protect her from the gossip and shame that would inevitably come from her unacceptable status as an unwed mother.

As we know, God's messenger intervened before Joseph could carry out his decision. "The angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.' ... When Joseph

awoke, he did as the angel commanded him and took his wife into his home" (Mt 1:20-21, 24).

There is no way that Joseph could have understood what the angel was saying to him. At best, the appearance of an angel in a dream made him aware that something extraordinary was taking place here, and that this incredible miracle was God's work. For "a righteous man" (Mt 1:19), a man of deep faith and no little courage, that was enough. He didn't protest or ask questions. He simply did as the angel commanded him, and took Mary and her unborn child into his home.

I confess that I am especially devoted to my namesake, Joseph of Nazareth, for many reasons. He is honest, humble, hardworking, faithful and "righteous" without ever being arrogant or self-centered. St. Joseph is someone that Mary and Jesus relied on in good times and bad, and he is there for us in the same way now. Turn to him in prayer, and you can be sure that he will hear you, comfort you and sustain you with his strength.

St. Joseph bears witness to the fact that God is with us, even when we don't

understand how or why. The Gospels tell us that every time Joseph was tested, he responded positively. He did what God asked him to do. He didn't resist or complain. He accepted what he could not understand, and he trusted that God was present and active in his world no matter how confusing or dangerous things appeared to be.

Imagine how hard it must have been to "take Mary into his home" when the details of her pregnancy were a complete mystery to him. The angel's assurance that the child was conceived in her "through the Holy Spirit" can't have been very satisfying. But the questions he must have had—and the conflicting emotions he surely felt—never interfered with his love for Mary and her child, or with his fidelity to God's will.

At Christmas time, we celebrate Mary's "yes" to the incarnation of God's Word in her womb. Without Mary's free acceptance of God's action in her life, Christ would not have come into our world 2,000 years ago.

But Joseph's "yes" is also important to the Christmas mystery. He did not have to accept the strange situation he found himself in. Except for his

profound respect for God's will, and his devotion to the woman he loved, Joseph might easily have gone through with their quiet divorce and saved himself a lot of future trouble and uncertainty.

I admire Joseph's strength and his courage. I pray that I can demonstrate something of the same fidelity to God's will in my ministry as a priest, a bishop and (now) a cardinal. In all honesty, the news of my appointment to the College of Cardinals—something I never expected—and then to the Archdiocese of Newark, N.J., caused me to experience some of the same confusion that St. Joseph must have felt (obviously on a much different scale). But when I looked to him for strength and support, he showed me that there is only one way to respond to unexpected interventions by God's messengers—in this case, Pope Francis. And that is to do as I am commanded without hesitation.

St. Joseph's acceptance of God's will in his life was a participation in God's plan "to save his people from their sins." Through the intercession of this good man, Joseph of Nazareth, may we all say "yes" to God's will—now and always! †

Dios está con nosotros, aunque no sepamos cómo ni por qué

"He aquí, la virgen concebirá y dará a luz un hijo, y le pondrán por nombre Emmanuel, que traducido significa: 'Dios con nosotros'" (Mt 1:23).

El Evangelio del Cuarto Domingo de Adviento (Mt :18-24) narra la historia de la reacción de José de Nazaret ante la noticia de que María, su prometida "había concebido por obra del Espíritu Santo" (Mt 1:18). Imagine su sorpresa, su rabia, pero por encima de todo, su profunda preocupación por la mujer que amaba, al descubrir que María estaba embarazada. José había tomado la decisión de "abandonarla en secreto" (Mt 1:19) más bien de forma desinteresada para protegerla contra las habladurías y la vergüenza que sin duda sobrevendrían de su estado inaceptable de mujer no casada.

Tal como sabemos, el mensajero de Dios intervino antes de que José pudiera poner en práctica su decisión. "Pero mientras pensaba en esto, he aquí que se le apareció en sueños un ángel del Señor, diciendo: 'José, hijo de David, no temas recibir a María tu mujer, porque el Niño que se ha engendrado en ella es del Espíritu Santo. Y dará a luz un hijo, y le pondrás por nombre Jesús, porque El salvará a su pueblo de sus pecados.' [...] Y cuando despertó José del sueño, hizo como el ángel del Señor

le había mandado, y tomó consigo a su mujer" (Mt 1:20-21, 24).

Era imposible que José pudiera comprender lo que el ángel le decía. En el mejor de los casos, que se le apareciera un ángel en sueños le hizo caer en cuenta que sucedía algo extraordinario y que ese maravilloso milagro era obra de Dios. Para "un hombre justo" (Mt 1:19), un hombre de profunda fe y gran valentía, eso bastó. No protestó ni hizo preguntas; sencillamente hizo lo que el ángel le ordenaba y recibió en su hogar a María y al hijo que llevaba en las entrañas.

Confieso que siento una devoción especial por mi tocayo, José de Nazaret, por muchos motivos. Es un hombre honesto, humilde, trabajador, fiel y "justo" sin jamás mostrarse arrogante o egoísta. San José es alguien en quien María y Jesús se apoyaron en los buenos y los malos momentos y también está allí para nosotros de la misma forma hoy en día. Acuda a él en oración y podrá tener por seguro que él lo escuchará, lo consolará y lo sustentará con su fuerza.

San José es testigo del hecho de que Dios está con nosotros aunque no comprendamos cómo ni por qué. El Evangelio nos dice que cada vez que José estuvo a prueba, respondió

positivamente. Hizo lo que Dios le pedía sin resistirse ni quejarse. Aceptó aquello que no podía comprender y confió en la presencia real y activa de Dios en su mundo, sin importar lo confuso o peligroso que aparentara ser todo.

Imagínese lo difícil que debió ser para él "tomar consigo a su mujer" cuando las circunstancias de su embarazo eran un absoluto misterio para él. La reafirmación del ángel de que el hijo que había concebido era "del Espíritu Santo" no podría haber sido más persuasiva. Pero las interrogantes que debió tener y las emociones encontradas que seguramente sintió, jamás interfirieron en su amor por María y su hijo, ni en su fidelidad a la voluntad de Dios.

En la época de Navidad celebramos el "sí" de María a la encarnación del Verbo en su vientre. Si María no hubiera aceptado libremente la obra de Dios en su vida, Cristo no habría venido al mundo hace 2,000 años.

Pero el "sí" de José también es importante en el misterio de la Natividad. No estaba obligado a aceptar la extraña situación en la que se encontraba. Salvo por su profundo respeto hacia la voluntad de Dios y su devoción a la mujer que amaba, José fácilmente podría haber seguido adelante

con su idea de abandonar a María y de esta forma ahorrarse bastantes dificultades e incertidumbres en el futuro.

Admiro la entereza y el valor de José. Rezo para poder demostrar algo parecido a esa fidelidad hacia Dios en mi ministerio como sacerdote, obispo y (ahora) como cardenal. Para ser totalmente sincero, la noticia de mi designación al Colegio de Cardenales—algo que jamás me imaginé—y luego mi transferencia a la Arquidiócesis de Newark en Nueva Jersey, me hicieron sentir algo parecido a la confusión que debió sentir San José (obviamente a una escala muy diferente). Pero cuando acudí a él para recibir fuerza y apoyo, me mostró que solo había una forma de responder ante las intervenciones imprevistas de los mensajeros de Dios—en este caso, el papa Francisco—y esto es, hacer lo que se me ordena sin dudar.

José, al aceptar la voluntad de Dios en su vida, participó en el plan de Dios "para salvar a su pueblo del pecado." Que por la intercesión de este buen hombre, José de Nazaret, todos digamos "sí" a la voluntad de Dios, ahora y siempre. †

Traducido por: Daniela Guanipa

Events Calendar

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

December 20

Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Church, 520 Stevens St., Indianapolis. **A Festival of Lessons and Carols Concert**, carols and Scripture readings, 7 p.m., free. Information: 317-636-4478 or infor@hollyrosaryindy.org.

December 21

Calvary Mausoleum Chapel, 435 W. Troy Ave., Indianapolis. **Christmas Mass**, 2 p.m. Information: 317-784-4439 or www.catholiccemeteries.cc.

December 23

Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, 1530 Union St., Indianapolis. **Vox Sacra Concert**, the schola cantorum of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, Advent and Christmas music, 4 p.m., CD's available for purchase. Free admission. Information: 317-236-1513 or www.voxsacra.com.

December 24

Church of the Immaculate Conception, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Festival of Lessons and Carols**, Scripture readings, prayer, singing of carols and candle lighting, 7-8 p.m.

December 27

St. Michael the Archangel Church, 3354 W. 30th St., Indianapolis. **Monthly Taizé Prayer Service**, held monthly on fourth Tuesday, candle-lit service with readings, meditation and music, 7 p.m.

Information: 317-926-7359, rectory@saintmichaelindy.org.

December 28

Hoosier Strike and Spare, 2310 State St., New Albany.

New Albany Deanery Catholic Youth Ministries Bowl-a-thon fundraiser

pick up a bowling pin bank at CYM office at Mount St. Francis, 101 St. Anthony Drive, Mt. St. Francis; bring to event for admission, cost is \$5 per person or \$20 per family for two games of bowling and shoe rental, noon-2 p.m., register by Dec. 27. Information, registration: 812-923-8355, www.nadyouth.org or sandy@nadyouth.org.

2017

January 3

Mission 27 Resale, 132 Leota St., Indianapolis. **Senior Discount Day**, every Tuesday, seniors get 30 percent off clothing, 9 a.m.-6 p.m., ministry supports Indianapolis St. Vincent de Paul Society Food Pantry and Changing Lives Forever program.

Information: 317-687-8260.

January 4

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

January 6

SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral chapel, 1347 N. Meridian, Indianapolis. **Lumen Dei Catholic Business Group**, 6:30 a.m. Mass, 7:15-8:30 a.m. breakfast at Lincoln Square Pancake House, 2330 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. Information: 317-435-3447 or lumen.dei@comcast.net.

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

Our Lady of the Greenwood Church, 335 S. Meridian St., Greenwood. **First Friday** celebration of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mass 5:45 p.m., exposition of the Blessed Sacrament following Mass until 9:30 p.m., sacrament of reconciliation available. Information: 317-888-2861 or info@olgreenwood.org.

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Serra Club Dinner Meeting**, 6-8 p.m., dinner meeting followed by speaker, \$15. Information: 317-748-1478 or smclaughlin@holyspirit.cc.

January 7

St. Michael Church, 145 St. Michael Blvd., Brookville. **First Saturday Marian Devotional Prayer Group**,

March 9-12

Archabbey Guest House and Retreat Center, 200 Hill Drive, St. Meinrad, "Praying the Psalms in the Office," for secretaries and parish administrators, Benedictine Father Jeremy King presenting, \$350 single, \$515 double. Information: 812-357-6585 or mzoeller@saintmeinrad.edu.

January 13-14

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Pre-Cana Preparation Conference**, \$255 includes separate room accommodations for couple, meals, snacks and materials. Information, registration: www.archindy.org/plfl/marriage-precana.html.

March 17-19

Archabbey Guest House and Retreat Center, 200 Hill Drive, St. Meinrad, "Contemplative Living," Benedictine Father Adrian Burke, presenter, \$255 single, \$425 double. Information: 812-357-6585 or mzoeller@saintmeinrad.edu.

March 24-26

Archabbey Guest House and Retreat Center, 200 Hill Drive, St. Meinrad, "I am With You Always, Even to the End of the World: The Sacraments of the Church," Benedictine Father Vincent Tobin presenting, \$255 single, \$425 double. Information: 812-357-6585 or mzoeller@saintmeinrad.edu. †

Retreats and Programs

*For a complete list of retreats as reported to
The Criterion, log on to www.archindy.org/retreats.*

December 31-

January 1, 2017

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. "The Magic of Stories for Faith, Hope and Love" New Year's Eve retreat, Father Jeffrey Godecker presenting, Sat. 4 p.m.-Sun., noon, \$145 single, \$270 married couple. Information and registration: 317-545-7681, ext. 107, marcia.johnson@archindy.org or www.archindy.org/fatima.

2017

January 6-7

Otter Creek Retreat Center, 5165 Old Mill Rd., Bradenburg, Ky. New Albany Deanery Catholic Youth Ministries "The Walking Dead" College Winter Retreat, Sat., 4 p.m.-Sun., 4 p.m., \$40. Register by Dec. 28. Registration and information: 812-923-8355, www.nadyouth.org or jennifer@nadyouth.org.

January 6-8

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St.,

Indianapolis. **Tobit Marriage Preparation Weekend**, \$298 includes separate room accommodations for couple, meals, snacks and materials. Information, registration: www.archindy.org/fatima/calendar/tobit.html, Marcia.johnson@archindy.org or 317-545-7681, ext. 107.

February 10-12

Archabbey Guest House and Retreat Center, 200 Hill Drive, St. Meinrad, "Almost Paradise," for married couples, Benedictine Father Noël Mueller presenting, \$425 double. Information: 812-357-6585 or mzoeller@saintmeinrad.edu.

March 24-26

Archabbey Guest House and Retreat Center, 200 Hill Drive, St. Meinrad, "I am With You Always, Even to the End of the World: The Sacraments of the Church," Benedictine Father Vincent Tobin presenting, \$255 single, \$425 double. Information: 812-357-6585 or mzoeller@saintmeinrad.edu. †

Special Pacers vs. Pistons offer for Catholic Schools Week ends Dec. 20

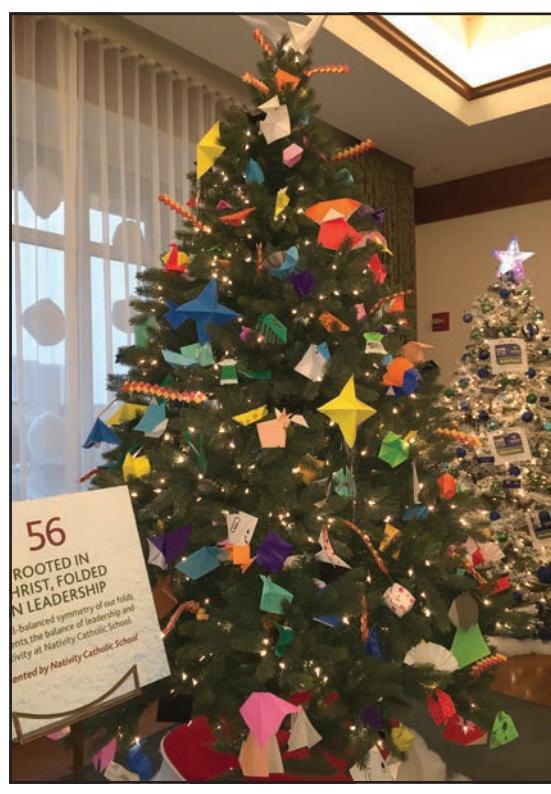
The Indiana Pacers and the Archdiocese of Indianapolis have teamed up to celebrate Catholic Schools Week through a special offer to watch the Pacers take on the Detroit Pistons on Feb. 4, 2017. The offer includes tickets, a Pacers hat, a food voucher for a hot dog, bag of chips and a soda, and the opportunity to shoot a free throw on the main floor after the game. The proceeds support the formation of young people throughout

Catholic schools in central and southern Indiana.

Tickets must be purchased by Dec. 20. The cost is \$20 for the upper balcony level or \$35 for the lower balcony level.

To purchase tickets, log on to www.pacersgroups.com/tickets/showevent.php with the passcode: Pacers.

For more information, contact Sam Elmore at 317-917-2829 or Selmore@pacers.com. †



Festival of Trees

A special Christmas tree sponsored and decorated by students of Nativity School in Indianapolis is featured at the Indiana Historical Society's "Festival of Trees." A sign next to the tree decorated with origami ornaments identifies the school and reads, "Rooted in Christ, Folded in Leadership: The well-balanced symmetry of our folds represents the balance of leadership and creativity at Nativity Catholic School." The tree is one of 72 trees decorated by various organizations and on display at the Indiana Historical Society building at 450 W. Ohio St., in Indianapolis. The Nativity School tree, which is located on the fourth level of the Indiana Historical Society building, can be seen free with admission, along with the other trees, on Tuesday-Saturday from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. through Dec. 30, and also until Dec. 25 on Sundays from noon-5 p.m. For more information, log on to www.indianahistory.org. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

Mass, prayers, rosary, confession, meditation, 8 a.m. Information: 765-647-5462.

Terre Haute Helpers of God's Precious Infants

7:30 a.m. Mass at the Carmelite Monastery, 59 Allendale, Terre Haute; 8:45 a.m. carpool from St. Patrick Parish,

1807 Poplar St., Terre Haute, to Bloomington Planned Parenthood, 421 S. College Ave., arriving 10:15 a.m.; return to St. Patrick Parish around noon. Information: Tom McBroom, 812-841-0060, mcbroom.tom@gmail.com.

January 8

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

St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) Church, 4720 E. 13th St., Indianapolis.

Class of '63 monthly gathering, 6 p.m. Mass, optional dinner afterward. Information: 317-408-6396.

January 10-March 28

St. Christopher Parish, Damascus Room, 5301 W. 16th St., Speedway. **Gospel of John Scripture Study**, meets weekly

for 10 weeks, 7-9 p.m., open to all, \$75 payable in installments, scholarships available, registration required by Jan. 8. Information and registration: Lois Jansen, 317-241-9169 or mlj986@gmail.com.

January 10

Church of the Immaculate Conception, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. **Monthly Taizé Prayer Service**, theme "Praying for Peace in the World and in Our Hearts," 7-8 p.m., silent and spoken prayers, simple music, silence. Information: 812-535-2952, provctr@spsmw.org. †

Christmas crèches on display at Archabbey Library through Jan. 6

An exhibit of Christmas crèches from around the world will be on display in the Saint Meinrad Archabbey Library, 200 Hill Drive, in St. Meinrad, through Jan. 6. The library will be closed on Dec. 23-26 and on Jan. 1-2.

The display features crèches from the monastery collection, as well as from the Catherine A. Smith Nativity Collection, which was donated to Saint Meinrad in 2002 in memory of Father Charles Patrick "Pat" Smith.

Catherine Smith began collecting Nativity sets in 1971, purchasing many during her extensive travels throughout the world. She donated the collection to Saint Meinrad in memory

of her brother, who studied for the priesthood at Saint Meinrad and later served as a priest in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

The crèches selected for display represent a variety of styles and media, such as porcelain, wood, glazed tile, glass, cloth, stone, metals and ceramic.

The exhibit is free and open to the public.

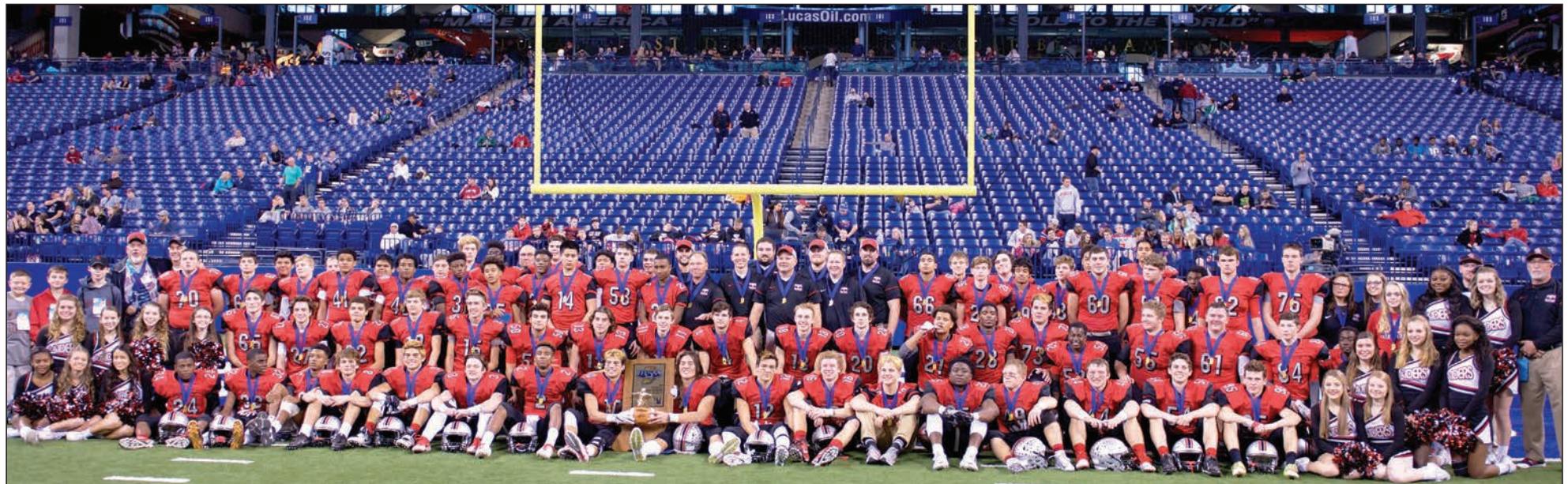
For library hours, call 812-357-6401 or 800-987-7311, or visit the Archabbey Library's website at www.saintmeinrad.edu/library/hours.

Visitors may wish to arrive at least 30 minutes before closing to view the exhibit. †



St. Louis School speech team wins awards

The speech team of St. Louis School in Batesville competed in the Batesville Deanery competition on Oct. 29 at Oldenburg Academy of the Immaculate Conception and won the traveling team trophy. This is the 10th time in 11 years the St. Louis speech team has won this competition. Additionally, Evelyn Storms won the individual trophy in the serious speech category. Posing with their awards are, first row: coach Jessica Laker, left, Evan Flaspohler, Allie Savage, Olivia Freeland, Madeline Schrand, Mary Hunter and principal Chad Moeller; and second row: coach Christy Kushman, left, Evelyn Storms, Hank Ritter, Kate Weber, Lilly Schebler and Ella Moster. (Submitted photo)



The football team of Cardinal Ritter Jr./Sr. High School in Indianapolis is pictured on Nov. 25 in Lucas Oil Stadium after winning the Indiana class 2A state football championship. (Submitted photo)

Despite early adversity, Ritter captures state football title

By John Shaughnessy

Coach Ty Hunt didn't have to think a long time to find the perfect saying to capture the state championship season of the 2016 football team of Cardinal Ritter Jr./Sr. High School in Indianapolis:

"Those who believe will find the strength to finish."

That motto will be emblazoned on a poster that will recall a season in which the Ritter Raiders lost four of their first five games this year, before putting together a 10-game winning streak that ended with a 28-6 win in the Indiana

class 2A state championship over Eastbrook High School on Nov. 25.

"The guys really continued to battle. That bonded them," says Hunt about his players who finished their season with that convincing victory at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis. "They overcame adversity. There was a 'no quit' desire in each of them."

It was a season unlike any other for Hunt, a 21-year veteran coach who has now led Cardinal Ritter to three state championships since becoming head coach in 2006.

"I've never had a season start like this one, not at all," he says. "We had four

plays that stopped us from being 2 and 0. As a coaching staff, we talked to the team about eliminating those mistakes, and we continued to watch film to see the things we were successful at. You have to stay together as a collective group. And once we started making those plays on a consistent basis, it really helped."

So did the leadership of the team's captains: Trevor Browder, Max Egenolf, Avery Hall, Diomoni Small, Stephen Timmons and Zach Yetter.

"My hat goes off to those guys," Hunt says. "The captains did a great job of having these guys believe in each other."

Hunt also praised the efforts of the assistant coaches, the school's administration, the families of the players, and the spiritual guidance provided by the school's chaplain coordinator, Father Matthew Tucci.

"They're truly the heart of it," he says. There's also the heart of a team that fought through the tough times.

"You're going to face adversity," Hunt says. "When you're down, you have to pick yourself off the ground and continue on. It's not only on the football field, but life in general. We talk about not only being a champion on the field, but being a champion in life." †



The football team of Roncalli High School in Indianapolis is pictured on Nov. 25 in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis after winning the Indiana class 4A state football championship. (Submitted photo)

Hard work leads Roncalli to perfection, state championship

By John Shaughnessy

Coach Bruce Scifres couldn't stop smiling as he looked around the gym of Roncalli High School in Indianapolis on Nov. 25—a gym packed with the fans, friends and family members of the Rebel football team that earlier that day had culminated an undefeated season with the Indiana class 4A state championship.

Still, in speaking to his team and the crowd during the joyous celebration, Roncalli's head football coach since 1990 wanted to stress one last, serious point to his players.

"There's a final page of being a champion of life," Scifres says, recalling the essence of what he told his players and the crowd following the team's

dramatic 34-22 win over Northwood High School at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis.

"It's not so much about what you get when you reach your destination. It's a lot more about what you become."

"I encouraged them to remain humble and to lead our lives in a way that is pleasing to God."

Scifres believes that God is pleased with the way the 2016 team approached its season.

"To go 15 and 0 will go down as a team in Roncalli legend," says the coach who earned his seventh state championship at the school. "Way beyond that, they taught us all great lessons about maintaining faith and hope, and exhibiting the merits of hard work when faced with

adversity."

A significant part of the adversity the team faced centered on assistant coach Vince Guerrini, a 1975 Roncalli graduate who had been teaching and coaching at his alma mater since 2014. Guerrini died of cancer on Nov. 11, two hours before the regional championship game.

"That was really hard," Scifres says. "He was a Roncalli Rebel through and through. Throughout his sickness, he was a big motivating factor for us. Watching him fight inspired us to fight and not give up."

That attitude prevailed time after time during the championship season.

"Of our 15 wins, eight of them were by seven points or less," Scifres says. "And six of those wins came literally in the last

30 seconds before the game was decided. They just had the ability to make plays when the game was on the line."

The players also now have an understanding of the best way to approach their lives in the future, Scifres believes. He talked about that approach with his players in his pre-game remarks before the state championship.

"I talked about committing themselves to excellence in all aspects of their lives. To live life with a sense of gratitude, duty and honor. To make the most of the gifts God has given us. To never give up. To fight, because life is often a fight."

"The lessons they learned about staying focused and relying on our faith will stay with them after athletics." †

AFRICAN MASS

continued from page 1

Book of the Gospels in a bag slung over a bent person, walking as if carrying the weight of the world.

After the Gospel was proclaimed, Cardinal Tobin spoke of Advent and dreams in his homily.

"Advent is a time for dreaming," he said. "Our dreams. The dreams of our community. The dreams of our Church."

"But most importantly, Advent invites us to dream the dreams of God, the dreams of the kingdom that is at hand."

He said that, as he prayed about St. Paul's message in the second reading, "This jumped out at me, these words: 'May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to think in harmony with each other' (Rom 15:5)."

"My brothers and sisters, the big message from the last election is the message of how we are a divided people. Nations are divided. Communities are divided. Families are divided. It seems that many people are losing hope about

the opportunity to live in harmony. They're saying, 'There is no longer any reason to dream.'

But there is reason to hope and dream, Cardinal Tobin continued. That hope is based on the words from the first reading—Is 11:1-10—words reflected in Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous "I Have a Dream" speech.

"Listen carefully to see if you hear the words of God that we listened to today," he said. "Dr. Martin Luther King said, 'I have a dream today. I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low. The rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of our Lord will be revealed. All flesh will see it together. This is our hope.'

"My dear brothers and sisters, during Advent time, we are not dreaming of a white Christmas. We are not dreaming of a black Christmas. Those dreams would be too small, too cheap."

"Instead, we ask the Lord again to pour out his Spirit upon us so that all of us together may dream the dreams of God."

Before the closing of the Mass, a gift was given to Cardinal Tobin on behalf of the archdiocesan African Catholic Community: a special garment, hat and beads from Africa.

"The attire we gave Cardinal Tobin is from Nigeria and is commonly worn by titled Igbo men of eastern Nigeria," explained Stovall, a member of Holy Angels Parish and a native of Nigeria. "The attire is called 'akwa onye eze' in the Igbo language, meaning 'attire made for kingly people.'"

The cap, called an "okpu agu" in the Igbo language, "signifies the person wearing the cap is an agent of his people," she said. "Not everyone can wear the cap, as it is a representation of a king or chief."

"Although the cardinal has many titles, we gave him these gifts as we see him as an agent of his people through our African culture and traditions."

Three youths also used the Igbo,



Several of the priests concelebrating the African Mass with Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin on Dec. 4 at St. Rita Church in Indianapolis are seen gathered at the altar. Facing the camera from left are Father Douglas Hunter, Deacon Michael Braun, Cardinal Tobin, Loral Tansy, who served as master of ceremonies, Father John Kamwendo and Father Kenneth Taylor. (Photos by Natalie Hoefer)

French and Swahili languages to thank the cardinal for celebrating the Mass.

Given the cardinal's support for Africa through his role with the USCCB, Dabrice Bartet, a member of St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis and a native of the African country of Togo, said it was "very fitting" for Cardinal Tobin to celebrate the Mass for the African Catholic Community.

"With all the work he has done for us here, we are so grateful that he was able to [celebrate the Mass]," she said.

Deacon candidate Oliver Jackson, a St. Rita parishioner who expects to be ordained a permanent deacon next June, reflected on the cardinal's message after the Mass.

"The dream is to be [a] child of God," he said. "I haven't heard too many people interpret the dream that Martin Luther [King] said in that way. When you look at it, that is what he was saying, and it did come from the Bible passage" that served as the first reading.

When asked his thoughts on the

cardinal leaving the archdiocese, Jackson admitted he was sad to see him go.

"For the four years that I've been going through this [diaconate] process, he's been nothing but supportive," he said.

Stovall, who has led the archdiocesan African Catholic Community since its inception 13 years ago, also lauded Cardinal Tobin's support. She credited him with creating a full-time position for archdiocesan director of Intercultural Ministry. Without that role, she said, "We wouldn't be where we are today."

A reception held after the Mass was intended to honor another person who has been a pillar of support for the African Catholic Community—Immaculate Heart of Mary Reparatrix Sister Christine Nantaba, a native of Uganda. Like Stovall, Sister Christine has been with the ministry from the start. She was recently reassigned by her order to a new ministry in Chicago. A welcome celebration in Chicago prevented her from attending the Mass and reception at St. Rita.

"She was secretary of the African Catholic Community, and then we needed her more with the liturgy, which is the core of what we do," Stovall explained. "So she became the choir director. She spent time preparing for the Mass, teaching the drummers, preparing for our retreat and anything else. We will miss her dearly."

Despite Sister Christine's absence, the reception served as a send-off anyway—for Cardinal Tobin instead of Sister Christine.

During the reception, glasses were raised in a toast to the cardinal led by Father Jerome Robinson, a priest of the Archdiocese of Mobile, Ala., who served for many years in Nigeria and is now residing at St. Rita Parish while between assignments.

"We are the beneficiaries of your service in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, even though we thought we'd have you for a longer period of time," he said. "We love you. We appreciate your holiness and simplicity, who you are and how you helped our ministry in so many ways."

"May God continue to prosper your path, through the intercession of our Holy Redeemer. ... For who you are in our hearts, for what you have done over these past four years, we toast you." †



Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin holds a gift given to him by the archdiocesan African Catholic Community during the annual African Mass on Dec. 4 at St. Rita Church in Indianapolis.



Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin poses with the concelebrating priests and members of the African Catholic Community toward the end of the annual African Mass at St. Rita Church in Indianapolis on Dec. 4.

PEACE

continued from page 1

whole of society," he said.

This "ethics of fraternity and peaceful coexistence" can never be "based on the logic of fear, violence and closed-mindedness, but on responsibility, respect and sincere dialogue."

"Hence, I plead for disarmament and for the prohibition and abolition of nuclear weapons: nuclear deterrence and the threat of mutually assured destruction are incapable of grounding such an ethics," he said. "I plead with equal urgency for an end to domestic violence and to the abuse of women and children."

The Church contributes by seeking to limit the use of force by applying moral norms, and many Christians contribute by drafting legislation.

"To be true followers of Jesus today also includes embracing his teaching about nonviolence," he said, and follow his practice of tackling evil with love and truth.

In fact, an important "manual" for peacemaking, he said, is Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, where he presented the Beatitudes.

Applying the Beatitudes, which outlines how to be blessed, good and authentic, "is also a program and a challenge for political and religious leaders, the heads of international institutions, and business and media executives," the pope said.

The "politics of nonviolence," he said, also begins with each individual, who will never miss an opportunity to offer a kind word, smile or simple gesture that "sows peace and friendship."

"I ask God to help all of us to cultivate nonviolence in our most personal thoughts

and values," the pope said. "May charity and nonviolence govern how we treat each other as individuals, within society and in international life."

When victims of violence resist the temptation to retaliate, "they become the most credible promoters of nonviolent peacemaking" in the tradition of those who struggled actively and nonviolently for change such as St. Teresa of Calcutta, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., and the thousands of women in Liberia who helped end their nation's civil war, Pope Francis wrote.

Many religious traditions contribute by promoting compassion and nonviolence and protecting victims of injustice, he said. For that reason, "I emphatically reaffirm that 'no religion is terrorist!'" and the name of God can never be "used to justify violence. Peace alone is holy. Peace alone is holy, not war!"

"In the most local and ordinary situations and in the international order," he wrote, "may nonviolence become the hallmark of our decisions, our relationships and our actions, and indeed of political life in all its forms."

Speaking with reporters at the Vatican, Cardinal Peter Turkson said the pope's message is meant to remind people that active nonviolence is not "a utopian idea," but is a truly "feasible path."

Diplomacy and the hope for peace negotiations must never be neglected because "the diplomatic channel always gives us the possibility for dialogue" where all sides can speak face to face, said the cardinal, who is president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. He will serve as prefect of the new Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, which will consolidate the work of four pontifical councils. †

Give flesh to the Gospel like Mary did, pope says on Guadalupe feast

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Celebrating the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Pope Francis described Mary as a strong woman who inspires believers to give “flesh to the Gospel” in societies often marked by distrust and blindness.

“To look at the Guadalupana is to remember that the presence of the Lord always passes through those who manage to make his Word flesh, who seek to embody the life of God within themselves, becoming living signs of his mercy,” Pope Francis said on Dec. 12, during an evening Mass marking the feast day.

The Mass began with a procession of the flags of the nations of South, Central and North America—a sign that Our Lady of Guadalupe is patroness of the Americas.

Like the U.S. bishops had asked their faithful to do, the pope’s Mass included a special prayer “for our Hispanic brothers and sisters and for the migrants of our lands that their dignity would be recognized and protected” and that their family unity and social and ecclesial integration would be promoted.

Another prayer intention asked God, through Our Lady of Guadalupe, to end violence on the continent and guarantee “land, work and a roof” over the heads of all.

The pope himself ended his homily with an improvised prayer that Our Lady of Guadalupe would intercede to give peace, bread, a home and a strong faith to all the continent’s people.

The Mass was celebrated primarily in Spanish, although some of the prayers were in Portuguese and English. And the music, in addition to Latin, included Marian hymns in the indigenous Quechua, Nahuatl and Mapuche languages.

The feast day’s Gospel reading was the story of Mary visiting her cousin Elizabeth, a story Pope Francis said



Children carry the flags of North, Central and South American nations at the start of a Mass celebrated by Pope Francis to mark the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican on Dec. 12. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

illustrates how, whenever God “visits,” people are moved, and their very being “is transformed into praise and blessing.”

“When God visits us, he leaves us restless with the healthy restlessness of those who feel they have been invited to proclaim that he lives and is in the midst of his people,” the pope said. Mary, “the first disciple and missionary,” goes out to Elizabeth to share the Good News.

She did the same in 1531 when she appeared to St. Juan Diego at Tepeyac in Mexico, the pope said. She reached out to the continent’s native peoples who were in pain, “becoming their mother.”

Mary is “the icon of the disciple, of the believing and prayerful woman who knows how to accompany and encourage our faith and our hope,” the pope said. Mary’s is not a “poetically sweetened faith,” but a faith that is strong and courageous in the face of brokenness and conflict.

The same kind of faith is needed today, the pope said, if the peoples of the Americas are to build a society that overcomes the increasing “signs of division and fragmentation,” where so many people are excluded and poor, “a society that likes to vaunt its scientific and technological advances, but that has become blind and insensitive to the thousands of faces that are there along the way.”

Pope Francis questioned how the peoples of the Americas can boast of their societies’ well-being when there are “thousands and thousands of children and young people on the streets, begging and

sleeping in railway stations, in the subway or wherever they find space.”

Too many families, he said, “are scarred by the suffering of seeing their children made victims of the merchants of death,” and too many elderly are abandoned to solitude. In addition, he said, there is “the precarious situation that affects the dignity of many women. Some, since childhood and adolescence, are subject to many forms of violence inside and outside the home.”

Yet, celebrating the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, he said, Christians are called to remember that they have a mother—“we are not and never will be an orphaned people”—and where there is a mother, there is a strong force pushing children to behave like brothers and sisters.

“This is Mary with us, with her children: a woman who fights against the society of mistrust and blindness, the society of apathy and dispersion; a woman who fights to strengthen the joy of the Gospel, who fights to give ‘flesh’ to the Gospel,” the pope said.

“Let us not be afraid to go out and look upon others with the same gaze, a gaze that makes us brothers and sisters.” †



Pope Francis celebrates Mass marking the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican on Dec. 12. (CNS photo/Remo Casilli, Reuters)

Vatican sets up emails and hashtag to send Pope Francis birthday greetings

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Even though Pope Francis is planning a “normal” workday for his birthday, well-wishers can help brighten it up with special tweets and emails.

Turning 80 on Dec. 17, Pope Francis is planning to start the day with Mass together with cardinals living in Rome, according to the Vatican press office. The Vatican made the announcement on Dec. 13, the anniversary of the pope’s ordination to the priesthood in 1969.

“The rest of the day will be ‘normal,’ loaded with appointments,” it said.

People can tweet messages using the hashtag #Pontifex80 or send an email according to their preferred language, including Latin:

- PopeFrancis80@vatican.va (English)
- PapaFrancisco80@vatican.va (Spanish/Portuguese)
- PapaFrancois80@vatican.va (French)
- PapiezFranciszek80@vatican.va (Polish)
- PapstFranziskus80@vatican.va (German)
- PapaFrancesco80@vatican.va (Italian)
- Papafranciscus80@vatican.va (Latin) †

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SINCE 1883

Divine Mercy grotto provides ‘place for people to go and be with Jesus’

By Natalie Hoefer

MADISON—Mary Rose Carlow scurries around Prince of Peace Parish’s new Divine Mercy grotto in Madison. She sweeps, rearranges flowers in a vase before the statue, and waters the red and white mums along the path to the prayer space.

She finally sits on one of the black iron benches in the grotto and takes in what three years ago was just a vision in her mind.

“God is awesome in that he places things in your heart,” she says. “I’ve always been in love with the Divine Mercy prayer and prayed it, but 10 years ago I felt like I needed to do more.”

Thus began the journey that resulted in the grotto’s prayerful presence—and a lesson in the beauty of God’s perfect timing.

‘I still need you to do more’

When Carlow felt a nudge to do more to promote devotion to the Divine Mercy image, prayer and message a decade ago, she started leading the Divine Mercy novena at her parish, Prince of Peace.

“I did that for a couple of years, but I felt God telling me, ‘I still need you to do more,’” recalls Carlow, a 53-year-old high school behavioral counselor in Madison. “Just by the grace of God, I happened to be looking something up and came across a Divine Mercy website [on how] to start your own Divine Mercy apostolate.”

She asked her pastor, Father Christopher Craig, for permission to start such a group at Prince of Peace.

“He said, ‘Go for it,’” Carlow recalls.

The group, which has about 12 members, focuses on practicing spiritual and corporal works of mercy, studying the Divine Mercy message as revealed through St. Faustina Kowalska’s diary, and on spreading devotion to God’s mercy as revealed by Christ to St. Faustina in the 1930s.

In 2013, a few years after the start of the apostolate, Father Craig told Carlow about the archdiocese’s Queen and Divine Mercy Center Endowment Fund. It was created through the archdiocesan Catholic Community Foundation (CCF) by a former religion teacher of his at Father Michael Shawe Memorial High School in Madison, Father Elmer Burwinkel, who later died in 2014. The fund is designated to support activities in the archdiocese that “honor and recognize Mary as Queen and Mother of Jesus, Divine,” according to CCF director Elisa Smith.

Carlow applied for a grant to purchase material for the apostolate, books for the Prince of Peace library, rosaries and information for the parish church on how to pray the Divine Mercy chaplet.

After the first year of receiving grant money, Carlow decided to apply again in 2014. But this time she had something bigger in mind.

‘You can’t help but see it’

“After the first year of the grant, I was like, ‘You know, we can do more than this,’” Carlow recalls.

She asked Father Craig if he thought building a Divine Mercy grotto on the St. Patrick campus of Prince of Peace Parish would be a good idea. Father Craig not only said yes, but he also knew just the place.

“The spot is someplace that can be seen from the road and from the [Pope John XXIII] school,” he says. “You can’t help but see it when you’re driving up and down State Street. The back drop is some woods, so it’s really pretty, and plus the kids can come over and pray.”

So Carlow applied again for the grant and received \$2,500. Prince of Peace parishioner Bob Schafer cleared the spot where the grotto would go, and he connected Carlow with Scotty Center, a 76-year-old Madison resident experienced in building with stone.

“He lives on a creek and said he’d give us all the rocks we need,” says Carlow. “He donated all of his time, and we didn’t have to pay for about 95 percent of the stone in the grotto!”

Using pictures of grottos from research Carlow had gathered, Center designed the structure and decided upon an arch for the statue niche, with stair-stepped creek stone walls embracing a circular area to form the grotto.

In addition to using the local creek stone—many with fossils embedded and exposed—Center included a steel frame encased by thick concrete in the construction of the shrine.

“This thing isn’t coming down,” he assures.

When Carlow’s retired husband David wasn’t working at the parish’s Catholic Community Center, where he volunteers about 20 hours a week, he helped Center with the construction of the grotto.

Meanwhile, Carlow ordered an Italian, hand-carved Divine Mercy statue through a company in Texas. She was told it would take several months to arrive, which worked out well, she says—it was the fall of 2014, and she figured the grotto



Prince of Peace parishioner David Carlow, left, and Scotty Center, the men who built a new Divine Mercy grotto for the Madison parish, stand with Father Christopher Craig, Prince of Peace’s pastor, after a dedication service and Mass on Oct. 4. (Submitted photos by Cathy Fox)

would be done in 2015. All was going according to Carlow’s plan.

‘It’s not progressing ... then it clicked’

But God’s timing does not always coincide with human plans, Carlow realized.

“The spring of ‘15 comes and they’re building the wall, but it’s not progressing the way I want it to,” she recalls. “The weather wasn’t cooperating,” and the temperatures made it difficult to work on the structure between November and March.

“Then in 2015, when Pope Francis declared the [Holy] Year of Mercy, it clicked: it’s not supposed to be done yet, not until the Year of Mercy,” she says she realized. The jubilee year began on Dec. 8, 2015.

So Carlow applied for another grant for the grotto in 2015 and again received \$2,500.

In the spring of 2016, after two years of planning and with building occurring only about seven months out of the year, Carlow says the grotto stood only a quarter complete.

“I told my husband, ‘It has to get done this year,’” she says, knowing the Holy Year of Mercy would end on Nov. 20.

And then, for some reason, she says, things began to move quickly. Men from a local factory constructed the steel frame, and the arch began to take shape.

“Kids would come over from preschool and just sit and watch as they worked,” says Carlow. “It’s been amazing. The little ones and the adults as well have loved seeing the progress.”

One more grant was applied for, and again Carlow received \$2,500. A small altar was built. Black, cast iron benches were purchased, landscaping was done, and a spotlight was installed to illuminate the grotto at night.

Two plaques were also installed, one honoring Father Burwinkel and one honoring Father Hilary Meny’s 100th birthday on Jan. 21, 2015. Father Meny was pastor of the former St. Patrick Parish in Madison for 40 years, retiring before the parish was merged with two other parishes to form Prince of Peace. He passed away on Oct. 7 of this year.

‘I want the message of Divine Mercy to spread’

Just three days prior to his passing—and

almost six weeks before the closing of the Holy Year of Mercy—the Divine Mercy grotto was dedicated before the parish’s daily Mass on Oct. 4. Prior to the liturgy, which was held at the grotto, Father Craig blessed the structure, the statue and the altar.

He says about 70 people were present for the dedication and Mass. Becky Goebel, who in 1946 was received into the full communion of the Church at one of the parishes that merged into Prince of Peace, was there for the special occasion.

“It was a beautiful dedication,” she says. “I was so happy to be there and see what we’d been hearing about. [The grotto] is lovely. The whole area can see it. It’s not hidden, and it’s easily accessible to people that can’t just get everywhere.”

With the grotto being close to the St. Patrick Church parking lot and accessible by a sidewalk, Father Craig says it will now be the site of the parish’s annual outdoor Mass, as well as the parish’s service for the Feast of the Divine Mercy, the Sunday after Easter.

But Mass is far from the only use for the grotto. The very day after the dedication, Carlow says she saw a teacher from Pope John XXIII School holding religion class in the grotto.

“I wondered how much it would get used, but I look out the window from our parish office and about every day there’s somebody out there,” says Father Craig.

“It’s so cool to see people up there praying,” says Carlow. “I wanted it to be a place where the parishioners and the community in general could go and just be with [Christ].”

She admits the grotto is a work in progress. A concrete cross about 2 feet by 3 feet was discovered half-buried on the St. Patrick property during the construction of the grotto. Carlow wants to build a base of creek stone for the cross and place it near the grotto. She also wants to install a container to hold rosaries and pamphlets on how to pray the rosary and the Divine Mercy chaplet.

While there may be more components Carlow wants to add, she is thrilled that the grotto to the Divine Mercy was completed during the Holy Year of Mercy.

“This year has been so awesome. It’s made people aware of his mercy,” she says. “And being able to spread the word and the novena [through the grotto] has been amazing.”

“I want the message of the Divine Mercy to be spread through it. And hopefully those who have been there will then spread the word.”

(The Divine Mercy grotto is located at 305 W. State St. in Madison on the St. Patrick campus of Prince of Peace Parish.)



Mary Rose Carlow, a member of Prince of Peace Parish in Madison, speaks on Oct. 4 about the Divine Mercy image during a dedication ceremony for the parish’s new grotto, an effort she envisioned, raised funds for and coordinated. Prince of Peace pastor Father Christopher Craig sits at right.

Faith Alive!

A supplement to Catholic newspapers published by Catholic News Service, 3211 Fourth Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20017-1100. All contents are copyrighted © 2016 by Catholic News Service.

God's 'loving gaze' rests on each of us, as it did on Mary

By David Gibson

God is not reluctant to astonish people, it is said. That is a good thing, even when surprising news briefly causes people to feel startled or confused—amazed by one of life's unexpected developments.

No one should know better than Mary, mother of the Lord, that God acts in unexpected ways. Neither is it any wonder that the archangel Gabriel, before announcing to Mary that she would bear “the Son of God,” urged her not to be afraid (Lk 1:26-38).

The angel's presence signified God's nearness, but Mary might nonetheless have experienced a tinge of anxiety upon learning of the astonishing way her life was about to change course.

And who was she anyway? Did she wonder: “Me? Really?” Anyone receiving such shocking good news might wonder momentarily if some mistake was made, if this news possibly was meant for someone else.

“The Lord's gaze rested on her,” Pope Francis said. In remarks during Advent of 2013, the pope recalled that St. Luke's Gospel “presents us with Mary, a girl from Nazareth, a small town in Galilee, on the outskirts of the Roman Empire and on the outskirts of Israel as well. A village. Yet the Lord's gaze rested on her.”

Mary did “not hide her surprise” at the angel's surprising news, Pope Francis commented in an October 2013 homily. Instead, she experienced “the astonishment of realizing that God, to become man, had chosen her, a simple maid of Nazareth.”

God had not chosen someone living “in a palace amid power and riches, or one who had done extraordinary things, but simply someone who was open to God and put her trust in him, even without understanding everything.”

God is like this, the pope made clear. “God surprises us.” Moreover, “it is precisely in poverty, in weakness and in humility that he reveals himself and grants us his love.”

The angel's message to Mary “threw her simple life in Nazareth into turmoil,” the pope remarked. Astonishing developments in life have a way of doing that.

When news arrives that life is about to change in far-reaching ways—maybe that a family soon will move to a new home a thousand miles away—people immediately begin asking what steps to take next, which projects to set into motion first.

Many people tell of being astonished by life. Perhaps someone had a detailed plan for life but, rather unexpectedly and inexplicably, turned off course in ways that ultimately proved all to the good.

Some people encounter their own “angels” in the form of good people who deliver good news to them, whether through insightful, supportive words or the power of their example. This kind of “good news” can open people's eyes, and enable them to see that they could take a different direction in life.

Decades later, a person could be forgiven for wondering how it all happened—how she wound up in a career that drew so greatly upon her finest talents, for example, or how he managed so brilliantly to marry just the right person.

Whatever such a person concludes, the message that God's ways are nothing short of astonishing is unlikely to ring false. Wasn't more than good luck at play?

God in his providence weaves together the many varied strands of our lives in ways that we could never predict and before which we can only stand in awe of his infinite goodness, mercy and love. God's astonishing ways can change everything, which is what happened for Mary.

Archbishop Bernard A. Hebda of St. Paul and Minneapolis described God as a “game changer” during his May 2016



Pope Francis visits a Nativity scene in St. Peter's Square after vespers on New Year's Eve in 2015 in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican. No one should know better than Mary, mother of the Lord, that God acts in astonishing ways. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

installation as archbishop of the Twin Cities.

“Our God is indeed a God who surprises us with his love, sustains us with his love, challenges us with his love—it's a love that changes everything,” said the archbishop. “God's love is the game changer.”

There could be a tendency to think God acted in a game-changing way in Mary's life that revealed little about how God acts in others' lives. But Pope Francis considers that conclusion off-track.

God rested his gaze on Mary, and God “rests his loving gaze on every man and every woman! By name and surname,” Pope Francis insists.

The mystery of Mary, the “girl from Nazareth,” is that she “is not estranged from us,” Pope Francis explains. “She is not there, and we over here,” he says. “No, we are connected.”

She is like us, too, in that the astonishing news she received from the angel “didn't make life easy for her,” the pope points out.

Of course, even when the astounding news anyone receives is all to the good, it makes big demands and sets a new chain of events into motion.

Pope Francis thinks a question to ask about the astonishing, transforming ways of God is “whether we are afraid of what God might ask or of what he does ask.” In other words, “Do I let myself be surprised by God, as Mary was, or do I remain caught up in my own safety zone?”

In contemplating Mary, he wants believers to recognize their own destiny and “deepest vocation: to be loved, to be transformed by love.”

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

Acceptance of God's unexpected will can often require great faith

By Mike Nelson

“For nothing will be impossible for God” (Lk 1:37).

The words of the archangel Gabriel, spoken to Mary in the Gospel of St. Luke, are followed by the most faith-filled response in all of Scripture: “May it be done to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38).

It is a response echoed by Jesus himself, praying in the garden of Gethsemane, the night before he was crucified: “Not my will, but yours be done” (Lk 22:42).

These responses—linking the birth, death and resurrection of Our Lord—model for us how we, too, are called to respond to God's word.

Throughout Scripture, we encounter numerous individuals who are addressed by God—Noah, Abraham and Moses often top the list—and are asked to do things that, at first glance, make little or no sense. (An ark? Move far away from home to an unknown land? A march across the Red Sea? Seriously?)

Then there is Samuel, the young minister serving under the priest Eli, who heard his name being called in the middle of the night and, three times, went to Eli, announcing, “Here I am. You called me” (1 Sm 3:4, 6, 8). Once Eli finally realized who was calling, he instructed Samuel how to reply, should this happen again: “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening” (1 Sm 3:9).

Which is another way of saying, “Be it done unto me.” A message not everyone is ready to heed, no matter how good and faith-filled they may be.

Just before Gabriel tells Mary what is in store for her, he has another conversation with Zechariah, a priest and husband of Mary's kinswoman Elizabeth. This couple, we are told, is “righteous in the eyes of God, observing all the

commandments and ordinances of the Lord blamelessly” (Lk 1:6).

But when the angel tells Zechariah that, even though he and his wife are elderly and she has never been able to conceive, they will soon have a son—a son, adds Gabriel, who “will be great in the sight of the Lord” (Lk 1:15)—Zechariah was, understandably, stunned.

“How shall I know this?” he wondered, clearly not convinced (Lk 1:18).

That's not the answer Gabriel was looking for, and so Zechariah is rendered mute for months, until Elizabeth gives birth and his parents, obedient to the angel's word, give him the name John. “Immediately,” we are told, “his mouth was opened, his tongue freed and he spoke blessing God” (Lk 1:64).

Mary, admittedly, was equally surprised when told she would conceive even though she was a virgin. Yet she willingly accepted what Gabriel told her. “I am the handmaid of the Lord,” she replied (Lk 1:38).

Such humility and obedience to the call of God is the model for us all, whether or not angels appear before us with proclamations of tidings and joy.

Indeed, knowing what God has done for us—specifically, the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus—should help us understand and accept more fully the promise of Advent: that the risen Lord is present in our lives today and will return in glory.

Like Samuel, we are called to listen, serve and believe. For, as Gabriel declared, “nothing is impossible with God” (Lk 1:37).

(Catholic journalist Mike Nelson writes from Southern California.) †



A floral rendition of Mary decorates the area outside St. Peter's Square at the Vatican on June 29. The words of the archangel Gabriel, spoken to Mary in the Gospel of St. Luke (1:37), are followed by the most faith-filled response in all of Scripture: “May it be done to me according to your word.” (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

From the Editor Emeritus/John F. Fink**Wrapping up 86 columns on the history of the Church**

Since April 10, 2015, I've tried to present slices of Catholic history, from the early days of the Church through the 20th century. I've tried to tell the story of the Church as comprehensively as possible, 515 words at a time.

Those 86 columns were preceded by a lengthy series about the Old Testament, which became my book *Introducing the Old Testament*. Then I had 10 columns about the Holy Land at the time of Jesus before starting on the Church's history. All of this is part of salvation history, the story of how God is directing the world.

Some of you have told me that they understand what I was trying to impress on my readers, that is, the history of the Church is evidence that it is more than a human institution. Considering some of its history, it would have disappeared long ago if it was guided only by humans. Clearly, it is the Holy Spirit who is in charge.

I devoted 18 columns to the early

Church, from its beginnings with the Apostles to the papacy of Pope Gregory the Great at the beginning of the seventh century. Together, we covered the importance of St. Paul, the classic age of martyrs, the writing of the Bible, Constantine's acceptance of Christianity, doctrinal disagreements and the early councils.

These were followed by 23 columns on the medieval Church, which was a turbulent period for the papacy. The Church survived because of the Franks and Charlemagne. But then it was divided by the East-West Schism of 1054. This period also covered the Crusades and such interesting characters as the remarkable St. Bernard, Eleanor of Aquitaine and Richard the Lionheart. It also included Sts. Francis and Dominic.

Then came 10 columns on the Renaissance Church, when popes became Renaissance princes, even warriors in the case of Julius II. This was the time of the building of St. Peter's Basilica and such artists and sculptors as Rafael and Michelangelo. But it was also the time of the Protestant Reformation, when the Catholic Church lost so many members.

Eventually, though later, the Council of Trent made needed reforms.

I devoted 11 columns to what I called "the imperiled Church" because it seemed certain that the Church would disappear. England became Protestant, Muslims threatened Europe, the Jesuits were suppressed, the French Revolution persecuted Catholics, Napoleon Bonaparte imprisoned two popes, and the Papal States disappeared and became part of Italy.

But the Church rebounded, and I wrote four columns about that. There was a turn-around in Great Britain and several strong popes led a more spiritual and less temporal Church.

Finally, I wrote 20 columns about the Church in the 20th century, from St. Pius X through St. John Paul II. Seven of those columns were about the Second Vatican Council.

That brings us to the present, when the Church is struggling against the secularism that has engulfed so much of the world, as well as the forces of extreme Islamism. We can be sure, though, that it will survive because it is more than a human institution. †

That All May Be One/Fr. Rick Ginther**Spirit will be present at Week of Prayer for Christian Unity**

Christmas—all Christians share a devotion to this great feast and season.

And unlike Easter, all Christians share a common date for Christmas, Dec. 25.

That which we share in common is very important. Our sharing in a longing for unity is most important!

Annually, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is celebrated from Jan. 18-25. This "octave" (eight days) offers an intense time for prayer that all may be one.

At 7 p.m. on Jan. 18, 2017, at King of Glory Lutheran Church, 2201 E. 106th Street, in Carmel, Ind., the Christian community of the greater Indianapolis area will gather for prayer. A reception will follow.

In keeping with this year of commemoration of the 500th year of the start of the Protestant Reformation, our host church is a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA), Indiana-Kentucky Synod.

The Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity annually publishes

the Week of Christian Unity prayer service.

Each year's service is formulated by a national or regional committee. For 2017, the German national committee was chosen. It consisted of representatives of different Christian communities in Germany—Catholic, Baptist, Evangelical, Methodist, Orthodox, Mennonite and Reformed.

The theme which the national committee chose is "The Love of Christ Compels Us." The source for this theme was Pope Francis' 2013 apostolic exhortation "*Evangelii Gaudium*" ("The Joy of the Gospel," #9).

From this, they used the fuller Scripture text of 2 Corinthians 5:14-20 to frame the prayer service and the entire week.

"For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them (2 Cor 5:14-15).

"From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away, see, everything has

become new! (2 Cor 5:16-17)

"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making this appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" (2 Cor 18-20).

Our prayer service on Jan. 18 will be based upon the international English version of the Prayer Service. Various leaders of Christian communities in Indiana, along with lay ministers and choir, will lead us in the prayer.

Having just completed the Holy Year of Mercy, what better opportunity could we have than to join together in an evening of prayer such as this?

May the Spirit of God compel us to be a part of this night—indeed this week—of hope and prayer for unity.

For more insight into the prayer service, go to www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/week-of-prayer.

(*Father Rick Ginther is director of the archdiocesan Office of Ecumenism. He is pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Indianapolis.*) †

Worship and Evangelization Outreach/Andrew Motyka**Appeal of music can add to richness, beauty of liturgy**

It has been said that people usually leave Mass and only remember two things: the homily and the music.

While this is a pretty broad-brush assumption, there is truth to the idea that music in the liturgy sticks with people after the recessional has ended. Music also focuses and elevates both our hearts and minds, drawing us toward the sacred as all beauty does. This, in turn, helps us to be receptive to the grace poured out in the sacraments, drawing us into a deeper relationship with Christ.

Music is a phenomenon with universal appeal, an art that everyone can form a connection to, regardless of their knowledge or experience. It can help shape our emotions, focus our attention, and add greater solemnity to texts. One only needs to listen to the difference between the Lord's Prayer being spoken

and the same prayer being sung to recognize the difference music makes on the text.

As St. Augustine said, singing is for one who loves. Music in general, and singing in particular, not only elevates the spoken word, but also gives us a way to engage our prayer more intentionally.

It takes much more effort to sing a prayer than it does to speak it, and the unity we experience when singing together as a congregation presents a beautiful symbol of our unity in worship and belief.

While music leaders can certainly be scrupulous or deliberately esoteric in their selections of music for the Mass, it is more likely that they are seeking for beautiful music of high quality that helps people to lift their hearts to the Lord. This effect of music and beauty in the Church and liturgy in general is not merely window dressing: It is an important opportunity for the assembly to open themselves further to the grace poured out in the Eucharist.

Nothing we do can add to or subtract from the grace that God pours out on

us in the Eucharist. Whether Mass is celebrated extremely reverently or halfheartedly, a validly celebrated Mass feeds us the Body and Blood of Christ.

Why then, is so much attention given to quality music and liturgy? Because disposition matters. Each individual's relationship with Jesus, our sinfulness and our openness in prayer can all affect our receptivity of God's grace. Beauty, whether in word, art, music or even silence, can open our hearts to prayer and make our reception of sacramental grace more fruitful.

Clearly, beautiful liturgy is no substitute for intentional discipleship, but it can help to guide people to discipleship by edifying them in prayer. God desires the best we have to offer in discipleship, in charity and in prayer.

Whether we have a wealthy liturgical life or the widow's mite, we should offer the best we have to God in worship.

(*Andrew Motyka is director of archdiocesan and cathedral liturgical music.*) †

For The Journey/Effie Caldarola**How to spot fake news**

My husband and I were planning date night. There was a new restaurant in town, so we Googled it.



On a site that posts restaurant reviews, supposedly submitted by customers, my spouse read aloud what was possibly the worst review I've ever heard.

Tepid soup handed back to an insolent waiter. The patron, within earshot, called "stupid" by the expeditor. The list went on as the poor service and insults—one from the owner himself—continued. I started to giggle.

"Wait a minute, that might be a fake review," I said. This new spot had been getting good press.

A restaurant review—or any online submitted review—can definitely be bogus. Your mom in Peoria may send in a glowing description of your new lunch spot in Dallas even though she has never left Illinois. Or your competitor from down the block, who has never set foot in your establishment, may assert he ate the worst meal of his life there, complete with cranky waitress and a hair in the salad.

You have to take online reviews with, pardon the pun, a grain of salt.

Now we know, on a far more serious and threatening level, that we have to take the "news" we see online with a block of salt.

Not only was our recent election threatened by fake news planted, allegedly, by sites in Russia and Eastern Europe, but National Public Radio, in a Nov. 23 report, found a man in California who was responsible for scores of widely read fake news, most of it anti-Clinton.

Claiming to be a Democrat, the man said it was easier to get the pro-Trump people to click on fake news than it was to get liberals to do so. So, since getting those clicks is very lucrative business, he cast aside any principles he obviously didn't have anyway, and went with anti-Clinton stuff.

For example, maybe you saw a story online: "FBI agent suspected in Hillary e-mail leaks found dead in apparent murder-suicide." Written by the operation in California, the story was a complete and total fabrication. No such agent, no such murder-suicide. But the story had traction.

People make money off of clicks, and Facebook and Twitter are receiving increasing pressure to police their platforms for these fake stories.

But the thing is, folks, it's up to us to be better-informed, better-read citizens. First of all, if you are one of the many Americans who get most of your news on Facebook, please stop right now. If you must find your news online, always go to established news sources, like *The New York Times*, *The Atlantic*, Catholic News Service and a host of others.

If, while perusing Facebook or Twitter, you see a story that sounds compelling—and these fake sites are great at producing eyebrow-raising headlines—don't click until you evaluate the source. Some fake sites try to sound suspiciously like real sites you trust. Tread carefully.

Leonard Pitts Jr., a syndicated columnist for the *Miami Herald*, has a great antidote for fake news. He made a pitch recently for a medium that isn't perfect, but isn't fraudulent.

"So what, you ask, is this miracle medium?" Pitts asks in a Nov. 27 column. "It's called a 'newspaper.'"

Real journalists have gone to journalism school. They know the First Amendment and journalistic ethics. They enhance our democracy rather than threaten it. Although imperfect, they are not "the lame stream media" as they've been foolishly tarred by some.

And they are not inventing lies to make money off gullible citizens.

(*Effie Caldarola writes for Catholic News Service.*) †

Fourth Sunday of Advent/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, December 18, 2016

- Isaiah 7:10-14
- Romans 1:1-7
- Matthew 1:18-24

The Church is observing the last Sunday of Advent. In only seven days, the Church will joyfully and in great faith celebrate Christmas, the Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord.

The Church chooses for the first reading on this weekend a passage from the Book of Isaiah. Central in the reading is King Ahaz of the southern Hebrew kingdom

of Judah, who reigned in the last third of the eighth century before Christ. His reign is not remembered as having been particularly distinguished. He was no great leader.

The definition of a good king for Isaiah was that the monarch genuinely should lead the people to God by inspiring them to follow their covenant with him. Regardless of any other duty, confirming the covenant and requiring submission to its terms were the essential responsibilities of the kings. Nothing else ultimately mattered.

Although Ahaz was not spectacular in his role, God still used him as an instrument to bring the people back to fidelity to the covenant. Ahaz served God's purpose to save the people from their own sins by fathering a son. When the king's spouse, a young woman, conceived, Isaiah saw in the event a sign of God's caring for the people. What the lackluster Ahaz could not accomplish would be achieved by his son.

Thus, the coming of the new prince was a cause for rejoicing.

As its second reading on this weekend, the Church selects a section from St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans. No Christian today would think of challenging Paul's status as an Apostle. When Paul was alive, however, his credentials were hardly so universally acknowledged. He himself wrote of usurpers who vested themselves with the

My Journey to God

The Joyful Noise

By John McMullen

It all began a little over 2,000 years ago—
That lingering Joyful Noise,
First heard in distant melodic tunes,
From a faraway town,
By shepherds and herdsmen tending their sheep and cattle.
Kings heard it, but were busy with matters within their realm.
Shopkeepers heard it, but were busy with their wares.
Onward strolled the shepherds over pasture land and hills;
Onward the herdsmen over range and mountainous terrain.
Ever increasing, this Joyful Noise,
As desert dwellers began to move toward that melodious sound.
Then, on a very starry night, in this little town, they all arrived.
They saw a star beaming its rays of light
Surrounding a little babe within a stable,
From which came the tumultuous music
Of the most Joyful Noise, as angels proclaimed:
“TODAY A SAVIOR IS BORN!”
And so it continues down through the years!
That soft thin sound heard only by those who listen.
Increasing in volume each day
Until the time we hear the angels' melodic voices
Proclaiming our Savior's birth.
All we need to do is listen—
Do you hear it? Do you hear the Joyful Noise?

(John McMullen is a member of St. Jude the Apostle Parish in Spencer.)

cloak of being Apostles, and who led the faithful astray.

Here Paul stresses that he indeed is an Apostle, because the Lord called him.

St. Matthew's Gospel is the source of the last reading. This reading recalls the miraculous conception of Jesus. Jesus is the Son of God and the son of the Virgin Mary. He entered human history directly as a result of God's love for humanity, fulfilling God's promise to give the fullness of life to the people who were faithful.

The Incarnation, as the Church's tradition calls the mystery of the Son of God's conception as a human, is beyond human comprehension. Not even Joseph, holy as he was, could understand it. God's ways are not our ways.

Reflection

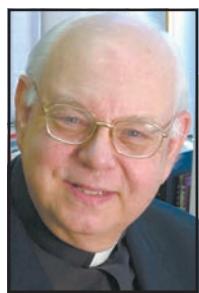
Only one week remains in Advent, and given the frenzy usually connected with preparing for Christmas in our society, these remaining days of Advent are apt to be quite busy.

Nevertheless, one week will be enough for any of us to use the opportunity of Advent to cleanse ourselves of attachments to sin and instead make our souls worthy of receiving the Lord. Christmas can be deeply personal for us, for if we have made ourselves worthy, Jesus will come to us personally on this great feast.

The Church encourages us, therefore, to accept its Advent invitation to come to God. If we have conscientiously observed Advent, then the Church urges us to continue doing so until Christmas. If we have allowed Advent to slip past us, the Church calls us to use the time left.

God wants us to love him as he loves us. Again and again, God has reached out to people to empower them in coming in him. He sent a son to Ahaz, that his chosen people might have a good king. He sent Jesus to us. Jesus sent us the Apostles. He sent Paul.

God loves us so much. He never leaves alone or without guidance. He provides for us in ways we cannot understand. Even in one week, we can reach out to God, if we wish. Time remains. †



Daily Readings

Monday, December 19

Judges 13:2-7, 24-25a
Psalm 71:3-4a, 5-6b, 16-17
Luke 1:5-15

Tuesday, December 20

Isaiah 7:10-14
Psalm 24:1-6
Luke 1:26-38

Wednesday, December 21

St. Peter Canisius, priest and 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

Thursday, December 22

1 Samuel 1:24-28
(Response) 1 Samuel 2:1, 4-8
Luke 1:46-56

Friday, December 23

St. John of Kanty, priest
Malachi 3:1-4, 23-24
Psalm 25:4bc-5ab, 8-10, 14
Luke 1:57-66

Saturday, December 24

2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16
Ps 89:2-5, 27, 29
Luke 1:67-69
Vigil of the Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)
Isaiah 62:1-5
Psalm 89:4-5, 16-17, 27, 29
Acts 13:16-17, 22-25
Matthew 1:1-25
or Matthew 1:18-25

Sunday, December 25

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

Question Corner/Fr. Kenneth Doyle

Catholics with celiac disease may receive low-gluten host or just the precious blood

At our parish weekend Mass, one child comes regularly to the altar at the same time as the extraordinary ministers of holy Communion and receives Communion separately from the congregation. My understanding is that he has celiac disease and receives a low-gluten host.



But I just realized today that the celebrant gives him Communion using the same hand that has just touched the "regular" hosts. As a person with a food allergy myself (albeit a different one), doesn't that risk a cross-contamination of the host received by the boy? (Pennsylvania)

The Mayo Clinic in 2012 estimated that 1.8 million Americans suffer from celiac disease. For them, eating gluten (a protein contained in wheat) can cause serious damage to the intestinal lining. This would mean that, in a Sunday congregation of 400 worshippers, two or three would likely be afflicted.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has recognized the danger you point out of cross-contamination. In their pastoral guidelines, they suggest that before Mass begins, a low-gluten host be placed in a pyx on the altar. (A pyx is a small metal container designed to securely hold consecrated hosts, and most parishes would have several of them.)

When the person with gluten intolerance approaches the priest in the Communion line, he or she could simply be handed the pyx containing the consecrated host.

You will notice that I use the term "low-gluten" rather than "gluten-free." According to the Vatican, hosts must be made of wheat since Christ used wheat bread at the Last Supper.

In the parish from which I just retired, we kept a supply of low-gluten hosts that contain less than 0.01 percent of gluten

and that medical research has deemed safe for most celiac sufferers.

A person with celiac disease is best advised to seek medical advice regarding the consumption of low-gluten hosts. Those Catholics unable to consume even low-gluten hosts may receive under the precious blood only, even if the cup is not offered to the rest of the congregation at a particular Mass.

A retired priest celebrates one of the Sunday Masses each week at our parish. During football season, after the opening hymn, he spends a couple of minutes commenting on the football game that our local team played the day before.

This, of course, produces giggles from the congregation, which urges him to continue what I believe is inappropriate. Also, at the conclusion of the liturgy, instead of saying, "The Mass is ended. Go in peace," he says, "The Mass never ends; it must be lived by each of us today." Do you have any thoughts on this situation and what I may do about it? (Ohio)

A The first rule, I would think, is that the Mass should be offered with the reverence and dignity that the circumstance warrants: Jesus Christ is made present on the altar, offered to the Lord in sacrifice and then received back as gift to the faithful. This doesn't rule out occasional humor, lighthearted commentary or reference to contemporary events, even football games.

But if the priest you mention regularly spends as much time as you say reviewing the fortunes of the local team—"a couple of minutes" and then some more—that seems a bit excessive.

As to his extemporizing at the dismissal rite, he should choose from one of the four formulas offered in the *Roman Missal*.

I recommend talking to the priest himself or with your pastor about your concerns.

(Questions may be sent to Father Kenneth Doyle at askfatherdoyle@gmail.com and 30 Columbia Circle Drive, Albany, N.Y., 12203.) †



Rest in peace

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

ACKERMAN, Joan L., 85, St. Augustine, Jeffersonville, Dec. 3. Sister of Joseph, Paul and Robert Ackerman. Aunt of several.

ALHORN, Bernice (Morrison), 90, St. Vincent de Paul, Bedford, Nov. 30. Mother of Rebecca Bliss, Rosemary Clampitt, Bernadette Dipple and Richard Alhorn. Sister of Goldie Milan. Grandmother of six. Great-grandmother of six.

BEESELEY, Ruth L., 99, St. Bartholomew, Columbus, Nov. 27. Mother of Kenneth Beesley. Grandmother of one. Great-grandmother of two.

BROWN, Michael J., 70, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, New Albany, Nov. 22. Father of Annette Devora and Keith Brown. Brother of Patrick Brown. Grandfather of three.

CROWLEY, Margaret, 86, St. Monica, Indianapolis, Nov. 28. Mother of Bridget Ardelean, Kathleen Miller, Mary, Matthew, Michael and Patrick Crowley. Grandmother of 17. Great-grandmother of five.

DONAHUE, Thomas F., 80, St. Barnabas, Indianapolis, Nov. 30. Husband of Arlene Donahue. Uncle of several.

DUNLEVY, Antoinette, 94, Immaculate Heart of Mary, Indianapolis, Nov. 26. Mother of Joan Cimyotte, Gail Clute, Mary Huffman, Kathy Lawrence, Carol and Jerry Dunlevy, Jr. Grandmother of 16. Great-grandmother of 21. Great-great-grandmother of two.

GARRETT, Thomas F., 87, St. Charles Borromeo, Bloomington, Nov. 25. Uncle of several.

GAVIN, Rita A., 89, St. Augustine, Jeffersonville, Dec. 4. Wife of William Gavin. Mother of Mary Ann Morgan and Shawn Gavin. Sister of Rosie Scott and Mary Catherine Young. Grandmother of two.

GRANNAN, Anthony J., 83, Our Lady of the Greenwood, Greenwood, Nov. 30. Father of Bryan, Curtis and Mark Grannan. Brother of Al, Jim and Ray Grannan. Grandfather of two.

HOTEL, Betty L., 88, Holy Family, Oldenburg, Dec. 5. Wife of Lawrence Holtel. Mother of Mary Jo Beck, Nancy Marticke, Karen Pratt and Robert Holtel. Grandmother of nine. Great-grandmother of five.

LECKLIDER, Bette, 94, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Richmond, Nov. 27. Mother of Jerry Lecklider. Grandmother of one. Great-grandmother of one.

PERRY, Andrew J., 50, SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi, Greenwood, Dec. 2. Father of Kevin Perry. Son of John and Alice Perry. Brother of Rob Perry.

RENNAKER, Barbara, 78, St. Lawrence, Indianapolis, Nov. 25. Mother of Connie Tupman, David Davis, Gary and Larry Sheperd.

Step-mother of several. Grandmother of several.

RIPBERGER, Eugene, 83, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Cambridge City, Nov. 20. Husband of Betty Ripberger.

Father of Carol Baker, Chris, Glen, Neil and Tom Ripberger. Grandfather of 14. Great-grandmother of seven.

SENG, Dorotha L. (Williams), 103, Holy Family, New Albany, Dec. 4. Mother of Joan Marie

Banet. Grandmother of nine. Great-grandmother of 11.

Great-great-grandmother of one.

SMITH, Marjorie, 94, St. Jude, Indianapolis, Nov. 30. Mother of Linda Dunn,

Michael, Ralph and Thomas Smith. Grandmother of 18. Great-grandmother of 37. Great-great-grandmother of six.

STUTZ, Doris M., 94, All Saints, Dearborn County,

Dec. 2. Mother of Melissa Hoffman, Debbie Wasinger, Gerri, Jackie and Richard Stutz. Sister of Jean Miller. Grandmother of eight.

Great-grandmother of seven.

TODD, Fern, 91, St. Mary, Greensburg, Dec. 6. Aunt of several.

WARD, Ralph N., 89, St. Paul, Tell City, Nov. 30. Father of Carolyn Cronin. Brother of Hazel Voges.

Grandfather of two. Great-grandfather of five.

WESLEY, Patricia L., 74, St. Malachy, Brownsburg, Nov. 30. Wife of Robert Wesley. Mother of Andrew and Eric Taylor. Sister of Marilyn Webb. Grandmother of one.

WOLBERT, Therese, 78, St. Pius X, Indianapolis, Nov. 28. Mother of Stephen and Terrance Wolbert. Sister of Eileen Busby. Grandmother of two. †

Congregation for Clergy updates guidelines for educating priests

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—The Catholic Church needs holy, healthy and humble priests, and that requires prayers for vocations and the careful selection and formation of candidates, said the Congregation for Clergy.

Updating 1985 guidelines for preparing men for the Latin-rite priesthood and ensuring their continuing education, training and support, the Congregation for Clergy on Dec. 7 released “The Gift of the Priestly Vocation,” a detailed set of guidelines and norms for priestly formation.

The updated document draws heavily on St. John Paul II’s 1992 apostolic exhortation on priestly formation, as well as on the teaching of and norms issued by now-retired Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis and by Vatican offices over the past three decades.

It reaffirms an instruction approved by Pope Benedict in 2005, which said, “the Church, while profoundly respecting the persons in question, cannot admit to the seminary or to holy orders those who practice homosexuality, present deep-seated homosexual tendencies or support the so-called ‘gay culture.’”

The document insists that through courses in pastoral theology, the example

of priests and practical experience, candidates for the priesthood learn that priestly ministry involves—as Pope Francis says—being “shepherds ‘with the smell of the sheep,’ who live in their midst to bring the mercy of God to them.”

Highlighting lessons learned over the past 30 years from the clerical sexual abuse scandal, the new guidelines state, “The greatest attention must be given to the theme of the protection of minors and vulnerable adults, being vigilant lest those who seek admission to a seminary or to a house of formation, or who are already petitioning to receive holy orders have not been involved in any way with any crime or problematic behavior in this area.”

Seminars and courses on the protection of children and vulnerable adults must be part of both seminary education and the continuing education of priests, it says. And bishops must be very cautious about accepting candidates for the priesthood who have been dismissed from other seminaries.

In the end, each bishop is responsible for determining which candidate for priesthood he will ordain, but the guidelines strongly encourage bishops to accept the judgment of

seminary rectors and staff who determine a certain candidate is unsuitable.

“Experience has shown that when ordinaries [bishops] have not accepted the negative judgment of the community of formators, it has been the cause of great suffering in many cases, both for the candidates themselves and for the local Churches,” the document says.

Reaffirming the requirement that seminarians study Catholic social teaching, the document says the education must include a study of climate change and other environmental threats.

“Protecting the environment and caring for our common home—the Earth—belong fully to the Christian outlook on man and reality,” the document says. Catholic priests must be “promoters of an appropriate care for everything connected to the protection of creation.”

Seminarians should be encouraged to use social media to build relationships and for evangelization, the guidelines say, but seminary personnel will need to help the students use the media wisely and in a way that is healthy.

Psychologists, whether or not on the staff of the seminary, can provide

valuable help to the seminary rector and diocesan bishop “in the assessment of personality, expressing an opinion as to the psychological health of the candidate and in therapeutic accompaniment, in order to shed light on any problems that may emerge and to assist in growth in human maturity,” the document says.

The Congregation for Clergy recommends that women be on the staff of seminaries or teach at the universities where the candidates study, and that seminarians’ ability to relate to and work with women be considered in the candidate’s evaluation, since the majority of parishioners with whom the future priest will work are women.

The guidelines, which are to be adapted by national bishops’ conferences, include an outline of the stages, prayer life and specific subjects to be studied during the six or more years of preparation for priestly ordination.

But the guidelines also acknowledge that many of the skills needed to be a good priest cannot be learned in a classroom. They are the result of prayer, self-discipline and seeking to model one’s behavior on that of Christ, the document says. †



Immaculate Conception

A projected image of Mary and the Christ Child illuminates the facade of Sydney’s St. Mary’s Cathedral on Dec. 8, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. (CNS photo/Jason Reed, Reuters)

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Despite family tragedy, speaker offers message of hope and healing

By Katie Breidenbach

Special to The Criterion

FORT WAYNE—Robert Rogers never dreamed that he would be engaged in full-time ministry.

A little more than 13 years ago, he was employed as an electrical engineer and happily married to his wife Melissa with four children—ages 8, 5, 3 and 1. But on the heartbreaking evening of Aug. 30, 2003, he lost them all.

The entire family was on their way home to Kansas City from a wedding in Wichita, Kan. Suddenly, their minivan was caught in a flash flood and swept off the interstate by a 6-foot wall of water. Plunged down into a rushing torrent, Rogers was flushed out of the vehicle and sent tumbling through the waters, eventually washing up on high ground “only by the grace of God.” In the hours and days that followed, rescue teams discovered that his wife and four children had all drowned.

“I still grieve,” Rogers said. “I still cry even 13 years later. I still miss them. But when we know Christ, we can grieve with hope. I know one day, I’ll see them.”

Now a member of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Fort Wayne, Ind., Rogers operates a ministry called Mighty in the Land. He travels the country sharing his story with others and urging them to turn to Christ for healing. He estimates that he has spoken to more than 250,000 people, crossing lines of denomination and tradition.

“This seems to be a story that surpasses denominational differences because we all need hope, we all need the good news,” he told *The Criterion*.

The good news of hope and healing is especially needed at this time of year, when many experience the pain of bereavement more acutely. As families and friends gather to celebrate Christmas, the absence of one member can become more pronounced.

“There’s that deafening silence in your home, an empty chair, an empty

spot at the dinner table,” Rogers said. “I can relate in some ways. I’ll never say I understand because every loss is uniquely devastating.”

Rogers’ first event this month took place on Dec. 1 at The Chapel, a nondenominational church in Fort Wayne. He shared his story with the Senior Connection, a fellowship group for adults over 60. Many of the attendees already knew the pain of losing a loved one.

Sharon Greenhow’s husband Peter passed away four years ago. She says Christmas Day is still particularly painful—Peter’s birthday was on Dec. 25.

“Prayer is what got me through. I asked the Spirit of the Lord to go before me and behind me and to cover me,” she related. “God never leaves you alone.”

For those mourning the loss of a loved one, Rogers suggests an action that he says “sounds rather backward”—to give God thanks. When he started thanking God for the lives of his wife and children, it helped to ease the pain of their deaths.

“I began thanking God that I got to be a father for eight years. I got to be a husband for almost 12 years,” Rogers recalled, “and that helped get my mind’s focus off the negative side of it and onto the positive, onto the gift that God has given me.”

The American Psychology Association notes that telling stories about the deceased and speaking with others who are also bereaved can further the healing process. Rogers relates that sharing his story and encouraging others brings him great joy in the midst of his grief.

“One of the best ways to heal is to help someone else in need,” he said. “As I started seeing people’s lives change, that blessed me. And that gave glory to God.”

An accomplished pianist and singer, Rogers also played several songs for those gathered at The Chapel. Some pieces were bright and full of cheer, others emotional and moving.

One of his most poignant pieces was the contemporary Christmas song titled “Breath of Heaven (Mary’s Song).” The lyrics are written from the Virgin Mary’s

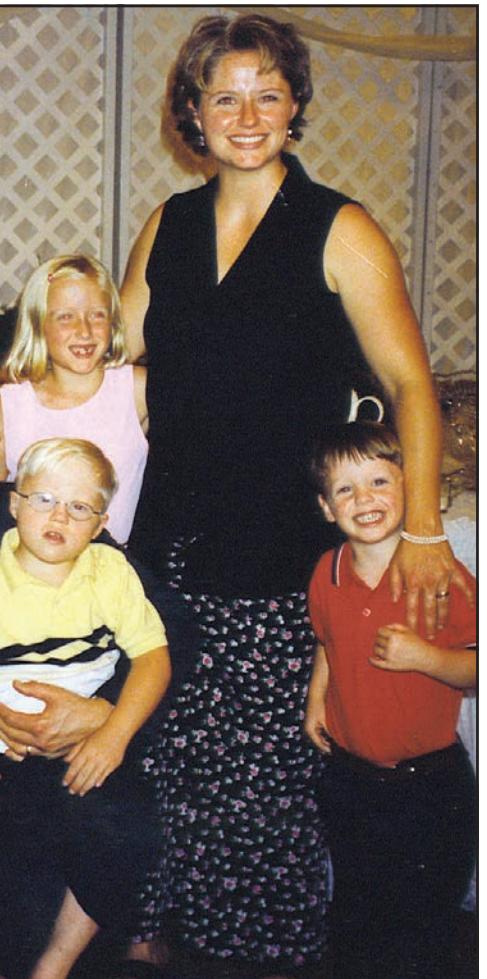
perspective and imagine her desolation as she, nine months pregnant, is forced to travel to an unknown city far from family and friends.

“Even though the season is full of holly jolly and lights and carols, you know Mary and Joseph weren’t all that comfortable. They were suffering,” Rogers explained. “They had, in a sense, lost their reputation. She was pregnant out of wedlock. There was no room for them at the inn.”

The Holy Family’s story, Rogers said, is proof that God can bring forth good from the most difficult circumstances.

“Out of that suffering that she and Joseph endured came the greatest gift that the world has ever known,” he said.

Mighty in the Land Ministry has sponsored seven orphanages in six countries to honor Rogers’ family members. His speaking schedule, along



Robert Rogers is pictured with his family hours before a flash flood on Aug. 30, 2003, resulted in the death of his wife Melissa and their four children. Robert is shown holding ALENAH, 1, and ZACHARY, 5. MELISSA has her arms around MAKENAH, 8, and NICHOLAS, 3. (Photo courtesy Robert Rogers)

with several books he has written, are available on his website, www.mightyintheland.com.

(Katie Breidenbach is a freelance writer in Bloomington.) †



Robert Rogers offers a message of hope and healing during a Dec. 1 talk at The Chapel, a nondenominational church in Fort Wayne, Ind. (Photo by Katie Breidenbach)

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The position requires a college degree or equivalent experience as well as three to five years of office experience, preferably involving fund-raising. Excellent interpersonal skills are essential, since the position involves a high degree of interaction with current and prospective donors. Candidates should be creative problem solvers who can take initiative and oversee projects to their successful completion. Demonstrated proficiency with computer software, including Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Word and Raiser's Edge database management software is desired. Highly ethical standards in working with confidential information are also essential.

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Vatican recognizes association of its women employees

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Lay and religious women make up almost 20 percent of the Vatican workforce, and a group of them have formed an association designed as a forum for collaboration, sharing and outreach.

“D.V.A.” which stands for “*Donne in Vaticano*” (Women in the Vatican) was approved as an association by the Vatican City governor’s office in September, according to a press release issued on Dec. 7.

So far, about 50 women have joined the association that a dozen Vatican employees started organizing several years ago. They say 750 women—19 percent of the Vatican work force—are eligible to join.

The female employees include two undersecretaries—Flaminia Giovanelli of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, and Sister Nicoletta Spezzati, a member of the Adorers of the Blood of Christ, who works at the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. Natasha Govekar, a theologian, serves as director of the new theological-pastoral department of the Vatican Secretariat for Communications, and Paloma Garcia Ovejero is assistant director of the Vatican press office.

In addition, the Vatican communications’ apparatus includes many female journalists, and women scholars and restorers work at the Vatican Library, Secret Archives and Museums.

Organizers said D.V.A. is not a union or a pressure group, but is a “network of friendship, exchange and solidarity among all for human and professional growth.” †

Oldenburg Academy senior captures cross country state championship

By John Shaughnessy

Curt Eckstein felt "a little pressure" as he lined up to run in the 2016 boys' Indiana high school cross country championship.

After all, the senior at the Oldenburg Academy of the Immaculate Conception in Oldenburg finished third in last year's race, and both runners who finished ahead of him had graduated.

And then there was the huge contingent of family, friends and people from his school who traveled from Oldenburg to Terre Haute to watch him compete for the individual state championship on Oct. 29.

"I feel like a lot of people were expecting me to win," says Curt, a member of Holy Family Parish in Oldenburg. "When I did, it was great and very relieving. It feels nice that all the hard work paid off."

Curt not only finished first in the 3.1-mile race, he finished 27.4 seconds ahead of the second-place finisher—the second largest winning margin since 1968.

He also became the first cross-country state champion in the school's history, much to the delight of the Oldenburg Academy cheering section.

"The turnout was really nice. It was great to have them come out and give me moral support," says Curt, who also sings

in the school's choir, serves as a school ambassador and is involved in campus ministry. "They were really excited. It shows we have a good community."

Following the race, the son of Dave and Judy Eckstein was also named the winner of the Charles F. Maas Mental Attitude Award for the state cross-country tournament.

"I don't like to brag or be cocky," he says. "So this proved to myself that I was good at staying humble." †



Curt Eckstein, a senior at the Oldenburg Academy of the Immaculate Conception, won the 2016 boys' Indiana high school cross country championship on Oct. 29 in Terre Haute. (Submitted photo)

FREEDOM

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participate in procedures that have the effect of mutilating a patient's otherwise healthy reproductive organs. Hospitals should not lose Medicare or Medicaid funding over this issue.

Third, the president-elect should rescind the Obama administration's "guidance" and related memos on Title IX that force schools—including at the K-12 level—to treat students according to their "internal sense of gender."

Teachers and school administrators at the local level should be free to use their best judgment—working with parents and counselors—of how to deal with extremely sensitive issues involving young children.

Further, schools with religious exemptions to Title IX should not be placed on a "shame list" run by the U.S. Department of Education simply for claiming an exemption—a right that stems from the Constitution.

Fourth, the president-elect should direct the U.S. Department of Housing

and Urban Development (HUD) to stop enforcing its "gender identity" mandate on homeless shelters, such as many operated by faith-based providers like Catholic Charities.

HUD's mandate would force women in federally funded homeless shelters to share shower facilities, restrooms and sleeping areas with biological men who "identify" as women. Many times, victims of domestic violence seek a safe haven in shelters. Women and girls should not have to give up their privacy or safety when they go to a shelter.

President-elect Trump has the opportunity to ensure that people of all faiths can continue to do their good work in serving their communities without having to violate their consciences or face crippling fines or onerous lawsuits. Our hope is that the next administration will ensure that Americans remain free to serve.

(Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore is the chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty.) †

MORALS

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If I rob others, it is objectively bad because it harms others by depriving them of their goods, and it transforms me into a thief, the kind of person who cheapens his humanity and degrades his integrity by stealing the goods of others.

Even those who believe in a "feelings-based" morality are quick to decry certain

actions as always wrong—at least when it comes to their own vehicles and homes being plundered, irrespective of whether the robbers might have their own moral sentiments favoring the practice.

To think clearly about morality, we need to start by acknowledging that certain moral duties do not depend on context or emotion, but are universally binding on us, having even a "commandment-like" quality.

Professor William May, a remarkable

teacher of moral theology at the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family in Washington, had a penchant for choosing clear and memorable examples when he would lecture. He used to tell his students that we all know certain actions are wrong, regardless of circumstances.

One of his most graphic examples, recounted by his students even decades later, was his undeniable assertion that we all know barbecuing a baby is wrong. Similarly, he stressed that everyone recognizes the wrongness of adultery, an act so often shrouded in secrecy that attacks the good of our spouse and seriously violates an important and defining personal commitment we have

made.

Even if something "feels right" in the moment, it can be very wrong for us to do it. Quite apart from the context or circumstances, certain kinds of acts, without exception, are incompatible with human dignity because, by their very nature, they are damaging and destructive to ourselves and to those around us.

(Father Tadeusz Pacholczyk, 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.ncbicenter.org.) †



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