Supreme Court upholds temporary stop on federal executions

WASHINGTON (CNS)—The U.S. Supreme Court has left in place a preliminary injunction prohibiting the Trump administration from carrying out the first federal executions in 16 years.

In an order handed down on the evening of Dec. 6, the justices unanimously denied an application by the U.S. Department of Justice to lift a federal court injunction blocking the federal government from carrying out four executions scheduled for December 2019 and January 2020. The executions were to take place at the Federal Corrections Complex in Terre Haute.

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson welcomed the decision. “The taking of life weighs heavily on the conscience of both individuals and society,” he said. “While we mourn victims of all forms of violence, stand in solidarity with grieving families and hold perpetrators of violence accountable for their crimes, let us never lose sight of the dignity as well as the possibility of conversion and redemption of every person.”

Providence Sister Barbara Battista, justice promoter for the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods just west of Terre Haute, said her initial reaction to the news was “relief for all the guys scheduled to be executed.

“But then following right after was this sense that this up-and-down and up-and-down is mental torture for them, and for their families and the families of their victims,” she said. “I don’t get the impression that we as a nation really understand that these are regular human people whose lives are being held in the balance.

“So truly I was relieved. It’s a little bit of a breather, and yet our work continues.”

In November, U.S. District Court Judge Tanya Chutkan of the District of Columbia temporarily halted the upcoming executions of four federal death-row inmates who had challenged the constitutionality of the lethal injection protocol to be used in their executions.

When U.S. Attorney General William Barr announced in July that the government was reinstating the federal death penalty after a 16-year hiatus, he said the executions would use a single drug instead of a three-drug protocol used in recent federal executions.

Are these five Catholic schools serving up the best healthy lunches in the archdiocese?

By John Shaughnessy

Flashing a smile, Cindy Greer makes a statement that’s sure to be challenged by her fellow principals and parents across the archdiocese.

Looking out across the lunchroom filled with her students at St. Anthony School in Indianapolis, principal Greer declares, “I have the cutest kids—and the best families!”

It’s exactly what you want every principal at a Catholic elementary school in the archdiocese to say. And while there will undoubtedly be good-natured challenges to Greer’s sincere boast at the next principals’ meeting, there is another reason to brag that would be harder to dispute.

That’s the school lunch program at St. Anthony where the menu on a recent day included honey-lime chicken, rice and corn, supplemented by a trip to the fruit-and-veggie bar where the selection included celery sticks, florets of cauliflower, red grapes and slices of watermelon.

Then there are the large glass water dispensers usually found in a trendy, healthy-food restaurant, where the water is infused on different school days with hints of cucumber, a blend of pineapple and mint, or a combination of strawberry and basil.

It’s all a revelation—and a difference-maker—for the 278 students at St. Anthony, the vast majority of whom qualify for the free meal program that is 100 percent funded by the federal government.

“We have so many healthy choices,” Greer boasted at the next principals’ meeting, natured challenges to Greer’s sincere boast at the next principals’ meeting.

Fire affects two Indianapolis pro-life organizations, but the commitment to continue the work prevails

By Natalie Hoer

A building fire on Indianapolis’ northwest side on Nov. 30 caused severe damage to two Catholic-founded pro-life entities, Magnificat Family Medicine, LLC, and 1st Choice for Women pregnancy resource center.

No one was injured in the two-alarm late-night fire that took about two hours to extinguish. But due to the extent of damage, the suites of both the medical practice and the ministry are expected to be declared a total loss.

At the time of publication, the cause of the fire was still under investigation, according to the Pike Township Fire Department. Their report estimates property damage and content losses at $1.25 million.

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Fifth annual E6 Catholic Men’s Conference to be held on Feb. 22, 2020

The fifth annual E6 Catholic Men’s Conference will take place from 8 a.m.-4 p.m. on Feb. 22 at East Central High School in St. Leon.

Organized by members of All Saints Parish in Deardorff County, the conference will feature presentations by Dr. Scott Hahn, Marianists of the Immaculate Father Donald Calloway and Doug Barry.

The title of the conference is taken from the sixth chapter of St. Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians, which calls on the faithful to ‘put on the armor of God’ (Eph 6:11) in Ephesians, which calls on the faithful to ‘put on the armor of God’ (Eph 6:11) in their spiritual battle against evil.

In addition to the speakers, the conference will include the celebration of the Mass, the opportunity to participate in the sacrament of penance, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and Benediction. Father Jonathan Meyer, pastor of All Saints Parish, is scheduled to be the principal celebrant of the conference Mass.

Registration for the conference will begin at 8:30 a.m. at All Saints Parish.

Last year’s conference drew more than 1,200 participants from across Indiana, Ohio and Kentucky.

Advance registration for the conference is $40 per person, $35 on the day of the conference and $25 per person for high school and college students. Clergy and religious may attend free of charge, but must register online.

Lunch will be provided for all conference participants.

(For more information or to register online, visit www.e6catholicmenconference.com. Send an e-mail to contact@e6catholicmenconference.com or call 812-576-4302.)

Jeanne Mancini

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 Archabbe Church of Our Lady of Einsiedeln of Saint Meinrad Archabbe, 200 Hill Dr., in Saint Meinrad, are as follows:

SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

Dec. 24—5 p.m. Mass, then 10 p.m. Mass with Archbishop Charles C. Thompson as the principal celebrant. Please note the Mass at 10 p.m. is a change from the midnight Mass celebrated at the cathedral in years past. Parking will be available for both Masses from 4 p.m. to midnight. All Masses will be streamed on the Cathedral Facebook page and at the Archishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center, 1400 N. Meridian St. Dec. 25—10 a.m. Mass.

Saint Meinrad Archabbe Church

Dec. 24—Vigils (Liturgy of the Hours) 7 p.m. CT, and Mass 10 p.m. CT Dec. 25—Mass 9 a.m. CT

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

Court won’t take challenge to Ky. law requiring ultrasound before abortion

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The U.S. Supreme Court on Dec. 9 declined to take up a challenge to a Kentucky ultrasound law that requires a physician or qualified technician to perform an ultrasound on a woman seeking an abortion and show the screen images to her.

The petition to the court did not get the required four justices to sign on to hear an appeal of an April 4 ruling by the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals overturning a lower court decision that the law violated doctors’ freedom of speech as guaranteed by the First Amendment.

This Kentucky Ultrasound Informed Consent Act can take effect immediately. It was passed in early 2017 by Kentucky’s House of Senate and signed into law by then-Gov. Matt Bevin. A Kentucky abortion provider, EMW Women’s Surgical, filed suit against the law on free speech grounds.

“March for Life applauds the U.S. Supreme Court decision today upholding a Kentucky ultrasound law,” said Jeanne Mancini, president of March for Life. “Women facing an unexpected pregnancy deserve to have as much medically accurate information as possible when they are making what could be the most important decision of their lives.”

The law — passed by the House 83-12 and by the Senate 32-5 in January 2017 — requires a physician or qualified technician to perform an ultrasound on a woman seeking an abortion and show the screen images to her. The doctor or technician will be required to explain the procedures and the need for the woman what the images show, including any organs that are visible and the size of the fetus. The provider also must seek to detect the fetus’ heartbeat.

The law allows the woman to refuse to view the ultrasound, and she may ask the provider to mute the heartbeat if audible. “Consistent with the Supreme Court’s direction that mothers considering abortion may be given accurate, non-misleading information about abortion and the miracle of human life,” said Catherine Glenn Foster, president and CEO of Americans United for Life, “today’s decision confirms that women can and cannot give real informed consent to an abortion unless facilities are transparent and honest about what abortion really is.”

She added: “That’s a right that was denied to me when I was 19 years old and making a difficult, life-changing decision, and I am so relieved that going forward, the women of Kentucky will have the opportunity I never did.”

The Catholic Association’s legal adviser, Andrea Picciotti-Bayer, and Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of the Susan B. Anthony List, likewise hailed the high court’s decision.

“It affirms common sense, transparency and the democratic process,” said Picciotti-Bayer. “Rather than keep women in the dark, Kentucky requires all medical professionals—including abortionists—to disclose vital information related to a woman’s pregnancy and her developing child. Women deserve to know all the facts before making such a consequential decision.”

Dannenfelser: “Modern ultrasound technology opens an unprecedented window into the womb, providing undisputable evidence of the humanity of the unborn child. The abortion industry has proven incapable of policing itself and will stop at nothing to keep vulnerable women in the dark for the sake of profit, which is why state laws protecting women’s rights to informed consent are so important.”

Students for Life, via Twitter, said: “This is another pro-life law that will be allowed to stand and will help protect preborn babies from abortion.”

This fall, the Supreme Court said it will hear oral arguments in March in a challenge to a Louisiana law—the Unsafe Abortion Protection Act—that would require abortion doctors to have admitting privileges at nearby hospitals. The case is June Medical Services L.L.C. v. Gee.
Building community and relationships, instilling Franciscan values are all part of Sister Norma Rocklage’s legacy at Marian University

By Sean Gallager

OLDENBURG—For the past three decades, Franciscan Sister Norma Rocklage found great life in the youthful community of Marian University in Indianapolis.

Since the summer, though, she’s lived among retired sisters of her community in their Oldenburg motherhouse. She’s found vitality there, too, but one with a different focus than the college students who were her friends for so long.

“I miss the energy and the excitement of young people,” Sister Norma, 86, said in an interview with The Criterion. “But I’m gradually moving into understanding the richness of being with people who are preparing, not for a greater career in the world, so to speak, but for something else.”

Although Sister Norma no longer lives at Marian, the university community still lives in her heart.

And she’s confident that the Franciscan values that have been at the heart of her life since entering the Oldenburg Franciscan community in 1951 will continue to live on at Marian as the presence of the sisters there diminishes.

She worked tirelessly at this while serving from 1989-2004 as Marian’s vice president for mission effectiveness, and from 2005 until her retirement last summer as its executive director of education, formation and outreach.

During that time, she spearheaded the effort to place what are known at Marian as “sponsorship values”—the dignity of the individual, responsible stewardship, peace, justice and reconciliation—at the heart of the university’s mission.

Those values aren’t just inscribed on the fountain that stands in the center of Marian’s campus. They are now consciously applied in the shaping of all aspects of the Marian community.

“It’s a great comfort to know that the power of the Spirit is working,” said Sister Norma. “It’s not just Marian. And it wasn’t just the sisters. It can live without us. We did our part.”

‘She knew how to listen’

Sister Norma worked hard for years to renew the sponsorship values at Marian by serving on committees and meeting regularly with faculty members.

It took many years for Marian to get where it is now with the sponsorship values so integrated into its life.

She recalled how, when she came to the campus in 1989, the school’s administrators and faculty did not have a good understanding of how the charism of the Oldenburg Franciscans should guide its mission.

But Sister Norma worked at it and wouldn’t let up.

“But before long, it began to pick up

and people began living it,” she said. “I shared the Franciscan charism. That’s who I was. The DNA of Marian University had always been the DNA of our Franciscan community.”

For many at Marian, Sister Norma helped imbue the life of the university with the sponsorship values—and in the process becoming a pillar of its community—simply through her constant positive presence at campus events.

She felt it was really important to be present at many things to show support,” said Marian associate theology professor Donna Proctor. “She had such a deep devotion to Marian. She’d show up to all kinds of things, even just for a few minutes. That impressed the students, faculty and staff a lot.”

Her presence alone didn’t make the difference, though, Proctor said. “She knew how to listen, and that’s part of that presence. She took you seriously. You always felt like she dropped everything for you.”

Sister Norma’s presence to the university community, combined with her efforts to help those in need and to advocate for justice, helped others at Marian see the sponsorship values in action.

She did this in recent years by helping so-called ‘dreamers’ become students at Marian. They are young people originally brought to the United States as minors by parents without documentation. Since 2012, they have been able to avoid deportation through the federal Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, which is known as DACA.

“She was known in the community for being somebody who is deeply concerned about people who are poor or struggling, or being abused by the justice system,” Proctor said.

That impressed Marian senior Maggie Stephens, who also saw her work for justice as inseparable from her relationship with God.

“She did so much work, especially with Latino students, helping them to come to Marian and get an education,” said Stephens, who worked closely with Sister Norma for three years as her assistant.

“She was very, very trusting in the Lord. She turned to prayer all the time, whether she was anxious about something or upset, or needed guidance or help with something.

‘Her closeness with God was notable to the people around her. That trusting relationship was very evident.’

‘Like being in the presence of a saint’

Relationships. With God. With students, faculty and staff. With people in need and those yearning for justice. And building community among them all was the way that Sister Norma said she lived out her Franciscan values at Marian and shared them with others.

“To be a Franciscan is to be interested in community and deep relationships,” she said. “I felt that when you’re around people, it’s not so much what you say, it’s that you’re with them and being open to receive from them.”

“Her Franciscan simplicity is probably her greatest legacy,” Proctor said. “The students, faculty and staff saw it. It was always a reminder that we have to be not so acquisitive. We have to remember that we’re part of a community.”

While Sister Norma sought to share her Franciscan values with the Marian community, she found that they helped her be a better Franciscan.

“As people began to realize what the Franciscan charism was, they, in their own unique ways, began to live it,” Sister Norma said. “It enriched me and helped me to know ways that I could live it better. I learned so much from them.”

Jim Larner learned an ordinary yet profound holiness from Sister Norma.

A professor of music and humanities at Marian for more than 30 years, Larner sees his friend as a living saint.

“You think about being in the presence of somebody who’s very holy. I would feel out of place,” said Larner. “But with Sister Norma, you just felt very much part of it. You didn’t realize that you were in the presence of somebody really extraordinary. I think that was her gift.

“It was like being in the presence of a saint.”

The love for Sister Norma shared by Larner, Proctor and Stephens extends to generations of students and others in the Marian community who have known her during the past three decades.

That love was expressed in a flood of congratulations and happy memories in comments posted last summer on Marian’s Facebook page when her retirement was announced.

“It surprised me and brought me to tears. I cried,” Sister Norma said of reading the comments. “I didn’t know that I had touched people that much. It overwhelmed me. I loved being there with them.

“I was grateful that they caught the spirit that I really loved them and valued them. I may have been a gift to them, but they were a gift to me.”

Lesley Bartone, administrative coordinator for the Office of Mission and Ministry at Marian University in Indianapolis, gives a kiss to Franciscan Sister Norma Rocklage on July 15 in Marian’s Allison Mansion during a farewell reception for Sister Norma, who retired after nearly 30 years of ministry at the school. She was also at Marian from 1965-74, teaching Latin and Greek and serving as academic dean. (Submitted photo)

Franciscan Sister Norma Rocklage smiles during a July 15 farewell reception for her held at Allison Mansion on the campus of Marian University in Indianapolis. She ministered at Marian for nearly 30 years before retiring earlier this year. (Submitted photo)

DONNA PROCTOR

Sister Norma Rocklage on July 15 in Marian’s Allison Mansion during a farewell reception for Sister Norma, who retired after nearly 30 years of ministry at the school. She was also at Marian from 1965-74, teaching Latin and Greek and serving as academic dean. (Submitted photo)
Advent is a time of ardent desire, of longing for Christ

When the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Savior’s first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming (Catechism of the Catholic Church #524).

Advent is the time of year when we give voice to the ardent desire for Christ’s coming again. Advent is a time of longing for God’s love, which was made manifest in the holy child of Bethlehem. Love was born that first Christmas day, and God’s love was fully revealed in the man who was destined to come. We rejoice because we are not alone. We are not without a hope, a quelling of the voice of despair, as we approach the end of the year.

God is with us—really and truly—in the Eucharist and in the infant lying in a manger. The Almighty God has emptied himself, as St. Paul says, and taken the form of the most vulnerable and dependent human being, a little child. And he has given himself to us in the most intimate way imaginable through his body and blood, which we consume during holy Communion.

So, we rejoice. We are filled with joy because the long-awaited Savior has come. We rejoice because we are not alone in a vast, uncaring universe. God is with us. He knows us—each one by name—and he loves us as his sisters and brothers in the one family of God. But even as we rejoice at the mystery of God’s presence here and now, we also celebrate the profound hope that he will come again. We believe that the sufferers and evil that we experience in this world will pass away one day. God’s kingdom will come—on Earth as it is heaven—and on that day every tear will be wiped away, and we will see God face to face.

Now, with the whole Church, we proclaim: ‘Oremus’! Come, Lord Jesus! And in the weeks ahead, we will sing with joyful hearts: ‘Adesce fulde! Come, let us adore him!’

—Daniel Conway

Letters Policy

Letters from readers are published in The Criterion as space permits, and the newspaper’s commitment to “the responsible exchange of freely-held and expressed opinion among the People of God” (Comunicio et Progressio, 116).

Letters from readers are welcome and every effort will be made to include letters from as many people and representing as many viewpoints as possible. Letters should be relevant, well-expressed and temperate in tone. They must reflect a basic sense of courtesy and respect. The editors reserve the right to select the letters that will be published and to edit letters from readers as necessary.

Letters should be typed or double-spaced. They must not exceed 300 words. Concise letters (usually less than 100 words) are more likely to be printed. Letters should indicate a name and address of the writer for the sake of courtesy. The editors reserve the right to withhold letters for any reason.

Letters must be signed, but, for serious issues, a name may be withheld.

Send letters to “Letters to the Editor,” The Criterion, 1400 N. Meridian Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367. Readers with access to e-mail may send letters to criterion@archindy.org.
Are you the one who is coming? Or should we look for another?

"Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them. And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me" (cf. Mt 11:4-6).

This weekend, we celebrate the Third Sunday of Advent. Christ is coming again, but how will we recognize him?

When our Lord comes again, he will look very much like he did the first time he came. Why would we expect anything different?

The Gospel reading for this Sunday (Mt 11:2-11) tells us that when John the Baptist sent his disciples to Jesus to check him out, they asked, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?" (Mt 11:3)

We might be tempted to ask the same question given all the confusion and uncertainty in our world today. Although no one knows the day or the hour, our faith assures us that the Lord will come again, but there’s no reason to doubt that he will once again speak the truth with love. That’s what the Last Judgment is all about.

We can be confident that Christ’s presence will heal the sick, forgive sinners and bring hope to human hearts that have lost all hope. That’s who Jesus is—our Savior, our Redeemer, our brother and our friend. He won’t come with attitude or with grandiosity or with self-serving ambitions. He will come to God’s people, and to our Father’s will, by collecting us, the lost sheep, and bringing us home.

With the first reading this Sunday (Is 35:1-6a, 10), we envision the kingdom that is both in our midst and still to come. It is a very different world than we have experienced in the past. But for the humblest and most selfless person we can imagine—someone who would be willing to lay down his life for us in order to set us free. With Isaiah the prophet we can sing:

"Be strong, fear not! Here comes your God, he comes with vindication, with divine recompense he comes to save you. Then will the eyes of the blind be opened, the ears of the deaf be cleared; then will the lame leap like a stag, then the tongue of the mute will sing!" (Is 35:5-6).

Let’s make the final weeks of Advent a true preparation for our Lord’s coming again. Since he is not limited by our conceptions of time and space, we are blessed with the knowledge that Christ is always with us—past, present and still to come.

How can we recognize him when he comes again? By looking for the signs he himself gave us:

"And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me" (Mt 11:6). Jesus said to John’s disciples. Blessed are we when we recognize Jesus in the poor, in strangers and in people who are very different from us. He comes among us exactly as he is—the one we least expect to save us and set us free. 

"Eres tú el que tenías que venir, o debemos esperar a otro?" (Is 35:5-6).

Convirtamos las últimas semanas del Advento en verdaderos preparativos del regreso de nuestro Señor. Puesto que él no se limita a nuestra noción del tiempo y el espacio, somos bendecidos con la certeza de que Cristo está siempre con nosotros: pasado, presente y porvenir.

¿Cómo lo reconoceremos cuando venga nuevamente? Por los signos que él mismo nos ha dado!

"Y felices aquellos para quienes yo no soy causa de tropiezo!" (Mt 11:6). Jesús dijo a los discípulos que no debemos buscar una superestrella sino a la persona más humilde y desinteresada que podamos imaginar, alguien que estará dispuesto a entregar su vida para liberar.

Puesto que Jesús ya ha sufrido, murió y resucitado, su segunda venida será indiscutiblemente distinta. Pero no hay motivo para pensar que su presencia entre nosotros contradeciría en modo alguno la misión original que recibió de su Padre. Si preguntamos: "¿Eres tú el que tenías que venir, o debemos esperar a otro?" la respuesta será la misma. Lo que vemos es tal cual: "Los viejos ven, los cojos andan, los leprosos quedan limpios, los sordos oyen, los muertos resucitan y a los pobres se les anuncia la buena noticia" (Mt 11:5).

Cuando Jesucristo venga nuevamente, las circunstancias serán distintas pero no hay razón para dudar que una vez más dirá la verdad con amor; de eso se trata el Juicio Final.

Podemos tener la seguridad de que la presencia de Cristo sanará a los enfermos, perdonará a los pecadores e infundirá esperanza a los corazones humanos que han perdido fe. Eso es justamente lo que se decía de nuestro Salvador, nuestro redentor, nuestro hermano y amigo. No vendrá con los ruidos de lasmultitudes ni con ambiciones egasistas; vendrá a mostrarnos la misericordia de Dios y a hacer cumplir la voluntad de su Padre, al reunirnos como sus ovejas perdidas y llevarnos a casa.

En la primera lectura de este domingo (Is 35:1-6a, 10), tenemos la visión del reino que está entre nosotros y por venir. Es un mundo muy distinto del que hemos experimentado desde la caída de nuestros primeros padres por el pecado original. La alegría y la felicidad abundarán, el dolor y la tristeza desaparecerán: "¡Que se alegren la estepa y el yermo, que exulte el desierto y florezca! ¡Como el narciso florece sin culpa, que exulte con gritos de alegría! Le darán la gloria del Ébano, la majestad del Carmelo y el Sarón, podrán ver la gloria del Señor, también la majestad de nuestro Dios" (Is 35:1-2).

La segunda venida de nuestro Señor que esperamos de un modo especial durante el Advento, determinará de una vez y para siempre el reino triunfante de Dios hecho posible a través de la pasión, muerte y resurrección de Jesús.

Pero esto no significa que Jesus aparecerá como un héroe conquistador. Si las Escrituras nos dicen algo es que no debemos buscar un héroe; que, desde el primer momento, no debemos buscar un héroe a modo de una estrella sino a la persona más humilde y desinteresada que podamos imaginar, alguien que estará dispuesto a entregar su vida para liberar.

Junto con el profeta Isaías cantamos: "Sigan firmes, no teman, que viene su Dios a vengarlos, él les traerá la recompensa y viene en persona a salvarlos".

Entonces se abrirán los ojos de los ciegos, los oídos de los sordos se destapan.

Entonces saltará el cojo como el ciervo, la lengua del mudo cantará" (Is 35:4-6).

Convirtamos las últimas semanas del Advento en verdaderos preparativos del regreso de nuestro Señor. Puesto que él no se limita a nuestra noción del tiempo y el espacio, somos bendecidos con la certeza de que Cristo está siempre con nosotros: pasado, presente y porvenir.

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December 16
St. Mark the Evangelist Parish, 251 W. 34th St., Indianapolis. Caregiver Support Group, sponsored by Catholic Charities, 5:30-7 p.m. Information: Monica Woodward, 317-261-3738, monicawoodward@archindy.org

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 6701 S. 8th St., Indianapolis. Leave the Light On, a reenactment of all nine Apparitions, 3-9 p.m., 6:30-7 p.m., no appointment necessary. Information: Jennifer Burger, 317-545-7681, theirlighton@gmail.com

December 16-24
Simhah Gabb novena of Masses in anticipation of Christmas, sponsored by archdiocesan Filipino and intercultural ministries, during regularly scheduled parish Masses as follows: Dec. 16, 6 p.m., St. Louis de Montfort Church, 6944 E. 46th St., in Indianapolis. Leave the Light On, a reenactment of all nine Apparitions, 9-11 a.m. and 6-9 p.m., no appointment necessary. Information: Jennifer Burger, 317-545-7681, theirlighton@gmail.com

December 17
Mount St. Francis Center for Spirituality, 101 St. Anthony Dr., Mt. St. Francis. St. Francis “Abide” Adoration Service, sponsored by Cacaulti Catholic, 7-8 p.m., every third Tues. of the month, featuring guest speaker, praise band, silence and confessions, child care available. Information and child care reservations: Chris Rogers, chrogers317@gmail.org, 812-923-8585

December 18
Calvary Mausoleum Chapel, 455 W. Troy Ave., Indianapolis. Christmas Mass, 2 p.m. Information: 317-784-4349 or www.calvethemetretary.org

December 19
St. Joseph Church, 1401 S. Mckee Ave., Indianapolis. Third Thursday Adoration, interceding for women experiencing crisis pregnancy, 11 a.m.-7 p.m., with Mass at 5:45 p.m.

Our Lady of Peace Church and Mausoleum, 9001 Havercock Road, Indianapolis. Christmas Mass, 2 p.m. Information: 317-574-8898 or www.calvethemetretary.org

December 20
Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, 1752 Scherler Lane, New Albany. The Longest Night: A Mass of Consolation, an evening of prayer, ritual, word and Scripture for those who mourn and struggle during the Christmas season, 7 p.m. Information: Tom Yost, 317-454-2374, tvost@olph.org


December 21
St. Michael the Archangel Church, 3354 W. 30th St., Indianapolis. Helpers of God’s Precious Infants, Indianapolis. Third Saturday of the month, Mass at 8:30 a.m. followed by Divine Mercy Chaplet and rosary at the Clinic for Women abortion center, 3067 W. 16th St., concluding between 10:30-10:45 a.m., with continued prayer at the church for those who wish to remain. Information: prayprayer@att.net

Our Lady of Lourdes Church, 5333 E. Washington St., Indianapolis. Vocations Advent and Christmas Concert, featuring the archdiocese’s schola cantorum joined by the archdiocesan youth choirs, starting at 5:30 p.m. and 6 p.m., free, open to the public. Information: 317-236-1483, 1-800-383-4367, 483-study@archindy.org, www.vossaca.com

January 3
Women’s Care Center, 4901 W. 96th St., Indianapolis. First Friday Mass, 5 p.m. Father David Huemmer presiding, optional rosary group to center. Information: 317-829-6800, www.womenscarecenter.org

January 4
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., ex-pouation of the Blessed Sacrament, following Mass, 9 p.m. Contact: 317-888-2861 or info@holodiego.org

January 5
Providence Spirituality and Conference Center, Foley Road, 2100 E. 71st St., Indianapolis. Providence Sister Rosemary Schmaltz presenting. $30 membership for group, $5 per session after. Contact Jeanie Frost, 317-535-2952 to request a brochure. Registration and information: 317-535-2952, provsp@psmw.org or www.provctr@psmw.org

January 10
Mount Saint Francis Center for Spirituality, 101 St. Anthony Dr., Mt. St. Francis. Painting with the Pope, panel painting with Franciscan Father Vince Peterson, 6:30-9 p.m., $40 includes all painting supplies and assorted cheeses, bring your own beverage. Information: 317-313-8742, or www.mountsaintfrancisc.org/event-tickets. 812-923-8817.

January 11
Providence Spirituality and Conference Center, Foley Road, 2100 E. 71st St., Indianapolis. R.S.V.P. Coffee with the Mystics, Providence Sister Jan Crenven presenting, 10 a.m.-noon, $30, register by Jan 10. Registration and information: 812-535-2952, provsp@psmw.org or www.provctr@psmw.org

January 14
Providence Spirituality and Conference Center, Foley Road, 2100 E. 71st St., Indianapolis. Adoration, 1-800-383-4367, 483-study@archindy.org

Jan 16 Providence Spirituality and Conference Center, Foley Road, 2100 E. 71st St., Indianapolis. Providence Sister Rosemary Schmaltz presenting. $30 membership for group, $5 per session after. Contact Jeanie Frost, 317-535-2952 to request a brochure. Registration and information: 317-535-2952, provsp@psmw.org or www.provctr@psmw.org

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A commonly used euphemism for euthanasia (taking the life of someone who is considered to be terminally ill) is “mercy killing.” But as Pope Francis has repeatedly taught, euthanasia is not merciful.

El rostro de la misericordia

Daniel Conway

By Daniel Conway

El rostro de la misericordia

Jesus of Nazareth, by his words, his actions, and his entire person reveals the mercy of God.

-Pope Francis, “Misericordiae Vultus” (“Face of Mercy”)
"Our kids love it!

At 32, Edwards is a mother of two—with another child on the way soon—who strives to live a healthy lifestyle. She heads to the grocery store a few times a week to get fresh produce, which serves as the foundation for the simple, quick- week to get fresh produce, which serves as the foundation for the simple, quick-

Supremes and celery. "There are different things we need to get healthy and learn. It's not just about the kids, it's about the adults as well. Our parents are the ones teaching us by example."

"We're doing worthwhile," says Pluchar.

"It was surreal"

According to its website, Magnificat Family Medicine is “a Christ-centered family health care center” with “a focus on healing within the context of the Christian spirit,” using “the Divine Physician as guide and example.”

"When the Gabriel Project president and director Linda Kile visited the building to check on the patients, she became a real fan. "Our kids love it," says Hurrle, the principal at Central Catholic. "Our fresh-eggs-and-vegetables program is really popular. They've done pumpkin cookies, chocolate chip cookies and mini pancakes. They use eggs from the chickens."

"We’re so grateful for the opportunity to move into a larger space. We want to spread our thank you to the building’s tenants. "We're so grateful for it. It's been a double whammy" for him. She said the normally

"Gabriel Project is blessed in that it not only helps the patients but it helps the families as well. Our patients carry their babies through the intercession of the Our Lady of Lourdes," said Pluchar.

"Probably need to start from scratch"

1st Choice for Women, a ministry of the Sisters of the Divine Savior (also known as The Gabriel Project), is a pregnancy resource center offering free peer- counseling, pregnancy testing and ultrasound. When The Gabriel Project president and director Linda Kile visited the building to check on the patients, she became a real fan. "Our kids love it," says Hurrle, the principal at Central Catholic. "Our fresh-eggs-and-vegetables program is really popular. They’ve done pumpkin cookies, chocolate chip cookies and mini pancakes. They use eggs from the chickens."

As always, what comes first in the nutrition program is the health of the students. Here, she watches as kitchen helper

Fire

"It was surreal"

According to its website, Magnificat Family Medicine was "already looking at moving because of patient demand. We really didn’t have enough space to accommodate our needs. So, in a way, we’re grateful for the opportunity to move into a larger space that is better equipped for our needs.”

That time might have already come. The practice started seeing patients this week, with more plans to continue seeing patients in the temporary space offered to them at the nearby Women’s Care Center.

"It looks like it will be a total loss," Pluchar said. "It was so weird. The lights are off, the floors are all soaked, and 100 percent of our staff was out of the building black [from smoke and soot]. It was surreal... Everything was touched.

"They produce a dozen eggs a week, and the eggs are used for a number of projects," says Armitage. “Once a week, the kindergartners bake something. They’ve done pumpkin cookies, chocolate chip cookies and mini pancakes. They use eggs from the chickens."

"My heart goes out to him," she said.

"That’s made a huge difference in their health and their lives," says the St. Anthony sixth-grader, flashing her rosary and walked through the damaged suites.

"We’ve been pondering if it’s time to move closer to one of the other [two] abortion centers in Indianapolis, she said. "Since Women’s Care Center opened next to the Planned Parenthood abortion facility not far from 1st Choice for Women, Kile explained, "We’ve dropped. We’re still helping women, but we don’t get the ones who change their minds at Planned Parenthood."

"This [fire] perhaps has opened up a whole new perspective for us. We’ve decided easier for us to make. We’re still not sure. This is a time to contemplate and start investigating that option.

Prayers and gratitude

Both Kile and Pluchar were quick to note their gratitude for Catholic building owner Dan Baldini and their call for prayers for the office building’s tenants.

"Dan is just a wonderful man," said Pulchr. "We’re so grateful for the space we have available to us."

"My parents want the best for their children, and they know that education is so important to setting them up for life," says Edwards. "Our kids love it," says Hurrle, the principal at Central Catholic. "Our fresh-eggs-and-vegetables program is really popular. They’ve done pumpkin cookies, chocolate chip cookies and mini pancakes. They use eggs from the chickens."

As always, what comes first in the nutrition program is the health of the students. Here, she watches as kitchen helper
What to get the person who ‘doesn’t need anything’ at Christmas

By Natalie Hoefer

When I was younger, I was baffled by people responding to the question of, “What do you want for Christmas?” with the answer of, “Oh, I really don’t want anything I want or need.” How could you ever not want something, I wondered.

But it got to be now. The longer we journey the earthbound path, the more “stuff” we accumulate. We can even reach the point of not wanting more, whether for lack of room or from a desire to simplify our lives.

So what do you get that person who has everything or wants nothing? Here is a list of ideas that will gift such souls without adding to their “stuff”:

• A gift certificate to a retreat center where they can take time to grow closer to Christ. Here in central and southern Indiana we’re blessed with six Catholic retreat houses that offer gift certificates (nearby Catholic retreat centers can be found at www.archindy.org/atima/midwest.html). Benedict Inn Retreat & Conference Center in Beech Grove (www.benedictinn.org, gift certificates: benedictinn@benedictinn.org or 812-923-8817); Oldenburg Franciscan Center in Oldenburg (www.oldenburgfranciscancenter.org, gift certificates: center@oldenburgproof.com or 812-933-6437); Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House in Indianapolis (www.archindy.org/fatima, gift certificates:iburget@archindy.org or 317-345-7681); Providence Spirituality and Conference Center at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in St. Mary-of-the-Woods (www.smw.org, gift certificates: events@smw.org or 812-535-2945); and Saint Meinrad Guest House & Retreat Center in St. Meinrad (www.saintmeinrad.org/retreats/guest-house, gift certificates: rozelle@saintmeinrad.ed or 800-581-6905).

• Make a donation in their name to a charitable organization or their parish, or if their parish is in the archdiocese, check to see if their parish already has a fund set up through the Catholic Community Foundation: www.archindy.org/cf. You can search for their parish in the most recent annual report and also donate online, or call Amy Higgins at 800-382-9836, ext. 1482, or 317-236-1482.

• Have Masses celebrated in their honor.

• Give them the gift of your time. Buy tickets for you and them to see a show or go to a museum. Promise an outing to a park, or perhaps monthly outings to get coffee, your treat.

• Give married couples the gift of time with each other with a gift card to a restaurant or tickets to an outing—and offering your baby-sitting services so they don’t incur that cost.

• Give them the gift of words. Write them a letter or series of letters given throughout the year telling the person what they mean to you, or how they’ve impacted your life.

• Give them the gift of your prayers. Write them one or more certificates for you to pray for them in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. Give them a card listing the specific day you’ll offer a rosary for them weekly or monthly. Give a bouquet of real or artificial flowers, each flower representing a prayer you will say for them and how often in the upcoming year.

• If they have a baptism, first Communion, confirmation or marriage coming up, or will be celebrating a milestone birthday (18, 30, 40 or 50-100 in increments of 5) or anniversary (10-80 in increments of 5) in the upcoming year, consider ordering them a papal blessing from the Vatican. Most of the fee, which runs from roughly $18 to about $27, goes toward parchment and processing fees, and the rest goes toward “the works of charity undertaken daily in the name of the pope by his office, in service to the poor.” (Shipping costs are handled separately.) For more information go to www.elemonesina.va/papal-blessings-enrollments/.

These are just a few ideas. The gift is to consider what you know about the person. Think of how they like to show love—through quality time, words or acts of service—because how a person shows love is often how they most appreciate receiving love.

As for spiritual gifts, show me a person who says no to an offer of prayers, and I’ll show you a person who needs prayer. Just as Christ brought joy to a world in need of so much love.
Seniors help lead Bishop Chatard to state championship

Rob Doyle’s answer came instantly when the head coach of the Bishop Chatard High School football team was asked about the best part of winning a state championship on Nov. 29.

“The seniors,” he said.

Four years ago, Doyle was the head coach of the freshman team at Chatard, the archdiocesan high school for the Indianapolis North Deanery.

Now, in his third year as the program’s varsity head coach, Doyle led that same group of youths as they won the Class 3A Indiana State High School Athletic Association championship by beating the team from Heritage Hills on Nov. 29 to win the Class 3A Indiana State High School Athletic Association championship. Chatard is the archdiocesan high school for the Indianapolis North Deanery. (Submitted photo)

“We saw them from the first day as freshmen, teaching them how to introduce themselves, to seniors winning a state championship,” Doyle said. “Their effort and their attitude and their ability to bring the others along was amazing. For our young guys to have that example really paid dividends. It was a credit to the seniors—the type of players they are and the types of persons they are.”

The seniors’ influence led to two defining traits of the team, Doyle said.

“The first thing is toughness. This is a very tough, hard-nosed group of kids. The second thing is their gratitude for the brotherhood they have formed and the type of persons they are.”

December beatification for Archbishop Sheen postponed

The diocese also said “there continue to be many miracles reported” through the archbishop’s intercession. The diocese said there have been “several” miracles reported since the pope’s announcement of the beatification ceremony.

“The Diocese of Peoria remains confident that Archbishop Sheen’s virtuous conduct will only be further demonstrated,” the statement said.

“Bishop Jenky has every confidence that any additional examinations will only further prove Fulton Sheen’s worthiness of beatification and canonization. “The Diocese of Peoria has no doubt that Fulton Sheen, who brought so many souls to Jesus Christ in his lifetime, will be recognized as a modern-day holiness and virtue,” the statement added.

Fulton J. Sheen, a native of El Paso, Ill., was ordained on Sept. 20, 1919, at St. Mary’s Cathedral in Peoria. He went on to teach at The Catholic University of America in Washington and lead the U.S. branch of the Society of the Propagation of the Faith. He is perhaps best remembered for his popular television show, “Life Is Worth Living.”

He died in 1979 at age 84. His sainthood cause was officially opened in 2003. The Church declared his heroic virtues and he was given the title “Venerable” in 2012 by Pope Benedict XVI.

In July, Bishop Jenky announced Pope Francis had approved a miracle attributed to the intercession of Archbishop Sheen, which led the way to the announcement he would be beatified.

The miracle concerns the healing of James Fulton Engstrom of Washington, Ill., who was considered stillborn when he was delivered during a planned home birth on Sept. 16, 2010. His parents, Bonnie and Travis Engstrom, immediately invoked the prayers of Archbishop Sheen and encouraged others to seek his intercession after the baby was taken to OSF Healthcare St. Francis Medical Center in Peoria for emergency treatment.

In general, two miracles must be accepted by the Church as having occurred through the intercession of a prospective saint, one before beatification and the other before canonization. ↑

By John Shaughnessy

PEORIA, Ill. (CNS)—Bishop Daniel J. Jenky of Peoria said on Dec. 3 that Vatican officials have told him that the upcoming beatification of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen has been postponed.

A news release from the Diocese of Peoria said it was informed on Dec. 2 that the Vatican had decided to postpone the Dec. 21 ceremony “at the request of a few members” of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The diocese added, “In our current climate it is important for the faithful to know that there has never been, nor is there now, any allegation against [Archbishop] Sheen involving the abuse of a minor.”

However, a Dec. 5 statement from the Diocese of Rochester, N.Y., said it had “expressed concern about advancing the cause for the beatification of Archbishop Sheen at this time without a further review of his role in priests’ assignments.”

The statement said the Rochester Diocese, prior to the Vatican announcement on Nov. 18 that Pope Francis approved the beatification, had provided documentation expressing its concern to the Diocese of Peoria and the Congregation for Saints’ Causes via the apostolic nunciature in Washington.

Archbishop Sheen was bishop of Rochester from October 1966 until his retirement in October 1969. He received the title of archbishop at retirement.

The statement from the Rochester Diocese said, “Other prelates shared these concerns and expressed them,” adding that “there are no complaints against Archbishop Sheen in his capacity as a priest engaging in any personal inappropriate conduct nor were any insinuations made in this regard.”

“The Diocese of Rochester did its due diligence in this matter and believed that, while not casting suspicion, it was prudent that Archbishop Sheen’s cause receive further study and deliberation, while also acknowledging the competency of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints to render its decision. The Holy See ultimately decided to postpone the beatification,” the statement continued.

The Rochester Diocese added it would have no other comment.

“Calling the delay unfortunate,” the Peoria Diocese’s Dec. 3 release outlined some of the activities for which Archbishop Sheen was especially known, including “his personal dedication” to a holy hour of daily prayer before the Blessed Sacrament and “courage in confronting the challenges in our society,” the statement said. “He was well known for his boldness in preaching the Gospel on radio and on television in the face of our secular culture. This same spirit of courage and boldness guided him as a bishop to preach the truth, to defend the faith and to safeguard the Church.”

The Peoria Diocese also said “there continue to be many miracles reported” through the archbishop’s intercession. The diocese said there have been “several” miracles reported since the pope’s announcement of the beatification ceremony.

“The Diocese of Peoria remains
Faith

Alive!

By Anna Jones

Picture an image of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Now picture her pregnant. Imagine coming across that image on your Facebook or Instagram feed. You see a young woman bathed in the warm glow of a photo filter, eyes downcast, cradling her round baby belly. Underneath the image are the words, “Coming this December … a baby boy named Emmanuel! He will come to rule the nations! #blessed #miracle #SonofGod.”

Maybe that daydream gave you pause. Maybe it shocked you slightly to think about Mary on your newswise. Maybe it made you roll your eyes. Maybe you laughed a little. Perhaps these reactions are born out of the reality that we know this would never happen, even if the angel Gabriel had told her. Mary had just appeared to Mary only nine months ago.

Yet on March 25, 2019, the feast of the annunciation, we heard how the angel Gabriel visited Mary to share the good news of the miraculous conception of her son. We heard Mary listen patiently and unselfishly agree to do the Lord’s will.

Mary showed courage, patience in bearing Christ in her womb was being asked to do an incredible thing—what God asked of her, even though it was far beyond what she could have expected for herself. Perhaps you spent time thinking about whether, in her shoes, you would have been so brave.

We continue to contemplate the great mystery of Christ’s conception and birth today. Imagine how Mary felt in the moment!

And, if you’re anything like me, after thinking about all of that on the annunciation, you promptly forgot about the fact that Mary was agreeing to be pregnant. And not just pregnant, pregnant out of wedlock with no ordinary explanation for others of how she came to be so.

For months, Mary has been silent. Patient. All this time carrying the Son of God without the fanfare of Facebook announcements, gender reveals and baby showers we’ve come to expect in our society today.

On the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we hear the story of the angel Gabriel’s visit again. Although it is a feast to celebrate the mystery of Mary’s being conceived without original sin, the Gospel reading instead serves as a reminder that while we are anxiously awaiting the anniversary of the birth of Christ, Mary had to be pregnant for that to happen.

As a relatively new mom myself, I’m not far removed from the intense anticipation that comes from expecting your first child. There’s excitement around setting up a nursery and experiencing the generosity of friends and family who want to contribute to welcoming your little one. The excitement level turned up tenfold for our family because our son was the first grandchild on my husband’s side.

It’s hard to remain patient amid the chaos and hubbub. While I never really minded being pregnant and secretly enjoyed the extra attention and love I received, I could not wait to hold my baby. From the moment I found out I was expecting, I couldn’t wait to feel my baby’s first movements. Every kick, roll over or hiccup brought me such joy. That anticipation only grew more intense as my due date came and went, and I struggled through 28 hours of labor, 10 days late.

I was proud of myself for waiting to find out the gender of my baby. My husband and I kept our name choices a secret. I thought that those things were somehow great acts of patience, in addition to “patiently” waiting 10 days past due. In some small ways, they were. But it was nothing compared to what Mary did.

There’s an easy scientific explanation for how my son came to be. I was married when I got pregnant. My family was overjoyed at our news. I could see pictures of my son every few weeks, catching glimpses of his features to help my daydreams about what my baby might look like.

I can’t imagine how much longer those nine months would have felt without that.

Aside from Elizabeth’s joy and Joseph’s decision to remain betrothed and his subsequent support of Mary, we know nothing else of how she was received during her pregnancy. We know nothing of how she felt.

What was it like for Mary to feel the baby Jesus kick for the first time in her womb? Did she have doubts about the angel told her was true?

In our truncated version of events in the Advent season, we hear of Mary becoming pregnant, traveling to see her kinswoman Elizabeth, and finally journeying to Bethlehem with Joseph to give birth in a stable, all of which required much courage and patience.

We heard Mary listen patiently and unselfishly agree to do the Lord’s will. And, if you’re anything like me, after thinking about all of that on the annunciation, you promptly forgot about the fact that Mary was agreeing to be pregnant.

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Joyful Witness/Kimberly Pohovey

Finding the gift of patience in a time of waiting

I am not a patient person. I used to pray for patience. However, when I heard the adage that time heals all wounds, I ceased that line of prayer. I believe some people are gifted with a patient temperament, but that would not be one of us, to some extent, struggle to be patient.

I know you are aware that my lack of patience is tied up in our culture’s “immediate gratification” mentality. But that’s not it for me. It is a results-driven issue. I want to be able to make an impact, in whatever situation is at hand, as quickly and effectively as possible. I want to help others; I want to do God’s will. However, I often get ahead of myself in the process.

We are well into the second week of Advent. However for me, Advent came early this year. I was discharged from surgery on Nov. 4. The recovery process requires me to wear a brace, vest-like back brace for two to three months. I am not to bend, lift or torsion when working or driving. I am not supposed to do any house cleaning, laundry or otherwise strenuous task, will be on limited holiday leave through December. So what can I do? Wait.

I wait for my husband or son to come home from their end of the day and find someone with whom to converse. I wait for the pain to subside while I apply ice to my knee and wait for another day to heal. I wait for sleep to come because I’ve developed insomnia from napping too much during the day. When I lie down on the floor, I must wait for a family member to come by and pick it up for me. I wait for the movie schedule to change. I wait for Christmas to movie to premiere (because by this point, I’ve seen all the rest of them). But the worst of all, I still wait to heal. This is supremely frustrating to me.

As November wore on, I began to see the parallels between my lack of patience, this waiting period in my life, and the season of Advent. What is Advent but a time of slow preparation, of waiting and daring? I pray patiently, wait for the arrival of the Christ Child?

As the weeks wear on, I am getting bored at waiting. My prayer life is in a situation is lessening. My prayer life is increasing, not only because of an abundance of free time, but more in my style of prayer, more intentionally focusing on prayers for others, and on the importance of gratitude. Giving thanks becomes a more constant, more gratifying aspect of my prayer life. It is during this time that I realize God’s not testing my patience, he’s giving me the chance to grow in patience.

This newfound patience bolsters me in an unexpected way. During what would be a hectic holiday season, I am grateful for the opportunity to wait… for the joyous coming of Jesus and the promise of the New Year. I can wait with confidence that I will be most grateful for—healing. Just wait and see.

(Kimberly Pohovey is a member of St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis. She is director of mission advancement for Archdiocesan Education Initiatives.)

Twenty Something/Christina Capcechi

Rudolph to the rescue, the triumph of an under-deer

Robert May was painfully aware of the distance between his dreams and reality.

The 34-year-old Dartmouth graduate had long fantasized about being a great American novel. Instead, he was working a mediocre job as an ad man for Montgomery Ward, cranking out forgettable copy about silk sheets and white shirts. He lived in a tiny apartment with his ill-tempered cat, Gunther.

One day in 1939, May’s boss tapped him for an unexpected assignment. For years, Montgomery Ward had bought coloring books and distributed them at stores as a Christmas giveaway. This time around, executives decided to save money by creating their own booklet—and asked May to write it. That’s how he ended up turning the Lincoln Park Zoo. When he took his 4-year-old, Barbara, she was drawn to the deer. He explained that these were good-natured, good-spirited, no-hurt kind of deer. They never seemed to be too much. They also seemed to be a bit too much during the day. When I drop something on the floor, I must wait for a family member to come by and pick it up for me. I wait for the movie schedule to change. I wait for Christmas to movie to premiere (because by this point, I’ve seen all the rest of them). But the worst of all, I still wait to heal. This is supremely frustrating to me.

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Our Works of Charity/David Bethuram

Pray the Savior’s warm Christmas draws people in from the cold

Christmas comes each year to draw people in from the cold.

Like tiny trudging sparrows, shivering in the winter cold, many live their lives on the bare branches of heartbreak, disappointment, and loneliness, in thoughts of shame, self-pity, guilt or failure. One day another day follows, and the only company they keep is with fellow strugglers who land on the same branches, confused and unprotected.

We try so hard to attract them into the warmth. Week after week, church bells ring. Choirs sing. Lights dance. Gathered around a warmth of hope, people dare, if only for a breath of fresh air to let the Holy Spirit inspire our exchanges of love in new ways.

In spite of this, some—indeed, most—still keep their distance. It happened when I first came to the archdiocese. Nevertheless, Christmas comes again. And again. And again. The story of Bethlehem, the birth of Jesus, the love and die for our sins. He didn’t come to the Father and the Spirit, willingly in heaven, co-equal and co-eternal with warmth and safety.

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The Book of Isaiah is the source of the first reading for Mass this weekend. Isaiah was between a rock and a hard place, so to speak. He realized that unwise alliances and behavior that forgot God put the Hebrew kingdom of Judah at great risk. The prophet was convinced that if the nation did not return to God in genuine obedience and piety, then the whirlwind eventually would sweep away life as he and his contemporaries knew it.

His message was met with dispute and opposition. It must have been frustrating. Nonetheless, Isaiah unfailingly called the people back to God, despite the angry reaction to what he said on the part of many of his contemporaries. It was not as if God would bring a terrible punishment upon the kingdom. Rather, the people, by their impurity, would create a nightmare for themselves. The Epistle of St. James supplies the second reading. This epistle rarely appears in the liturgy. The identity of the author is unclear. The New Testament mentions four men with this name. Which, if any, wrote this epistle?

Some insist that James, the foster brother of the Lord, was the author. Here is the other question. Did Mary have other children? Ancient Christian writers surmised that James in this reference was a son from a previous marriage of Joseph, the eventual spouse of Mary. They reasoned that this must have been the case, as they believed, with the Church today, that Mary had only one child of Jesus. Regardless, this reading solidly establishes the author’s faith that Jesus will be victorious. No power can exceed the power of the Lord. After all, the Lord is the Son of God.

However, while final victory undoubtedly will come, it will not necessarily come at a time that humans predict, and certainly it will not come at their bidding. But it will come. So, the epistle urges strong faith, but also forbearance.

The third reading, from St. Matthew’s Gospel, centers on St. John the Baptist, whose denunciations of sin in high places led to his arrest. In time, they would lead to his death. Despising the Roman occupation of the land, pious Jews at this time yearned for a Messiah who would rid the Holy Land of the pagan intruders.

John gave another description of the Redeemer. He saw the Savior not as a warrior, commanding armies to slaughter the enemies of the One God of Israel, but the compassionate, truly holy, leader and guide of the people. Jesus met this description, healing the sick, giving hope and restoring life, lovingly coming to Earth as God made man.

In the last verses, Jesus affirms that John is a prophet. In fact, John insists, Jesus is the greatest prophet.

Reflection

Ancient cultures often found the dawn awe-inspiring and also reassuring. As the sun creeps over the horizon, the sky presents a marvelous sight. It is not a sudden transition from utter darkness to bright light. Instead, everything changes to a gentle rose.

Traditionally, priests wear rose-colored vestments on this weekend to remind us that the bright light of Christ is about to burst upon the horizon of our world. It is overwhelming to consider. God so loved the world that he sent his Son to us, to give us life.

As in days of old, when the re-appearance of the sun showed that all would be good, so Christians are reassured that they are secure. Jesus lives. He is with them.

Each of us sins. Each is imperfect. Advent is the opportunity to allow God to create a dawn within our hearts, so we invite Christ to come to brighten our lives. †

The Child

It is now that most wonderful time of the year…
do ye hear
do ye hear
People will come to see the Child from everywhere…
do ye hear
do ye hear
They come to worship God’s precious Child Mary will bear…
do ye hear
do ye hear

By Charles Miller

This blessed babe shall make God’s world so clear…
do ye hear
do ye hear
This Child will teach God’s love for everyone far and near…
do ye hear
do ye hear
So now let us all rejoice in God’s love so pure, so dear…
For now we hear
For now we hear

Q

Do ye hear

A

A child shall you find that first there is a slight possibility that your friend is already a Catholic. The Armenian Catholic Church is one of about two dozen Eastern Catholic Churches that are in full communion of the Church and accept the doctrine of papal primacy. More likely, though, he belongs to the Armenian Orthodox Church.

There are about 35,000 Armenian Catholics in the United States, while Armenian Orthodox number nearly half a million in this country.

It might be good for him to know, if he is an Armenian Orthodox Christian and there is no church in his faith tradition near where he lives, that reception of the sacraments in the Catholic Church has been licit. The bishops of the Church specifically approved of this at the Second Vatican Council. The Vatican reiterated the same in the 1993 “Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism” (#122-128).

So what would your friend need to do to be received into full communion of the Church if he is an Armenian Orthodox Christian?

He would need only to make a profession of faith, a declaration that he believes all that the Catholic Church teaches. Most significantly, he would not need to be re-baptized or re-confirmed, since those Orthodox sacraments he has already received are recognized as valid by the Catholic Church. Likewise, his reception of holy Communion as an Orthodox Armenian Orthodox Christians may receive sacraments of the Catholic Church

Every Mass I attend begins with a penitential rite, which I take to be the forgiveness of sins for those who are there worshipping. And then, just before Communion, we say, “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.” Why, then, does the Church require Catholics to go to confession? (Arkansas)

It is true, as you indicate, that at various points in the Mass, we indicate our unworthiness to participate in such a sacred act. However, none of these expressions of sinfulness and sorrow is equivalent to sacramental absolution, and they do not dispense us from the obligation of confessing grave sins before receiving holy Communion.

The Church’s Code of Canon Law states clearly that “a member of the Christian faithful is obliged to confess in kind and number all grave sins committed after baptism and not yet remitted directly through the keys of the Church nor acknowledged in individual confession” (#988:1).

Grave, or “mortal,” sins are those involving serious matter, committed with knowledge of their gravity and the deliberate consent of the will. The “General Instruction of the Roman Missal,” which lay out the Church’s norms for the celebration of the Eucharist, notes, “the priest calls upon the penitent to take part in the penitential act, which, after a brief pause for silence, it does by means of a formula of general confession. The rite concludes with the priest’s absolution, which, however, lacks the efficacy of the sacrament of penance” (#51).

However, venial sins are forgiven with the reception of holy Communion during the Mass. Strictly speaking, one is obligated to go to the sacrament of penance only for serious sins—although it is certainly a good practice to take part in the sacrament of penance regularly even for lesser sins—without imperfection. In 2013, Pope Francis revealed that he himself goes to confession every two weeks and considers it the best path to spiritual healing and health.
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 this 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.


DIDAT, Mary Pat, 69, St. Joseph, Martinsville. Grandmother of five.


KIRTLER, Michael B., 57, St. Lawrence, Indianapolis, Nov. 11. Father of Jennifer Kirl. Brother of Elizabeth Cox and Carolyn Ibel.


SHEETS, Jeffery P., 64, St. Martin of Tours, Martinsville, Nov. 26. Brother of Joe and Tom Sheets. Uncle of two.


Wisconsin snowfall

A snow-covered statue of Joseph and the Child is pictured during a major snowstorm on Nov. 30 on the grounds of St. Mary Catholic Cemetery in Appleton, Wis. Winter officially arrives on Dec. 22 (CNS photo/Nate Bauer/Bizx)

USCCB president urges special prayers for pope’s 50 years as a priest

WASHINGTON (CNS)—The Catholic faithful across the United States are being invited to pray for Pope Francis as he celebrates 50 years as a priest.

Walter H. Medlin, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), has sent a letter to bishops across the country asking them to

encourage parishioners to honor the jubilee during Advent with special prayers and Mass petitions.

The letter included a prayer for the pope as well as two petitions that can be used at Mass or in praying the Liturgy of the Hours. The archbishop also invited the faithful to use any other appropriate prayer for the pope if they desire.

Four days before Pope Francis celebrates his 83rd birthday on Dec. 17, he will celebrate 50 years as a priest—a ministry he sees as being a shepherd who walks with his flock and yearns to find those who are lost.

The petition texts are:

• For our Holy Father Pope Francis as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood, that Jesus the High Priest will continue to renew, increase, and strengthen in him the graces received at ordination as he carries out his sacred ministry in the holy Church.

—That the example of the many years of faithful priesthood of Pope Francis will be a source of inspiration for all priests, and awaken in young people their own call to service in the Church for the salvation of souls.

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The USCCB also plans a social media effort to spread the message about the prayers.

Archbishop Gomez encouraged bishops to share the prayers with parishes, schools and other diocesan ministries.

Supporting materials sent with the letter noted that Dec. 13, the anniversary of the pope’s priestly ordination, is a weekday in Advent and the memorial of St. Lucy. Church practice allows for the celebrant to use an optional special Mass for the day, including one identified as “For the Pope.” The materials suggest that the Mass “would be appropriate to use in honor of the 50 years of priesthood of Pope Francis.”

The text of the prayer is:

Father of mercy, we come before you with gratitude / for the 50 years of priesthood of Pope Francis, whom you have made Peter’s successor. Support him with the Spirit’s gifts / so that he can continue to preach the Gospel with priestly zeal / and lead the Church with wisdom and strength and courage / May his example of long and faithful service be an inspiration to your priests and to all your faithful. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

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Online Lay Ministry Formation

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis has partnered with the University of Notre Dame Catholic and Diocesan Distance University (CUDi) to offer an accredited online degree program.

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• Complete 12 courses online with ND STEP program

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• 20% discount for all employees, volunteers, and parishioners

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

REPORT SEXUAL MISCONDUCT NOW

If you are a victim of sexual misconduct by a person ministering on behalf of the Church, or if you know of anyone who has been a victim of such misconduct, please contact the archdiocesan victim assistance coordinator. There are two ways to make a report:

• Ethics Point, Archdiocese of Indianapolis, Victim Assistance Coordinator, 703 S. Broad St., Indianapolis, IN 46202-1419; carlahill@archindy.org or 317-236-1548 or 800-382-9836, ext. 1548 carlahill@archindy.org

Onsite: Online Reporting: www.archindy.org/findhelpatethics.ethicspoint.com or 888-395-4810

Carla Hill, Archdiocese of Indianapolis, Victim Assistance Coordinator

100 South Broad Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202-1419

317-236-1548 or 800-382-9836, ext. 1548 carlahill@archindy.org

Page 14 The Criterion Friday, December 13, 2019
WASHINGTON (CNS) — If the use of the rosary as a devotion fell off at some point in the past, that’s not the case now, according to Gretchen Crowe, Our Sunday Visitor’s editorial director for periodicals.

Under St. John Paul II, “we saw a real resurgence in praying the rosary,” said Crowe, author of “Praying the Rosary With St. John Paul II.” He had such a great devotion to the Marian prayer that he inspired an entire generation of Catholics to come back to the rosary.”

Crowe added, “I think there’s a great power to the rosary, a great devotion to the rosary. I think John Paul exemplified that. I want to do, and try, everything I can, to help people reclaim that great gift of the rosary.”

The book includes chapters for each of the mysteries — joyful, sorrowful, glorious and luminous, the last developed by the Polish-born pope — and each mystery contains a biographical note about St. John Paul as well as words from his writings or speeches. It’s Crowe’s second book on the rosary. Her first — “Why the Rosary? Why Now?” — was published in 2017. Both are published by Our Sunday Visitor. She said her intent with the first book was to “make the case for people to have a devotion to the rosary … to face a lot of the trouble we’re facing in the world: increased secularity, troubles in the Church, the need for sanctity, our call to holiness.”

Crowe still remembers the rosary she got when she made her first communion. “It was in a white packet, it said ‘My Rosary’ on it. I got it from my parents,” she told Catholic News Service (CNS) in a Nov. 26 phone interview from Our Sunday Visitor’s offices in Huntington, Ind.

“I would keep it with me at my bedside, and if I had trouble sleeping, I knew the rosary was there for me to turn to. I was 7, 8 years old, I didn’t quite know what the rosary was. I didn’t know the history of the saints using the rosary to grow closer to Christ.”

Crowe added, “I would keep the rosary under my pillow at night when I was a kid and pray a decade or two to fall to sleep. I heard somebody say, later on in life, that if I didn’t finish the rosary before I went to sleep, my guardian angel would finish it for me. That’s a beautiful thought.”

Today, Crowe and a rosary are like most people and their cellphones: always within reach. “I have a rosary pretty much everywhere. I have rosaries in my purses, in my nighttime, by my bedside.”

Crowe said that goes back to John Paul’s rosary. “We have a little rosary keychain that’s on my keys. I try to keep them wherever I go,” she said. That provides opportunities for her to pray the rosary.

“If you have children, like we do, we try to pray in the car when we go to Mass every Sunday as a family. My husband and I pray, obviously, but my 2-and-a-half-year-old last Sunday pipped up. ‘Are those the prayers we say at bedtime?’ He already understands it better,” Crowe said.

“Whether you like to pray when you are busy and trying to find time to pray the rosary, I think the best thing to do is to start small. If you can’t work in a full rosary, start with a decade or two decades,” she added. “I try to pray the rosary during my commute to work. I have an 18-minute commute to work. I find myself still praying some of the last prayers of the rosary while I’m walking up the steps, but I find that it helps me spiritually.’

And for those who haven’t memorized each and every prayer of the rosary, “Praying the Rosary With St. John Paul II” includes all of them.

“We wanted to make this book invitational. That’s why we included the specific prayers to be an impediment. We wanted people to pray it. The prayers can be learned.”

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In late August, he finished the story. Ward seized it as a lesson for his clerks, celebrating in an in-house memo: “The arc of his own life is a testament to the power of prayer, and it offers a reminder to all who feel the weight of the world on their shoulders.”

The book was a huge hit, and the retailer printed more than 2 million copies that Christmas season, 80 years later.

May was eventually given all rights to Rudolph, which provided a good livelihood. He experienced a dramatic arc of his own with profound spiritual understandings: remarrying a devout Catholic, converting to Catholicism and having five live children, one of whom became a nun.

His biography can encourage anyone who feels crippled by the gap between hopes and reality. It reminds us to trust in the bigger picture, in the One who isn’t our hands doing our work.

“TheCriterion Friday, December 13, 2019 Page 15

Mount Saint Francis Center for Spirituality
Part Time Business Manager
Mount Saint Francis Center for Spirituality (located just outside Louisville, Kentucky, near Floyd Knobs Indiana) is seeking a part time (18 hrs week) Business Manager who is experienced in all areas of accounting, bookkeeping, financial analysis, and payroll processing. Candidate should be proficient in Sage Accounting program, Microsoft Excel and Word. Candidate should ideally have BS in accounting or finance with 5+ years experience, additional credentials such as MBA or CPA preferred. A good communicator is important since this position works with office staff, clerks, vendors, and reports to the Director of Retreats.

Please send cover letter and resume to: Mount Saint Francis Center for Spirituality, Attn: Br. Randy Kin OFM Conv.

Email: retreatdir@mountsaintfrancis.org or mail to: 101 St. Anthony Drive, Mount St. Francis, IN 47146

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Ad limina visit takes on Marian flavor for Region VII bishops

ROME (CNS)—As the bishops of Indiana, Illinois and Wisconsin began celebrating an early morning Mass at the Basilica of St. Mary Major, the church was abuzz with activity and repeated banging on a bass drum.

In Rome for their visits “ad limina apostolorum” to the threshold of the Apostles—the bishops celebrated Mass on Dec. 9 at the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls and in a chapel of St. Mary Major on Dec. 10, the feast of Our Lady of Loreto. Indianapolis Archbishop Charles C. Thompson is among the bishops on the visit.

Pope Francis has declared a special jubilee to mark the 100th anniversary of Our Lady of Loreto being named patron of aviators and air travelers.

As the U.S. bishops prayed in the Marian chapel, workers moved chairs and decorated the railing around the basilica’s main altar with pine boughs, poinsettias and other flowers. And the orchestra of the Italian air force, which claims Our Lady of Loreto as their patron, began tuning their instruments.

The rumble from all that activity carried into the chapel.

Bishop David L. Ricken of Green Bay, Wis., the principal celebrant and homilist, noted how the bishops’ ad limina week had a very Marian flavor: the transferred feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Dec. 9, the day’s Loreto feast and the celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe on Dec. 12.

“We have been truly blessed to walk these days with our Blessed Mother,” he said. “The world is in need of her intervention, her prayers, her grace and this is a time when she is reaching out to save souls and bring them to her son Jesus.”

The day’s first reading, from the book of the prophet Isaiah, began, “Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God” (Is 40:1).

Many, many people need comfort—not the comfort of material goods, he said, “but the comfort of true and genuine peace that comes only from God,” Bishop Ricken said.

“Often, my brother bishops, we are called to give comfort to our people, to listen to their trials and tribulations, sometimes their anger, sometimes their hostility,” he said, “and we are called to walk with them, to accompany them in their sorrow, their sense of betrayal, their sense of needing God.

“And thank God they’re still coming to us for consolation, some comfort,” he added.

Bishops also are called to offer solace, affirmation and consolation to their priests and seminarians. “The challenges of being a priest today,” Bishop Ricken said, “are more than anything. I remember in my almost 40 years of priesthood, 20 years of being a bishop.”

The Isaiah reading also spoke about being a “herald of good news” (Is 40:9), and not being afraid to share the glad tidings of salvation. “Courage is needed today to engage in a mission we’ve all been called to, a mission that seems defeated at this point, but we know in hope and confidence that this is God’s Church and the world needs the Church now, perhaps more than ever,” the bishop said.

During the ad limina visits, Bishop Ricken said, the bishops should renew their “dispensabilita—radical availability” to serve God, serve God’s people and proclaim the Gospel.

Cardinal James M. Harvey, a native of Milwaukee and archbishop of the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, was invited by the group to be the principal celebrant and homilist at the Mass on Dec. 9 near the tomb of the Apostle.

While the bishops did pray at the tomb, the readings for the Mass were those for the feast of the Immaculate Conception.

The cardinal quoted William Wordsworth’s poem, “The Virgin,” which includes the lines: “Woman’ above all women glorified, our tainted nature’s solitary boast.”

“We do boast about Mary,” Cardinal Harvey said. “We boast when we say, ‘See what the power of God has done for a member of our human race.’ And herein lies our hope. If the power of God is great enough to preserve from sin a human person like ourselves, Mary, then it is great enough to cure us of the effects of sin.”

U.S. bishops from Indiana, Illinois and Wisconsin—including Indianapolis Archbishop Charles C. Thompson—pray in front of relics revered as the crib of the baby Jesus after concelebrating Mass at the Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome on Dec. 10. The bishops were making their “ad limina” visits to the Vatican to report on the status of their dioceses to the pope and Vatican officials.

(CNS photo/Paul Haring)