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, the students hear a story marked by birth of the United States as a nation, the Declaration of Independence in the classroom wall, stressing the words “Life” and “Liberty” that he has written in big, bold, black letters.

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.

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“America is a dream come true.” It was just about a year ago when Ahmed Al-Darraji—a dentist in Iraq—used a visa to attend a dental conference in New York, his cousin in Indianapolis. Before he left his homeland, he told his wife of his plan to seek asylum. He also threatened me,” he said about the Iraqi government before the beginning of class.

“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 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 cross.

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!”

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

By Natalie Hofer

Cardinal Tobin, 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 Hofer)

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IMMIGRANTS
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encouraged him to move close to him.

“He’s helped me a lot,” Al-Darraji 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-Darraji said.

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 fulfill 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, a dream made possible with the help of Catholic Charities Indianapolis.

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.

Winnie Al-Darraji said. “It’s all about freedom.”

Limon, 38, a member of SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral and 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-Darraji 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-Darraji 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, 1347 N. Meridian St. in Indianapolis and the Archchbe 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. vespers Mass, and Midnight Mass with Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin as the principal celebrant. It will be the last time he celebrates in the archdiocese.
Parking is available for the 6 p.m. Mass from 5:30 p.m. behind the cathedral and at the Archbishop Edward T. O Meura 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
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. †

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Prisco “Paco” Limon, a 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.

(Photos by John Straubmiller)
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 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 original families pray at the parish and maintain its family atmosphere. The close-knit nature of St. Anne was on full display Nov. 6, when Cardinal-designate Joseph W. Tobin was the principal celebrant of a Mass to celebrate its bicentennial.

As it turned out, the Mass was historic in itself, being the last Mass Celebrated by Cardinal-designate Tobin at the shrine 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 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 a 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 the 19th century.”

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 T. Duager 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 choir.

They also helped clean the parish and laundered its linens.

“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 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 in the state after 20 weeks, or five months of pregnancy. On Dec. 6, they approved legislation that would ban abortions in the state after 20 weeks, or five months of pregnancy. On Dec. 6, they approved legislation that would ban abortions in the state after 20 weeks, or five months of pregnancy.

Current law bans abortions after a fetus has begun its 20th week of gestation, unless the child is believed to be defective, which is usually at about the 20th week.

The Gaspers trace their roots back to a founding family of the faith community.

Lea and Patti Gasper, members of St. Anne Parish in Jennings County, have been married during the Mass.

It was the principal celebrant of a Mass to celebrate its bicentennial.

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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 faith-based 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 offered 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. It explains in the military context 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 uniform’s way.

President Barack Obama’s Executive Order 13672 would restrict faith-based organizations from being able to hire people only after they lose the mission of the organization if they have a contract with the federal government. Faith-based organizations also would not be able to opt out from working with the government to provide much-needed services.

First, the president-elect can—and should—rescind executive orders that restrict 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. Contraceptive mandates are not preventive “health care,” and indeed are associated with adverse health outcomes.

Repealing 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 refrain from issuing any future “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 claiming they are “medical.”

Doctors and hospitals should be free to use their best medical judgment to treat patients. Health care providers should not be told by the federal government that they must provide much-needed services.

Order 13672 was a significant overstep by the Obama administration. Faith-based organizations should be allowed to hire people who can effectively serve the mission of the organization, if they choose to do so.

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

Consider, for example, if a person were granted emotion leeway to trump their moral feelings of those around us.

Religious freedom is a matter of conscience. It is not about the relative or the context.

In light of our tendency to try to justify our misdeeds, it can be appealing to frame the issue as a matter of conscience from a position of self-advantage—from my perspective. But I have also, to some extent, in order to defend the freedom to serve the mission of the organization, I find it is a crucial point to the freedom of faith-based organizations to align their faith with their ministry service.

Consider the miscarriage of justice that would occur if judges ruled only when they were in the moment, by which they make the perpetrator feel and experienced at the time the crimes were committed, and had to know those choices in line with those feelings.

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

“He alone, 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, was “with child through the Holy Spirit” (Mt 1:18). Imagine his surprise, his anger, but above all 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. He had no personal or private agenda, only the will of the one he loved and his bond with God. Conscientious obedience to God’s will is a loving and active response.

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). Imagínese 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 “abandona la en secreto” (Mt 1:19) más bien de forma desinteresada. “Pero Dios intervino antes de que José pudiera llevar a cabo su decisión” (Mt 1:19). José, amante, al descubrir que María estaba embarazada, fue “tomar consigo a su mujer” (Mt 1:18), una hombrade profunda fe y gran valentía, eso bastó. No protestó ni hizo preguntas; sencillamente hizo lo que el ángel le ordenaba en ese momento. Cuando el pequeño Jesús nació, se aseguró de que estaría bien cuidado, lo llevaría en las entrañas.

Confieso que siento una devoción especial por mi tocayo, José de Nazaret, por muchos motivos. En 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 esté allí para nosotros de la misma forma hoy en día. Acuada 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, aunque nosotros somos, a menudo, no comprendemos 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. 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 reaparición 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 querido dar a luz a su bebé, 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. Sala de protestar o quejarse respecto a 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 ahorrear a Dios en su mundo, sin importar lo confuso o peligroso que aparentara ser.

Admito que siento una devoción especial por mi tocayo, José de Nazaret.

Translate to: Dania Guajata
Events Calendar

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

Festival of Trees

A special Christmas tree sponsored and decorated by the Nuns of Nazareth 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 Nazareth School.” This tree is one of 72 trees decorated by various organizations and on display at the Indiana Historical Society building at 500 W. Ohio St., in Indianapolis. The Nazareth School tree, which is situated on the fourth level of the Indiana Historical Society building, can be seen with admission, along with the other trees, on Tuesday-Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. through Dec. 30, and also until Dec. 25 on Sundays from noon to 5 p.m. For more information, log on to www.indianahistory.org.

(Photograph by Natalie Hoefer)

Christian creches on display at Archabbey Library through Jan. 6

An exhibit of Christmas creches 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. 24 and 25.

The display features creches from the monasteries collection as well as from the Catherine A. Smith Nativity Collection, which was donated to Saint Meinrad Archabbey 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 creches selected for display represent a variety of styles and media, such as porcelain, wood, glazed tile, and metal, and range from small, stone, metals and ceramic.

The exhibit is free and open to the public.

For library hours, call 317-357-6401 or 800-987-5311, or visit the Archabbey Library’s website at www.saintmeinrad.edu/library/hours.

Visitors are welcome to arrive at least 30 minutes before closing to view the exhibit.

December 20
Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Church, 203 N. Vermont St., Indianapolis. A Festival of Lanterns and Carol Concert, carols and Scripture readings. 7 p.m. Free. Information: 317-946-4079 or info@holyspiritindy.org

December 21
Calvary Mansions Chapel, 415 W. Trower St., Indianapolis. Christmas Mass, 2 p.m. Information: 317-784-4439 or www.catholiceducationeries.org

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. 6 p.m. Free. Information: 317-246-1913 or www.voxsacra.com

December 24
Saint of the Incarnate Conception, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. Festival of Lessons and Carols, Scripture reading, prayer, singing of carols and candle lighting. 7:8 p.m.

December 27
St. Michael the Archangel Church, 3354 W. 30th St., Indianapolis. Monthly Tai Chi Practice, open to everyone on fourth Tuesday. Tai Chi service with readings, meditation and music, 7 p.m.

December 31-

January 1, 2017
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5535 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 room, $270 married rental, noon-2 p.m. Information and registration: 317-784-1077 or marcia.johnson@archindy.org or www.archindy.org/retreats

January 7-6

January 6-8
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5535 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. Tobit Marriage Preparation Weekend. $298 includes separate room accommodations for couples, meals, snacks and materials. Information, registration: www.archindy.org/fatima/registration.html or marcia.johnson@archindy.org or 317-545-7681, ext. 107.

January 13-14
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5535 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. Pre-Cana Conference Preparation Conference, $275 double includes separate room accommodations for couples, meals, snacks and materials. Information, registration: www.archindy.org/pl/prague-prague.html

February 10-12
Archabbey Guest House and Retreat Center. 200 Hill Drive, St. Meinrad. “Almost Paradise” for married couples, Benedicte Father Noel Mueller presenting. $425 double. Information: 812-357-6658 or mobeller@smuinrad.edu

March 9-12
Archabbey Guest House and Retreat Center, 200 Hill Drive, St. Meinrad. “Praying the Rosary” for secretaries and parish administrators, Benedicte Father Jeremy King mass offering, $350 single, $515 double. Information: 317-655-6858 or mobeller@smuinrad.edu

March 17-19
Archabbey Guest House and Retreat Center, 200 Hill Drive, St. Meinrad. “Contemplative Living,” presented by Adrian Burke, presenter, $255 single, $425 double. Information: 317-655-6858 or mobeller@smuinrad.edu

March 24-26
Archabbey Guest House and Retreat Center, 200 Hill Drive, St. Meinrad. “I Am With You Always” to the End of the World; The Sacraments of the Church,” Benedicte Father Father Tobin presenting. $255 single, $425 double. Information: 317-655-6858 or mobeller@smuinrad.edu

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 award. The team included members Jessica Laker, left, Evan Flaspohler, Allie Hager, Alex Regehr and Bethany Esterline.

Photo by Natalie Hoefer

Indianapolis Pacers and the Archdiocese of Indianapolis have teamed up to sponsor a Catholic Schools Week contest through a special offer to watch the Pacers take on the Detroit Pistons on Feb. 4. 2017. The contest 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.

One ticket to be purchased by Dec. 20. The cost is $20 for the upper level balcony or $35 for the lower 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.

Special pacers vs. Pistons tickets available for Catholic Schools Week ends Dec. 20

The Indiana Pacers and the Archdiocese of Indianapolis have teamed up to sponsor a Catholic Schools Week contest through a special offer to watch the Pacers take on the Detroit Pistons on Feb. 4, 2017. The contest 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.

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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.

“They 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.

“I encouraged them to remain humble and to lead our lives in a way that is pleasing to God,” Scifres 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, Diamoni 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.”

“But you go 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 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)

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.”

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.

“At 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 ourselves 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.”

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)
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.”

“I plead 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 in international life.”

When 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” while “we cannot face alone,” 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.
VATICAN CITY—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.

“God comes to us in the form of Mary,” the pope said. “When God visits us, he leaves us transformed into praise and blessing.”

When God visits us, he leaves us without 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 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 at 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/Paul Haring)
Divine Mercy grotto provides ‘place for people to go and be with Jesus’

By Natalie Hoefler

MADISON—Mary Rose Carlow scavenges 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.

This began the journey that resulted in the grotto’s prayerful presence—and in 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, focusses on promoting 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 encouraging people to 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.”

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. 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-caved 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 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’s just 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 another parish 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.

“I 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 side walk, 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. While there may be more components to Carlow wants to add, she is thrilled that the grotto to the Divine Mercy is completed for the Holy Year of Mercy.

“I wondered how much it would get used, but I look out the window from our parish office and 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.)
Faith Alive!

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

By David Gibson

The angel’s message to Mary “threw her simple life in Nazareth into turmoil,” as 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, 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, or how she managed to make a difference in the lives of others.

Whatever such a person concludes, the message that God’s ways are nothing impossible to ring true. 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 in turn changes everything else.

Acceptance of God’s unexpected will can often require great faith. The angle’s message to Mary “threw her simple life in Nazareth into turmoil,” as the pope remarked. Astonishing developments in life have a way of doing that.

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Spirit will be present at Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Christian Unity annually publishes leave Mass and only remember two between the Lord's Prayer being spoken and add greater solemnity to texts. One connection to, regardless of their Christ.

devotion to this great feast and season. 

appeal of music can add to richness, beauty of liturgy Worship and Evangelization Outreach/
Andrew Motyka
At 7 p.m. on Jan, 18, 2017, at King of Glory Lutheran Church, 2201 E. 106th St, Indianapolis, that all may be one.

days) offers an intense time for prayer because we are convinced that one has
exhortation “For the love of Christ urges us on, mercy, what better opportunity could we
(“For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has
did it was easier to get the pro-Trump
man was responsible for scores of widely
Nov. 23 report, found a man in California
worst meal of his life there, complete with

life or the widow's mite, we should offer

it can help to guide people to discipleship

be better-informed, better-read citizens.

but the thing is, folks, it's up to us to

If, while perusing Facebook or Twitter,

For the Journey/ Effie Caldarola

How to spot fake news
My husband and I were planning date

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

Tepid soup handed back to an insolent daughter, her eyes, within earshot, called “stupid” by the

experts are some of the best we have to God in worship.

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 assessment, it is true to the idea that music in the liturgy is very important. Our sharing in a longing for unity is most important.

As the church continues to celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, we are reminded of St. Paul’s exhortation: “For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all, therefore all have died. And though they are still called ‘the unrighteous’, the Spirit itself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God. If, then, we have been justified through faith in Christ, we have also been justified by faith in Jesus Christ. For there is no difference between Jew and Greek, between slave and free, between male and female; for in Christ all are one and alike to God, who has broken down every barrier between us.” (Galatians 3:1-28)

Music is a phenomenon with universal appeal across all cultures and has the ability to form a connection to, regardless of their knowledge or experience. It can help shape our emotions, our attention, and add greater solemnity to texts. One only needs to listen to the difference the Liturgy of the Eucharist made when the same prayer being sung then and the same prayer being sung now to recognize the difference music makes on the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

As St. Augustine said, singing is for one who loves. Music in general, and singing in particular, has the power to elevate the spoken word, but also gives us a way to practice our prayer more intentionally. Music makes music more meaningful. It allows music to have a greater impact on our spirituality because it helps us focus our prayer than it does to speak it, and the unity we experience when singing together as a congregation. It is a beautiful symbol of our unity in worship and belief.

While music leaders can certainly be scrupulous or deliberately esoteric in their selection of music for the Mass, it is more likely that they are seeking for beauty, meaning and beauty to allow people to lift their hearts to the Lord. This effect of music and beauty in the Church and the liturgy enables us to engage in a 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 to 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 it can help to guide people to discipleship and edification. It can help the Church fulfill God's exhortation "For the love of Christ urges us on." Beauty, whether in word, art, music or even flavor, can open our hearts and make our reception of sacramental grace more fruitful.

Beautiful liturgy is no substitute for intentional discipleship, but it can help to guide people to discipleship and edification. It can help us fulfill the best we have to offer in discipleship, in charity and in prayer.

As the church continues to celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, we have now and a limited time to lift our hearts and our spirits toward the Lord.

Andrew Motyka is director of archdiocesan and cathedral liturgical service and a host of others. The New Catholic.®

For example, maybe you saw a story online: ‘TBI agent suspected in Hillary e-mail leaks found dead in apparent murder-suicide.’ Written by the operation in Cleveland, this article was full of junk and total fabrication. No such agent, no such murder-suicide. But the story had traction. It spread like wildfire. But the thing is, folks, it's up to us to be better-informed, better-read citizens.

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 your most of your news online, please stop right there. If you must read the 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 especially a great at producing eyebrow-raising headlines—don’t click until you evaluate the source. Some fake sites are so realistic, they look 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 fake news.

"So what, you ask, is this miracle medium?" Pitts asks in a Nov. 27 column. It’s called “a more traditional medium.”

Real journalists have gone to journalism school. They know the First Amendment. They understand that we thrive because our democracy rather than threatened. Although imperfect, they are not fake news. They have been foolishly tarred by some.

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

(Effie Caldarola writes for Catholic News Service)
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 utterly 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 questioning 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 cloak of being Apostles, and who led the faithful astray.

Here Paul stresses that he indeed is an Apostle, because God 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 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. †

My Journey to God

The Joyful Noise

By John McMullen

It all began a little over 2,000 years ago—That lingering Joyful Noise, that sweet sound of news of a king. The first Christmas, God entered human history, and the angelic heralds sang at the manger: “TODAY A SAVIOR IS BORN!” And so it continues down through the years! That soft thin sound, heard by those who listen. Increasing in volume each day Until the time we hear the angels’ melodic voices Proclaiming our Lord and Master. 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.)

Daily Readings

Monday, December 19

Psalm 71:3-4a, 5-6, 16-17
Luke 1:15-1

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
(Responsorial) 1 Samuel 2:1, 4-8
Luke 1:46-56

Friday, December 23

St. John of Kanny, priest
Malachi 3:1-2, 17-24
Psalm 25:4b-5a, 8-10, 14
Luke 1:57-66

Saturday, December 24

2 Sm 7:1-5, 8-12, 14a, 16
Ps 89:2-5, 27, 29
Luke 1:67-69

Vigil of the Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)
Isaiah 62:1-6
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)
Msgr. Owen F. Campion
Isaiah 9:1-6
Psalm 96:1-3, 11-13
Titus 3:1-14
Luke 2:1-14
Isaiah 62:11-12
Psalm 97:1, 6, 11-12
Titus 3:4-7
Luke 2:15-20
Psalm 52:7-10
Hebrews 1:1-6
John 1:1-18
or John 1:1-5, 9-14

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 his 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)

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

As a priest, my commitment 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 on the week of publication; be sure to state date of death. Obligations 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.


CROWLEY, Margaret, 86, St. Monica, Indianapolis, Nov. 28. Mother of Dipti Adelton, Kathleen Miller, May, Matthew, Michael and Patricia Crowley. Great-grandmother of 17. Great-grandmother of five.


GARRETT, Thomas F., 94, St. Charles Borromeo, Bloomington, Nov. 25. Uncle of several.


LECKLIDER, Betty, 94, St. Elizabeth, Jeffersonville, Richmond, Nov. 27. Mother of Jerry Lecklider. Grandmother of one. Great-grandmother of one.


RENNAKER, Barbara, 78, St. Lawrence, Indianapolis, Nov. 25. Mother of Connie Tugman, David Padgett, Gary and Lisa Schilder.


Congregation for Clergy updates guidelines for educating priests

The Congregation for Clergy has issued guidelines to help priests and bishops to determine if a candidate for ordination has had a sexually transmitted infection or sexual misconduct by a person who has been a victim of such misconduct, please contact the archdiocesan victim assistance coordinator.

If you are a victim of sexual misconduct by a person ministering on behalf of the Archdiocese of Notre Dame and Catholic Distance University (CDU) to offer not-for-credit online theology classes:
• Courses on the Catechesis of the Catholic Church from CDU
• 12 classes for a Certificate in Lay Ministry, available online
• 20% discount for all employees, volunteers and parishioners
• Employees also receive reimbursement upon completion

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

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—The Catholic Church needs to address sexual misconduct by a person who has been a victim of such misconduct, please contact the archdiocesan victim assistance coordinator.

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. †
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)

Robert Rogers is pictured with his family hours before a flash flood on Aug. 30, 2003, resulted in the deaths 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)

Robert Rogers offers messages of hope and healing through song and encouraging others brings him great joy in the midst of his grief. "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. "It’s one way to try 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 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. "Out of that suffering that she and Joseph endured came the greatest gift that the world has ever known," he said. The Holy Family, Rogers said, is proof that God can bring forth good from the most difficult circumstances.

For those mourning the loss of a loved one, Rogers suggests an action that he says “sounds rather backward” but is, in fact, a prayer. “God never leaves you alone.”

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

—Robert Rogers

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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.

“Mr. Rogers, you have really spoken to me,” one audience member said. “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 great news of hope and healing is crucial especially this time of year.

Family, Rogers has been sharing. He has spoken to more than 250,000 people, crosslingues of denomination and tradition. This story and encouraging others brings him great joy in the midst of his grief. "I started seeing people’s lives change, that blessed me. And that gave glory to God."

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—Robert Rogers

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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. Maze Mental Attitude Award for the state cross-country tournament. “I don’t like to brag or be cocky,” he says. “So this proved to me that I was good at staying humble.”

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.)

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

La Navidad es un tiempo para la familia
Diga “sí” a la familia de Dios

Mediante su sacrificio al hacer un donativo para nuestra campaña anual tenemos la oportunidad de responder con caridad a los problemas de los demás y mostrar el valor de la generosidad que se imprime en nuestro corazón. Cada donativo es un pasos crucial es importante para nuestra misión.

Campaña Católicos Unidos
Crísis Nuestra Esperanza

Más de 20 parroquias que ofrecen ministerio hispano: misas, sacramentos y catequesis en español. Los invito a que consideren el aporte generoso para la Campaña de Católicos Unidos para que juntos podamos compartir con los demás aquello que se nos ha dado.

Para usted que ya se han dado gracias!

Time is the essence. In 2015-16, nearly 2,300 children attended Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis due to generous donations that provided Tax Credit Scholarships. On July 1, this year, $9.5 million in tax credits became available from the state of Indiana to help families choose the school of their choice for their children’s education. Today, only about $2.7 million remain. The fund is diminishing quickly and is expected to run out by year’s end. You can literally transform a child’s future by providing them with the means to afford a Christ-centered, quality education while you benefit from a 50 percent state tax credit on your gift made through the Institute for Quality Education (as long as the gift is received before the tax credits run out). Both individuals and companies are eligible to receive the 50 percent state tax credit and may be eligible for a federal tax deduction as well. There’s no better time than NOW to impact the future.

For more information or to donate call: www.i4qed.com or contact Kim Powell, Archdiocesan Office of Education and Development, at kpowell@archindy.org or call 317.386.1588 or 800.382.9636, ext. 1508.

INDIANA STATE TAX CREDIT: $1,000 IQE contribution example

With | Without

State (50%) | $500  | $0
Federal (28% Bracket) | $410 | $280
Savings | $640 | $280

Out of Pocket Cost | $70 ($22)  

INCOME TAX CREDIT: $2,000 IQE contribution example

With | Without

State (50%) | $1,000  | $0
Federal (28% Bracket) | $840 | $560
Savings | $1,740 | $560

Out of Pocket Cost | $120 ($560)

Contribution made to the Institute for Quality Education (IQE) is deductible on your federal tax return and eligible for a state tax credit. Please consult your professional tax advisor on how this affects your personal financial situation.

FREEDOM

continued from page 6

participate in procedures that have the effect of mutilating a patient’s otherwise healthy part.

Morals

continued from page 4

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.

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.

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

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Para usted que ya se han dado gracias!

www.archindy.org/IQA

Donate today to a Tax Credit Scholarship

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