Queridos hermanas y hermanos en Cristo:

Al tiempo que celebramos el evento de la Navidad que ocurre una vez al año, no debemos olvidarnos de vivir el espíritu navideño cada día del calendario. Tal como nos exhorta el papa Francisco, los cristianos deben exudar la alegría del Evangelio en cada aspecto de nuestras vidas.

Hace varios años, un parroquiano me comentó que apreciaría mucho más la Navidad si no ocurriera en una época del año tan ajetreada. Vale la pena recordar que, mientras María y José junto con algunos pastores y eventualmente los magos tomaron tiempo para ponderar el nacimiento de Jesucristo, el mundo no se detuvo a contemplar este evento trascendental en la historia de la salvación. De hecho, la mayoría de las personas de todo el mundo continuó con su vida habitual sin siquiera sospechar que había ocurrido este evento, mucho menos sospechar su trascendencia.

En medio del ajetreo de nuestras vidas, lo complicado de las relaciones y las incertidumbres terrenales, se nos ofrece la gracia de una oportunidad para celebrar la bendecida encarnación del Verbo hecho carne, una experiencia que puede ser tan transformadora para nosotros hoy en día como lo fue para aquellos que vivieron durante la época de la primera Navidad. La belleza, la verdad y la bondad de este gran momento merecen nuestro tiempo para detenernos y reflexionar sobre su significado en cada fibra de la sociedad y en todos los aspectos de nuestras vidas. Incluso una mínima comprensión y valoración de esta realidad debería encender la llama de la alegría en nuestros corazones, en nuestras vidas, y con uno al lado de otro. Efectivamente, hay tanto que nos preocupe de que el caos, la violencia y la injusticia que aquejan a nuestro mundo hoy; todo lo cual es una razón todavía más grande para alegrarnos de la Buena Nueva de la Salvacon en Jesucristo! En el espíritu de Navidad, hay que tomarse el tiempo para alegrarnos de este gran momento, de este gran acontecimiento, de esta experiencia bendecida.

Vengan, adorémoslo hoy y siempre.

¡Bendecida Navidad a todos!

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Message from Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

While celebrating the Christmas event that comes but once a year, the spirit of Christmas is to be lived each and every day of the calendar. As Pope Francis exhorts, Christians must exude the joy of the Gospel in every aspect of life.

Several years ago, a parishioner commented to me that he could appreciate Christmas much more if it did not come at such a busy time of year. It’s worth remembering that, while Mary and Joseph along with a few shepherds and eventually the magi took some time to ponder the birth of Jesus Christ, the world did not stop to pause and reflect on this transforming event in salvation history. In fact, most people in the world went about their business without any hint of this event, let alone its significance. Amid busy lives, tangled relationships and worldly uncertainties, we are graced with the opportunity to celebrate the grace-filled Incarnation of the Word made Flesh that can be as transforming for us today as it was for those who existed at the time of that first Christmas. The beauty, truth and goodness of this grand moment deserve our time to pause and reflect on its meaning in every fabric of society and all aspects of our lives.

And through the birth of Jesus, salvation is made available to all of humanity. Even the slightest understanding and appreciation of this reality should spark joy in our hearts, on our faces and with one another.

Indeed, there continues to be much to concern us about all the chaos, violence and injustice in our world—all the more reason to rejoice in the Good News of Salvation in Jesus Christ! In the spirit of Christmas, may we take away from the celebration of this year’s event a greater resolve to remain Christ-centered in our lives and relationships. Come, let us adore Him now and forever.

Blessed Christmas to all!

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Mensaje de Navidad del Arzobispo Charles C. Thompson

Queridos hermanos y hermanas en Cristo:

Al tiempo que celebramos el evento de la Navidad que ocurre una vez al año, no debemos olvidarnos de vivir el espíritu navideño cada día del calendario. Tal como nos exhorta el papa Francisco, los cristianos deben exudar la alegría del Evangelio en cada aspecto de nuestras vidas.

Hace varios años, un parroquiano me comentó que apreciaba mucho más la Navidad si no ocurriera en una época del año tan ajetreada. Vale la pena recordar que, mientras María y José junto con algunos pastores y eventualmente los tres Reyes Magos dedicaron algún tiempo para reflexionar acerca del nacimiento de Jesucristo, el mundo no se detuvo a contemplar este evento transformador en la historia de la salvación. De hecho, la mayoría de las personas de todo el mundo continuó con su vida habitual sin siquiera sospechar que había ocurrido este evento, mucho menos sospechar su trascendencia.

En medio del ajetreo de nuestras vidas, lo complicado de las relaciones y las incertidumbres terrenales, se nos ofrece la gracia de una oportunidad para celebrar la bendecida encarnación del Verbo hecho carne, una experiencia que puede ser tan transformadora para nosotros hoy en día como lo fue para aquellos que vivieron durante la época de la primera Navidad. La belleza, la verdad y la bondad de este grandioso momento merecen nuestro tiempo para detenernos y reflexionar acerca de su significado en cada fibra de la sociedad y en todos los aspectos de nuestras vidas. Con el nacimiento de Jesús y a través de este, la gracia de la salvación queda al alcance de toda la humanidad. Incluso una mínima comprensión y valoración de esta realidad debería encender la llama de la alegría en nuestros corazones, nuestros rostros y en cada uno de nosotros.

Efectivamente, siguen existiendo muchos motivos de preocupación con respecto a todo el caos, la violencia y la injusticia que aquejan a nuestro mundo, todo lo cual es una razón todavía más grande para alegrarnos de la Buena Nueva de la Salvación en Jesucristo. Que bañados por el espíritu de la Navidad contemos con la celebración de este año una determinación aún más fuerte para mantener a Jesucristo en el centro de nuestras vidas y nuestras relaciones.

Vengan, adorémoslo hoy y siempre.

¡Que tengan una bendecida Navidad!

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The Nativity is depicted in this 16th-century painting by Italian artist Lorenzo Lotto. The feast of the Nativity of Christ, a holy day of obligation, is celebrated on Dec. 25. (CNS/Bridgeman Images)
Jesus—ranging from tiny plastic figures blessed hundreds of figurines of the baby Pope blesses Nativity scene statues, humble and merciful,” he said. God chose to assume in Jesus Christ, so great is his love for us that he became man in order to encounter every contemplate the Christmas story, we are is like a living Gospel. ... As we put in mangers at home, at school and in statues of the infant Jesus, for children to make sure... "Raise the statues up,” the pope told the children. “I bless them from my heart.” Pope Francis then quoted from his new apostolic letter on the meaning and importance of the creche: “The Nativity scene is like a living Gospel. ... As we contemplate the Christmas story, we are invited to set out on a spiritual journey, drawn by the humility of the God who became man in order to encounter every man and woman. We come to realize that so great is his love for us that he became one of us, so that we in turn might become one with him.” In his main Angelus address, Pope Francis spoke about the importance of answering the Advent call to conversion in preparation for Christmas. “We are called to recognize the face God chose to assume in Jesus Christ, humble and merciful,” he said. “Advent is a time of grace,” the pope said. “It tells us it’s not enough to believe in God; it’s necessary to purify our faith each day.” The Advent journey is about preparing “to welcome not a character from a fable, but the God who calls us, gets us involved and who makes us choose,” he said. “The baby lying in the manger has the face of our neediest brothers and sisters,” who deserve the care of the Christian community. Nativity scenes were also on the pope’s mind on Dec. 16 when he met members of Italy’s Catholic Action section for 11-13-year-olds for his annual exchange of Christmas greetings with them. “I’m giving you some homework,” he told them. “On Christmas Day, pause in prayer and, with the same awe of the shepherds, look upon baby Jesus who came into the world to bring the love of God, who makes all things new.” With his birth, Jesus became a bridge between God and humanity, reconciling earth and heaven, restoring the unity of the whole human race,” the pope said. “And today he asks you, too, to be little bridges where you live. You know there always is a need to build bridges, right?” “What is better, building bridges or walls?” he asked them. “Bridges,” they shouted. Being bridges, bringing people together, “is not always easy,” the pope told them, “but if we are united to Jesus, we can do it.” Pope Francis also asked them to think about what “Christmas” means to Mary. “She and Joseph can teach us how to truly welcome Jesus, how to adore him and how to follow him day by day.”

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—“Continue being ‘smugglers’ of the faith,” Pope Francis told thousands of Filipino migrants living and working in Italy. “Raise the statues up,” the pope told the children. “I bless them from my heart.” Pope Francis praised the Filipino community’s “Simbang Gabi,” a novena of nighttime or pre-dawn Masses in preparation for Christmas, the pope praised the community for not only keeping their faith alive, but for enlivening the faith of the parishes they frequent. According to Italian government statistics, more than 100,000 Filipinos live in Italy as temporary workers or permanent residents. The more than 6,000 free tickets for the Dec. 15 Mass with Pope Francis were gone in a matter of hours, said Scalabrinian Father Ricky Gente, the Rome community’s chaplain. A large Filipino choir, with members wearing their national dress, provided the music for the liturgy. The songs and readings were in Filipino, English and Italian. In his homily, Pope Francis said the day’s Gospel reading from Matthew showed “in Jesus Christ, the saving love of God is made tangible: 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” (Mt 11:5). The signs of God’s kingdom, he said, are not “trumpet blares” and military marches, “not judgments and condemnations of sinners, but liberation from evil and the proclamation of mercy and peace. “And because there are still many inhabitants of the existential peripheries”—the poor, the fragile and those thirsting for justice—“we must ask the Lord to renew the miracle of Christmas each year, offering ourselves as instruments of his loving mercy toward the least ones,” the pope said. Pope Francis praised the Filipino community for bringing with them to Rome the tradition of Simbang Gabi. “Through this celebration,” he said, “we want to prepare for Christmas in accordance with the spirit of the Word of God we have heard, remaining constant until the definitive coming of the Lord. The spirit of the Gospel reminds us to submit ourselves to manifesting the love and tenderness of God.” He said. “We are called to be leaven in a society that often is not able to witness the beauty of God and experience the grace of his presence.” “Brothers and sisters, you who have left your homeland in the search for a better future have a special mission,” the pope told them. “May your faith be ‘yeast’ in the parish communities you belong to today. I encourage you to multiply the opportunities of encounter to share your cultural and spiritual richness, allowing yourselves at the same time to be enriched by the experiences of others.” All Catholics, everywhere in the world, he said, are called “to build together that communion in diversity that is a distinctive feature of the kingdom of God.”

Correction

In the Dec. 13 article in The Criterion about the fire affecting two pro-life organizations in Indianapolis, we incorrectly spelled the last name of Magnificat Medical Clinic manager Lori Puchlar. Also, the correct web address for The Gabriel Project is www.gabrielpals.org.
Mary is loving mother, humble disciple, pope says on Guadalupe feast

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Celebrating the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Pope Francis said she reminds Catholics of her true essence as a woman, a mother and a person of mixed race.

She revealed herself to St. Juan Diego as a “messia” to show “that she is everyone’s mother,” she said, and to everyone as she spoke to this indigenous saint five centuries ago, with tenderness and motherly love, she said.

Pope Francis said his homily in a Mass in St. Peter’s Basilica on Dec. 12.

The pope and concelebrating Cardinals and bishops processed into the basilica dressed in white. Among the concelebrants were U.S. bishops from Indiana, Illinois and Wisconsin who were in Rome as part of their Dec. 9-13 “ad limina” visits to report on the status of their dioceses.

Pope Francis stood before a replica of St. Juan Diego’s tilma, which bears the image of Mary, who appeared to the saint in 1531.

In his homily, which the pope delivered off-the-cuff in Spanish, he reflected on the way Mary appears in the Gospels and in the apparitions to St. Juan Diego.

She is first and foremost a woman who has been given many titles—many which contain the title “Our Lady”—which underlines her womanhood, he said.

But, he said, “she doesn’t try to be something else: she is a woman, a disciple,” he said.

She is humble and faithful to her teacher, her son, “the only Redeemer,” he said.

She never asked and “never wanted to take something of her Son for herself. She never presented herself as a co-Redemptrix, but as a disciple” who served him and gave life, he said.

Pope Francis’ mention of Mary and the role of co-Redemptrix was a reference to the fact that, for decades, some Catholics, including specialists in Mariology, have requested that Mary be officially proclaimed co-Redemptrix for her cooperative role with Jesus, the redeemer. However, St. John Paul II and popes Benedict XVI and Francis declined to do so.

Mary is the mother of Jesus, she is “our mother, the mother of our people” and the Church, Pope Francis said in his homily.

Understanding the Church through Mary is essential also for understanding the role of women in the Church, he said, because her role is more than just “functional.”

Pope Francis' prayer intentions for January

- Promotion of World Peace—We pray that Christians, followers of other religions, and all people of goodwill may promote peace and justice in the world.

(To see Pope Francis’ month prayers, go to www.popesprayer.va)
We must do all we can to keep ‘Christ’ in Christmas

“The angel said to [the shepherds], ‘Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a Savior has been born for you who is Christ and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel praising God saying: ‘Glory to God in the highest and on Earth peace to those on whom his favor rests’” (Lk 2:9-14).

Each Christmas, we hear St. Luke’s Gospel narrative about the Nativity, a story that has been a cornerstone of our faith and a teaching of many other Christian faith traditions for thousands of years. And every year—whether we’re honest about this or not—this humanity-changing event should cause us to pause to reflect on the great gift our Creator gave us through Jesus Christ his Son. It should truly be a time of awe and wonder.

But sadly, because of the interference, noise and madding crowd generated by secularists in society, the true meaning of Christmas is getting pushed further and further from the forefront and shoved on summer-based sales. This should be: many of those same secularists in society, the true meaning of Christmas is getting pushed further and farther from the forefront and shoved on summer-based sales.

We cannot let that continue to happen. It seems almost every year a school or town is filing a lawsuit to political correctness. A school choir cannot sing religious-themed Christmas songs. A Nativity scene cannot be displayed in a town square. Employees in some stores are forbidden from wishing customers a “Merry Christmas” and instead must offer them a “Happy Holidays.”

What’s next? We can only wonder what will be done to push “Christ” further and further from the true meaning of Christmas. Our response to this and all of life’s challenges must have faith at its core. Each of us is called to holiness, and our faith instructs us to preach Jesus Christ as the word and example. Our charge as Catholics is to see Jesus in others and be for Jesus, not only in church on Sundays but every day with family, friends, co-workers, strangers—anyone and everyone who crosses our path.

We believe we can do just that if we embrace the Pope’s call for exchanging gifts of joy and goodness. The holiday panic of picking out the right gifts is upon us. Now comes the challenge of deciding what is best to give a beloved or dear friend.

Our materialist world is forever pointing us to worldly gifts as the way to celebrate the moment. Seldom, however, are we pointed to the very soul and ultimate end of a gift. Here are some quotes that take us in that direction.

“Above all the grace and the gifts that accompany it, even more memorable is when the heart was touched.”
—Leo Buscaglia

Finding reason to hope in life amid the pessimism of the world

My father-in-law, Joseph, was a wonderful guy. An immigrant who passionately loved America, he was hardworking, honest and thrifty. He had a laborer’s hands but a poet’s mind. Joseph had seen enough of life, however, to make him a bit jaundiced about human nature.

My wife recently found a page of a magazine she had clipped many years ago, with a series of “quotable quotes,” but only one he underlined. It was attributed to George Will: “The nice part about being a pessimist is that you are constantly being either proven right or pleasantly surprised.”

It feels a little bit like what being a Catholic is like these days. There are lots of opportunities for pessimism in all the headlines of 20 years ago, yet we may feel like we are too rarely being “pleasantly surprised.”

The room that are grounds for pessimism there is no denying. One may fervently believe that God will not desert his Church, and will still feel utterly dismayed at what seems like an endless series of revelations and headlines. Looking at the past 20 years, it seems like most of our surprises have been unpleasant.

The problem with pessimism is that it can become its own addiction, its own crutch protecting us from caring too much. We start looking for reasons to validate it, and then we risk becoming anti-Pollyannas, actively seeking out the bad news. Do this long enough, and we’ll all become journalists!

Nobody’s made much money selling good news stories, but it might be useful if we stop looking at the forest once in a while and gaze on the trees. All around us are terrific people doing yeoman’s work for the Lord without publicity or acclaim.

I’ll bet that if you had to think of someone in your parish who is selfless and admirable, holy in a rolled-up sleeves sort of way, you could think of a person who fits that description in a nanosecond. Maybe you are one of those people.

I recently connected with an old friend, Paul Wilkes. Our friendship began when I wrote a review criticizing a book he had initiated contact and over time we grew to respect our differences and appreciate what we each brought to the table. In recent years, however, we had drifted apart, and I only recently found out what he has been up to.

About 14 years ago, during a “trip of a lifetime” to India, providence led Paul to a Salesian orphanage, where he met a little girl who had been intentionally blinded with a darning needle to make her “a better beggar.” His encounter with her and many other young girls seeking shelter in this orphanage from a cruel outside moved him to get involved.

Back in the States, his career path changed radically. He began to build funds to build for those girls what he would call a “Home of Hope.”

One day, he met a beggar again. Return trips to India made it clear that “there are millions of girls on the streets, orphaned, abandoned, sex trafficked, disabled.” He kept going. He spoke at parishes, raised money and helped to build 16 more Homes of Hope sheltering more than a thousand girls.

And as Pope Francis wrote earlier this year, “for the love of others, for those out there waiting for their Magi. They might be waiting for you. If you’d like to learn more, visit homeofhopeindia.org/about-us.”

—Mike Krokos

Finding reason to hope in life amid the pessimism of the world

The holiday panic of picking out the right gifts is upon us. Now comes the challenge of deciding what is best to give a beloved or dear friend.

Our materialist world is forever pointing us to worldly gifts as the way to celebrate the moment. Seldom, however, are we pointed to the very soul and ultimate end of a gift. Here are some quotes that take us in that direction.

“Make gifts meaningful by putting the time in creating them, whether baking and cooking, or in making arts and craft. It will all have more meaning for the giver and receiver.”

In our age of instant meals, a homemade meal may be memorable, but even more memorable is when the heart is broken and a burning desire to make it joyful accompanies it.

St. Francis of Assisi tells us, “Above all the grace and the gifts that Christ gives to his beloved is that of overcoming self.”

There is no greater Christmas gift than being a person who had been broken by a bad habit and having conquered it.

On self-conquest, American poet Maya Angelou could counsel, “It is one of the greatest gifts you can give yourself, is forgive. Forgive everybody.”

Author and motivational speaker Leo Buscaglia points to the essence of exchanging gifts: “Your talent is God’s gift to you. What you do with it is your gift to God.”

Famed cookbook author Lidia Bastianich goes to the heart of giftgiving: “Make gifts meaningful by putting the
God is with us as we wait in joyful hope

“Pues bien, será el propio Señor que les dará una señal Viva como Dios la joven está embarazada y va a dar a luz un hijo, al que llamarán Dios-con-nosotros” (Is 7:14).

La lectura del Evangelio del cuarto domingo de Adviento (Mt 1:18-24) refirma lo que celebramos en esta época sagrada del año: Dios está con nosotros. El Adviento es una época llena de expectativa esperanzada por el regreso del Señor, pero esta espera no debe excluir a Dios. De hecho, uno de los misterios más grandes de la temporada de Adviento es el hecho de que Dios espera con nosotros. Aun cuando lo buscamos con entusiasmo, siempre está presente en los sacramentos (especialmente la Eucaristía), en nuestras oraciones, en nuestra comunión con el prójimo y en nuestro servicio a los necesitados. Dios Padre está con nosotros incluso mientras aguardamos la nueva venida de su Hijo con expectante alegría. El Espíritu Santo está con nosotros ahora y siempre para consolarnos en el dolor, calmarnos nuestros temores y alentarnos en medio de las dificultades que enfrentamos, evitando simultáneamente durante esta temporada tan ajetreada y a menudo estresante. Una de las figuras más destacadas del Adviento es san José, el esposo de María y padre adoptivo de Jesús. Su Matriz es la imagen de un hombre justo (Mt 1:19). Decimos que alguien es justo cuando se comporta de manera honesta, confiable, leal y firme en sus compromisos. José ciertamente cumplía con esta descripción. Jamás lo oímos hablar, pero lo observamos escuchar atentamente a los mensajeros de Dios y responder inmediatamente a la voluntad de Dios para él y su familia.

“José, descendiente de David—le dice el ángel—no tengas reparo en convivir con María, tu esposa, pues el hijo que ha concebido es por la acción del Espíritu Santo. Y cuando dé a luz a su hijo, tú le pondrás por nombre Jesús, porque él salvará a su pueblo de sus pecados” (Mt 1:20-21).

Algo que describe a José es su aceptación solícita del papel que se le asignó como custos, o mayordomo, del niño Jesús. Fue un hombre justo que sin duda habría tenido sus dudas y temores, pero que jamás permitió que estas le impidieran cumplir con sus compromisos como esposo, padre y judio creyente, un “descendiente de David”.

El embarazo de María fue el primer Adviento: fue una época de ansiosa expectativa, un momento en el que Dios se hizo presente en su creación de una forma única. José apoyó a María durante este tiempo de espera, al igual que el Señor lo hizo con la virgen María, y el hijo que llevaba en el vientre que saltó de alegría cuando él y Jesús estuvieron juntos por primera vez, cuando todavía se encontraban en el seno de sus respectivas madres. Dios está con nosotros todo el tiempo, pero lo sentimos de una forma especial durante el Adviento y la Navidad: se trata de una época del año en la que se vive una esperanza extraordinaria. Quizá estemos rodeados de oscuridad—y estamos profundamente conscientes de la maldad y la injusticia que se vive a nuestro alrededor—pero la presencia de Dios supera las fuerzas negativas que nos amenazan. La profunda esperanza de que el Señor vuelve nuevamente a reaffirmar su victoria sobre el pecado y la muerte, y a unirnos a Él, nos remueve del letargo y enciende nuestros corazones con el fuego de su amor.

El Adviento es una época de alegría. Lo que esperamos ya ha llegado. De hecho, llega todos los días si abrimos nuestros corazones a la presencia de Dios en nuestras vidas, y estará con nosotros hasta el final de los tiempos para siempre si seguimos el ejemplo de José y vivimos de una forma santa y justa. ¡Estamos alegría porque Jesús está con nosotros y está por venir!

¡Qué obsequio tan maravilloso! Dios está con nosotros incluso mientras aguardamos su nueva venida con expectante alegría! La historia del nacimiento de Jesús que escucharemos nuevamente en los próximos días jamás resulta aburrida porque nos recuerda vivamente que Dios está con nosotros: está presente en los momentos más tranquilos de nuestras vidas, así como en el ruido y la confusión de la cotidianidad. “Todo esto sucedió en cumplimiento de lo que el Señor había dicho por medio del profeta: Una virgen quedará embarazada y dará a luz un hijo, a quien llamarán Emmanuel, que significa Dios con nosotros” (Mt 1:22-23).

A medida que nos acercamos a los últimos días del Adviento y nos preparamos una vez más para celebrar el nacimiento de Cristo, recemos para tener la paciencia y la fe callada de san José. Que a través de su intercesión podamos escuchar con atención la Palabra de Dios y que respondamos con corazones alegres y generosos cuando nuestro Señor vuelva nuevamente.

Por último, pero no menos importante, reconozcamos la presencia de Jesucristo, aquí y ahora, aun mientras esperamos ansiosamente, con corazones jubilosos. †
Events Calendar

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

December 24
Church of the Immaculate Conception, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. Festival of Lessons and Carols. Scripture readings, prayer, singing of carols and carol lighting. 7:8 p.m., all faith traditions welcome. Information: 822-835-2952, provctr@spsmw.org

January 3
Women’s Care Center, 4901 W. 86th St., Indianapolis. First Friday Mass. 5 p.m., Father David Huemer presiding, optional tour of center to follow. Information: 317-829-4800, www.womenscarecenter.org

January 4
All Saints Parish, St. John the Baptist Campus Hall, 25743 State Route 1, Guifford. Growing the Faith: Finding Time for God. Stacey Sumerave presenting, Mass and catered meal, 6:9 p.m., free will offerings accepted. Registration requested by Jan. 2 online at bit.ly/2IV3cr9 (case sensitive) or by calling parish office: 812-576-4302.

John Paul II Parish, St. Paul Chapel, 216 Schellers Ave., Sellersburg. First Saturday Marian Devotion. 8 a.m. rosary, meditation, prayer; 8:30 a.m. a eucharistic adoration with confessions prior Information: 812-246-3522.

January 8
Archbishop O’Meara Catholic Center, 1,800 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. Senior Saints (weather permitting). Catholic, educational, charitable and social singles, over 50, single, separated, widowed or divorced. New members welcome. Information: 317-243-0777.

January 11
Providence Spirituality and Conference Center, Sisters of Providence. 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. Teen Volunteer Opportunity, ages 12-18, sharing time and talent with retired Providence sisters, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. (first of several teen volunteer opportunities through April 2020). Registration and parent/ guardian waiver: events@spmw.org/event/teen-volunteer-opportunity-all. Information: Providence Sister Josie Luna, 361-500-9055, jiluna@spsw.org

January 12
Sisters of St. Benedict, Ferdinand, Louisville. St. Thomas Aquinas Archangel Church, 3334 W. 30th St., Indianapolis. Ethiopian and Eritrean Christmas Mass celebrated in the Ge’ez Rite, Father Eyasu Dessay from the Ethiopian Catholic Eparchy of Adigreal celebrating, 10 a.m. with reception to follow. Information: Samson Gebey, abe@yahoocom, 317-369-5380.

January 19

John Paul II Parish, St. Paul Chapel, 216 Schellers Ave., Sellersburg. First Saturday Marian Devotion. 8 a.m. rosary, meditation, prayer; 8:30 a.m. a eucharistic adoration with confessions prior Information: 812-246-3522.

January 26
Sisters of St. Benedict, Ferdinand, Louisville. First Saturday Marian Devotion. 8 a.m. rosary, meditation, prayer; 8:30 a.m. a eucharistic adoration with confessions prior Information: 812-246-3522.

February 9
Sisters of St. Benedict, Ferdinand, Louisville. House, 512 Breckenridge Lane, Louisville (Louisville Archdiocese). Sundae with the Sisters, receive input on discernment, visit and meet with the sisters, 1-3 p.m. Information: jocelyn@ thehome.com, 812-367-1411.

February 11

February 16
Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. Ten Volunteer Opportunity, ages 12-18, sharing time and talent with retired Providence sisters, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Registration and parent/guardian waiver: events@spmw.org/event/teen-volunteer-opportunity-all. Information: Providence Sister Josie Luna, 361-500-9055, jiluna@spsw.org

February 5
Archbishop O’Meara Catholic Center, 1,400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. Solo Seniors. Catholic, educational, charitable and social singles, 50 and over, single, separated, widowed or divorced. New members welcome. Information: 317-243-0777.

February 7
Women’s Care Center, 4901 W. 86th St., Indianapolis. First Friday Mass, 5 p.m., Father Robert Hanke presiding, optional tour of center to follow. Information: 317-829-4800, www.womenscarecenter.org

February 20
St. Joseph Parish, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. Bishop’s Session 2020. Information: 812-483-1300, parishoffice@spsw.org

February 22
East Central High School Performing Arts Center, 1 Trojan Road, S. Leon. El Catholic Men’s Conference: Putting on the Armor of God, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., speakers, adoration, confessions, Mass, ages 26 and older $40 for pre-registration or $55 for walk-in, 16-25 $25 for pre-registration or $30 for walk-in, clergy and religious free, includes lunch and parking. Information and registration: elcatholicsmenconference.com

March 4
Archbishop O’Meara Catholic Center, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. Solo Seniors. Catholic, educational, charitable and social singles, 50 and over, single, separated, widowed or divorced. New members welcome. 6 p.m. Information: 317-243-0777.

March 6
Women’s Care Center, 4901 W. 86th St., Indianapolis. First Friday Mass, 3 p.m., Father Patrick Bridegeld presiding, optional tour of center to follow. Information: 317-829-4800, www.womenscarecenter.org

March 1
St. Joseph Parish, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. First Thursday Adoration, interceding for women experiencing crisis pregnancy, 11 a.m.-7 p.m., with Mass at 5:45 p.m. Information: 317-243-0777.

March 7

March 14-17
Providence Spirituality and Conference Center, Poly, Room 1, Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. Fried Book Sale sponsored by Linden Leaf Gifts, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., books not pre-priced but donations accepted. Information: Ryan Sheney, 866-996-2947 or rsheney@spsw.org.

March 21
St. Joseph Parish, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. Third Thursday Adoration, interceding for women experiencing crisis pregnancy, 11 a.m.-7 p.m., with Mass at 5:45 p.m.

VIPS
Announcements for couples celebrating 50, 55, 60, 65, 70 or more years of marriage are accepted. Go to bit.ly/2M4MQms or call 317-236-1585.

John and Janet (Hawkins) Zetzl, members of St. Christopher Parish in Indianapolis, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on Nov. 7. The couple was married at St. Matthew the Apostle Church in Indianapolis on Dec. 19, 1969. They have six children, Daniel, Jim, John, Jr., and Larry Zetzl. The couple also has 12 grandchildren and one great-grandchild. The couple will celebrate with a dinner for family and friends.

Richard and Mary Ann (Tinder) Wagner, former employees of the archdiocese and now members of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Carmel, Ind., (LaFayette Diocese), will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on Jan. 6.

The couple was married at St. Matthew the Apostle Church in Indianapolis on Dec. 19, 1969. They have five children, Daniel, Jim, John, Jr., and Larry Zetzl. The couple also has 12 grandchildren and one great-grandchild. The couple will celebrate with family.

Sisters of Providence to host dementia caregiver support group on Jan. 8

“Dementia: Approach is Everything” is the theme of a caregiver support group hosted by the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. Candidates are paired with a sister or other associate companion for a year of study, prayer and reflection. They then commit to sharing their unique gifts and talents with others while walking with the Sisters of Providence. Currently, more than 20 Providence Associates live out Providence spirituality in their daily lives across the United States and in Taiwan. Learn more about the program at ProvidenceAssociates.org.

New Providence Associates

Pictured above are 16 of the 17 individuals—plus two program co-directors—after becoming Providence Associates on Nov. 9 at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in St. Mary-of-the-Woods. Providence Associates are individuals of faith who form an intentional relationship with the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. Candidates are paired with a sister or other associate companion for a year of study, prayer and reflection. They then commit to sharing their unique gifts and talents with others while walking with the Sisters of Providence. Currently, more than 285 Providence Associates live out Providence spirituality in their daily lives across the United States and in Taiwan. Learn more about the program at ProvidenceAssociates.org.

Submitted photo

Retreats and Programs

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

January 8, January 9

January 10
Mount Saint Francis Center for Spirituality, 101 St. Anthony Dr., Mt. St. Francis. Painting with the Padre, paint with Franciscan Father Vince Petersen, 6:30-9 p.m. includes all painting supplies and assorted cheeses, bring your own beverage, information and registration: www.mountsaintfrancis.org eventickets, 812-923-8817.

Page 6 The Criterion Friday, December 20, 2019
Smiling through tears, one graduate spoke of new ways of thinking and planning for his future, while another thanked God for the gifts of inner peace and confidence. These veterans were among the nearly 300 graduates of the Indianapolis St. Vincent de Paul Society’s “Changing Lives Forever” (CLF) program and the first to complete the course in a Veterans Administration (VA) facility in Indianapolis.

The unique collaboration between the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and the VA began with a chaplain’s request to bring the program to veterans residing in a therapeutic community located in northeast Indianapolis. The St. Vincent de Paul conference at St. Simon the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis agreed to host the program and the 16-week course that began on Aug. 21.

“CLF is a perfect union of our mission at the VA domiciliary: taking complete management of your life, improving living conditions and standards of behavior, and rediscovering a spiritual purpose in your journey of life,” said Divine Word Missionaries Father Charles Smith, the VA’s chaplain.

Speaking at the Nov. 25 graduation, combat veteran Landon “Red” Boyd said, “This program is a God-sent program that has guided me in ways of knowledge [and] has given me inner peace when I think of my future. I am no longer afraid.”

Paul Larkin summed it up this way: “This incredible program has, through Christ, allowed me to change my thinking, my words, and of course my actions. At this time in my life, I now sit down and cautiously consider my thought processes, behaviors and actions, and actually write out a plan for things in my life I need to accomplish. Now the work begins. I encourage others to consider this incredible course.”

CLF facilitators Dave Kasberg and John Babcock, both members of St. Simon, were assisted by Phyllis Manfredi, a member of St. Philip Neri Parish in Indianapolis, and Brenda Ray of St. Rita Parish, also in Indianapolis.

When asked why he volunteered to be lead facilitator, Kasberg, an Air Force veteran, said, “I spent 28 years on active duty. We were stationed across the U.S., in Germany four times, and finished up in the Pacific. When I retired, we moved back home to Indiana.

“I wanted to give back, to help those in need in my own city, my own parish, not some distant land. It is easy to write a check and send it off in the mail. It is a lot harder to get your hands dirty and to address poverty in your own backyard—whether it is through St. Vincent de Paul home visits, Changing Lives Forever or some other program. It is just something I feel I am called to do. And I love it!”

The St. Vincent de Paul conference at St. Simon plans to host another program for veterans. For more information and additional program sites, contact Domoni Rouse, CLF coordinator, at 317-924-5769 or drouse@svdpindy.org †
St. Malachy Parish marks ‘150 years of making saints’

By Natalie Hoefer

St. Malachy Parish in Brownsburg was founded by native sons of Ireland who immigrated to America and made their way to the town in Hendricks County. Now, 150 years later, the parish’s pastor, Father Sean Danda—a native son of St. Malachy—reflects on the faith community’s sesquicentennial.

He sums it up in a statement that addresses the past, the present and the future. “It’s been a fun year of celebrations, ... a pivotal moment of looking at where we came from and where we’re heading, where [God] is leading us.”

This article looks at those three aspects—the parish’s founding, how it honored its 150th anniversary, and the faith community’s future path as a parish and as saints with heaven as their destination.

‘Looking at where we came from’

As the parish celebrates 150 years, it could be said that it has recently returned to its roots.

About a decade ago, the parish relocated from downtown Brownsburg to a site surrounded by fields—quite possibly on the same land the faith community’s Irish founders cleared in the late 1840’s. The timing makes sense. Irish immigrants poured into the United States during the Green Isle’s devastating potato famine of 1845-1849.

Meanwhile, the town of Harrisburg in Hendricks County was incorporated and renamed Brownsburg in 1848. The small wilderness town was ready to grow.

A 1969 memorial book marking the parish’s 100th anniversary notes that “these Irish settlers, blessed with vigorous constitutions, labored clearing the dense forests and draining the pestilent swamps to convert this worthless territory into rich, productive farmland.”

To meet their spiritual needs and fulfill their faith obligations, they traveled 14 miles by horse or buggy to worship at St. John the Evangelist Church in Indianapolis. Additionally, Father D.J. McMullen of County Down, Ireland, was appointed to minister to the Brownsburg Catholic community.

He helped them establish their own parish. The community held a naming contest, and the winning name was St. Malachy. It was a doubly appropriate choice—not only is he Irish, but the 12th-century bishop was known for serving those “in the remotest villages” in Ireland, according to the 1969 memorial book.

The congregation ebbed and flowed. A new brick structure replaced the old, wood-frame church in 1904, but little physical growth occurred until the parish opened a school in 1955. Twenty years later, the parish built its third church structure in the town of Brownsburg.

In 2008, the most recent church was built on the parish’s new field-encircled campus. The adjacent school building was completed in 2014.

“You have to think of what it took for [the parish founders] to do this in a somewhat remote parish, to continue and not let it waiver,” says Beatrice Bursten, a St. Malachy parish council member and head of the 150th anniversary committee.

“You look at where we are today, and [the faith community’s growth] is pretty impressive, not just from a building perspective but also from a faith perspective.”

‘A fun year of celebrations’

The parish’s growth is impressive from a numbers perspective as well. In 1885, the parish had 72 registered families. Today it has 2,100.

“Many new people are moving to Hendricks County. It’s the second fastest growing county in the state,” says Father Danda.

“The parish is becoming a very young parish, very ethnic in diversity with a large African community, many Asians and Filipinos. The feel of the parish is really young and vibrant.”

Those are the same adjectives St. Malachy’s director of faith formation uses to describe the community.

“It’s a young, vibrant parish,” says Marian Kneven. “Young families are getting very involved. ... We are seeing the leadership responsibilities shifting, so young, growing families are leading us.”

Bursten notes St. Malachy now has 45 ministries, including several mission trips each year to supply medical, educational and clean water support to St. Marguerite Parish and the people of Port Margot, Haiti.

The parish began more than a year of celebrating its sesquicentennial with a Mass in September 2018, the same month the first church building was dedicated in 1869. (See related story.)

“The theme has been ‘150 years of making saints—become the saint God wants you to be,’” says Father Danda. “We’ve had a saint of the month highlighting different vocations. We put an image of them in the sanctuary, information about them in the bulletin.”

For inspiration, the parish led several local pilgrimages, including one to the Sisters of Providence at St. Mary-of-the-Woods. (See ST. MALACHY, page 20)

Custom seats are act of ‘chair-ity’ for parish’s sesquicentennial

By Natalie Hoefer

During the Nov. 3 Mass marking the 150th anniversary of St. Malachy Parish in Brownsburg, a trio of exquisite art pieces adorned the sanctuary.

But these were no ordinary sanctuary chairs.

Several talented parishioners—hand-crafted the wooden altar, ambo, candlesticks, tabernacle base, gifts table and pieces for the church’s Blessed Sacrament chapel and Marian shrine.

All that was left by 2018 was the sanctuary chairs.

But two important Masses were rapidly approaching—one in September launching the parish’s sesquicentennial year, and one in November celebrating the feast of St. Malachy.

And those who had created the existing sanctuary pieces were no longer available. One of those volunteers, Larry Garetto, had even sold his expensive woodworking equipment before moving out of state.

But like the precisely-fitting pieces in the fine-crafted chairs, a new team of parishioners with complementary skills fell perfectly into place, and just in the nick of time.

It began with Bob Kasnak. He and his wife Leslie are artisans for their antique furniture business, Kasnak Restorations.

Kasnak admits he’d been approached about building the chairs by various pastors since the new church was built in 2009. But the timing was never right.

Then one day in 2018, Kasnak ran into two other known woodcrafters in the parish, Bill Buss and Roger Manternach.

“Unbeknownst to me, Bill was the one who bought Larry’s equipment,” he says. “And Bill said Larry told him, ‘I’ll sell it to you cheap, but you have to build these chairs.’”

Also unbeknownst to Kasnak was that then-pastor Father Vince Lampert, not wanting to wait any longer, had already selected chairs to purchase for the sanctuary.

After a conversation with Father Lampert, the priest agreed to commission the work to the three parishioners instead.

So the components were in place: Kasnak had the space to do the work, Buss had the equipment, and Manternach made for a third gifted craftsman to work on the project. Plus Garetto contributed the designs, and Leslie helped with the hand-finishing.

Now all they needed was time—something they had little of. The team started working on the chairs in March of 2018. The September Mass was seven months away, and the St. Malachy feast day Mass was nine months away.

Selecting the lumber was easy. They retrieved from storage the dark African Wenge and brown Honduran Mahogany made for a third gifted craftsman to work on the project. Plus Garetto contributed the designs, and Leslie helped with the hand-finishing.

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Annual conference focuses on ministering to those in prison

By Katie Rutter

BLOOMINGTON—Russell Boyd never expected that he would be outside the prison walls, let alone be a panel member speaking to an audience. Yet on Nov. 16, he was one of the presenters at the annual Corrections Ministry Conference held at St. Paul Catholic Center.

“If it hadn’t been for the people coming in from the outside and encouraging me,” Boyd told those in attendance, “I probably would have been the same man. But I changed.”

Boyd spent 10 years on Indiana’s death row. On Feb. 22, 1989, just 25 hours before he was scheduled to die, he was granted a stay of execution. Four years later, he was re-sentenced and removed from death row, and in January was released from prison.

“I watched my brothers on [death row] die. God, for some reason, he saved me, and from that moment that’s where my faith started to kick in,” Boyd said.

He was one of six formerly incarcerated people who shared their appreciation for prison ministry at the annual conference. About 140 people attended the event, which aimed to equip and recruit ministers to enter correctional institutions and minister to the incarcerated.

The keynote speech was given by well-known activist Sister Helen Prejean, a Sister of St. Joseph of Medaille. Her lifelong ministry to those on death row led to her well-known activist Sister Helen Prejean, minister to the incarcerated.

To enter correctional institutions and campaign against the death penalty were thrust into the spotlight by the 1995 film Dead Man Walking, which was based on her book of the same title.

“My goal always is to inform those who are already interested so that they can perform their ministry in a more effective and fulfilling way,” explained Deacon Marc Kellams, a former judge and now the coordinator of Corrections Ministry for the archdiocese.

“I also hope that it helps encourage them that there are many people throughout the archdiocese who have devoted significant time and resources to helping those who are most vulnerable and in often dire need of spiritual counseling and support,” Deacon Kellams said.

According to the latest numbers available from the Indiana Department of Corrections, on Oct. 1 there were 28,876 adults held in prisons maintained by the department.

All of the formerly incarcerated people participating at the conference expressed the importance of having ministers come to visit them.

“When people come in, it’s a big deal. It’s more than just a conversation. It’s someone breathing life back into you,” said Richard Samuels, who was incarcerated for 26 years. “When you get into prison, a lot of times hope is not there.”

“Just to see how much [the volunteers] love you and care about you and they spend their time and they’re there to pour into your souls—and you gotta hold onto that for days because then you go back into the dorm and it’s chaos,” explained Maria Luttrell, who was released in April after a decade of imprisonment.

In addition to the panel discussion, the conference also included breakout sessions on topics like best practices for ministering and the correlation of addiction and crime. Attendees frequently engaged in discussion with the presenters, sharing their own experiences to encourage and educate others.

Harlem Lyle and Karen Burkhart, both members of St. Susanna Parish in Plainfield, told The Criterion about a lasting relationship that they formed with one person they had ministered to in prison. Once released, the man invited both women to his wedding. Then, when the ladies were stuck in traffic en route, he waited to begin the ceremony until they arrived.

“I became his kind of ‘mother/grandmother,’” said Burkhart. “We had helped him find God again, and so he wanted to share [the wedding] with us,” added Lyle.

The conference met under the shadow of several pending executions that were scheduled to take place at the Federal Corrections Complex in Terre Haute in December and January. Attendees bowed their heads in prayer, while Sister of Providence Barbara Battista read aloud the names of those scheduled to die.

Just four days after that prayer, a federal trial judge temporarily suspended those executions. Appeals to that stay continue to make their way through the courts.

“Everybody is worth more than the worst thing they’ve ever done in their life,” Sister Helen said at the conference, an oft-repeated mantra.

“You know from visiting prisons,” she told those in attendance, “we look into their eyes, and they are human beings, and we reflect in our own minds. What if I was poor, what if I came from a broken family, what if I was taught violence from the time I was 6 years old? Where would I be?”

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that capital punishment is “inadmissible.”

Sister Helen emphasized that what everyone needs—including those in prison—is the mercy freely offered to all people by God.

“As a young adult, I did some stupid things,” reflected attendee Dan White, a member of St. Matthew the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis.

“These people just made mistakes in their lives and got caught. … They need somebody now,” White concluded.

As the new Corrections Ministry initiative continues to grow, Deacon Kellams said he intends to focus on facilitating re-entry for those who are released from prison. He affirmed that ministry to the incarcerated is critical to the Catholic faith.

“It says in [the Gospel of] Matthew [25:36] that when I was in jail, you visited me,” Deacon Kellams said, “and it’s an instruction from our Lord to include these people in the body of Christ, and make sure their spiritual needs and their personal needs are met as best we can. It’s a mandate of the Gospel.”

(Katie Rutter is a freelance writer and member of St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Bloomington.)


A family remembers their son

James Warren, Jr., a 2015 graduate of Bishop Chatard High School in Indianapolis, died of cancer on Feb. 22, 2019. His father James E. Warren, Sr., and mother Joan C. Warren (née Romeiser) called this Christmas to remember how much James meant to them and to his family and friends. Write them to letter to them before this Christmas on the faces of these letters."

By Joaquin Lament

The doll is now 67 years old. It has a hair restoration only once, but the rest of the hair is original and still looks like the hairdos she got at the salon in small packages! I could not imagine it otherwise. She had a lot of hair restoration, and even more hair restoration that was done at the salon where she lived in Indiana. I remember being so thrilled and happy with it. The doll is now 67 years old. It has a hair restoration only once, but the rest of the hair is original and still looks like the hairdos she got at the salon in Indiana. I remember being so thrilled and happy with it.

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Pope lifts secrecy obligation for those who report having been abused

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Francis has abolished the obligation of secrecy for those who report having been sexually abused by a priest and for those who testify in a Church trial or process having to do with clerical sexual abuse.

“The person who files the report, the person who alleges to have been harmed and the witnesses shall not be bound by any obligation of silence with regard to matters involving the case,” the pope ordered in a new “Instruction On the Confidentiality of Legal Proceedings,” published on Dec. 17.

In an accompanying note, Bishop Juan Ignacio Arrieta, secretary of the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts, said the change regarding the “confidential” secret has nothing to do with the seal of the sacrament of confession.

“The absolute obligation to observe the sacramental seal,” he said, “is an obligation imposed on the priest by reason of the position he holds in administering the sacrament of confession, and not even the penitent can free him of it.”

The instruction was published by the Vatican along with changes to the already-updated “Sacramentorum Sanctiatis Tutela” (“Safeguarding the Sacrament of the Sacraments”), the 2001 document issued by St. John Paul II outlining procedures for the investigation and trial of any member of the clergy accused of sexually abusing a child or vulnerable adult or accused of acquiring, possessing or distributing child pornography.

In the first of the amendments, Pope Francis changed the definition of child pornography. Previously the subject was a person under the age of 14. The new description of the crime says, “The acquisition, possession or distribution by a cleric of pornographic images of minors under the age of 18, for purposes of sexual gratification, by whatever means or using whatever technology.”

In describing the procedural norms for how the tribunal of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is to be composed and conducted, Pope Francis has removed the requirement that the legal representative of the victim—a Church official—be among the members. Those who read: “The role of advocate or procurator is carried out by a member of the faithful possessing a doctorate in canon law, who is approved by the presiding judge of the college.”

But the abolition of the pontifical secret over the entire Vatican process is the greatest change made. And, not only are victims and witnesses from the new case, the amended law specifies that the still-in-effect obligation of Vatican officials to maintain confidentiality “on pain of having the fulfillment of the obligations laid down in all places by civil laws, including any reporting obligation and the execution of enforceable requests of civil judicial authorities.”

Archbishop Charles Scicluna, adjunct secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Vatican’s chief abuse investigator, told the Italian news magazine La Repubblica the new law makes clear that “anybody who discloses misconduct or a crime anybody whom the Church has protected by the misconduct or the crime, and the witnesses, should never be subject to a vow or a promise of silence on the fact that they have reported.”

The new law, he said, explicitly states people’s “moral duty” to cooperate with civil authorities in reporting and investigating crime of abuse. “Moreover, there is an obligation not to bind people who disclose misconduct or crimes by any promise or vow of silence,” he explained.

In a separate interview with Vatican News, Archbishop Scicluna described as an “epochal change” the new law’s attempt to drop the “pontifical secret”—the highest level of confidentiality. “That means, of course, the question of transmission of evidence is being implemented at the highest level,” he said.

The new rules do not mean that documents from Vatican abuse investigations and trials will be made public, he said, but “they are available for authorities, or people who are interested parties, and authorities who have a statutory jurisdiction over the case.”

In the past, when a government or court asked the Vatican for information on a case, “the response usually was that material was covered by ‘pontifical secret.’”

Now, Archbishop Scicluna said, once “all the offices of international law are fulfilled, communication with other authorities and the sharing of information and documentation are facilitated.”

In September 2017, members of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors asked Pope Francis to reconsider Vatican norms maintaining the imposition of “pontifical secret” in the Church’s judicial handling of clerical sexual abuse and other grave crimes.

The secret ensures cases are dealt with in strict confidentiality. Vatican experts have said it was designed to protect the dignity of everyone involved, including the victim, the accused, their families and their communities.

But when Pope Francis called the presidents of the world’s bishops’ conferences to the Vatican for a summit on the abuse crisis in February, victims and experts alike urged a revision of the policy. The “pontifical secret,” which is invoked with an oath—was not the same thing as removing all obligations for confidentiality.

“The secrecy of the office” still applies to Vatican officials and others involved in an investigation or trial of a cleric accused of abuse or of a bishop or religious superior accused of cover-up. Except for sharing information with civil authorities, the basic professional secrecy serves, as the new law says, to protect “the good name, image and privacy of all persons.”

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—The world does not need more empty words but more peacemakers, not empty words, says Pope Francis in a message released on Dec. 12.

“People, he said, need “a new moral conscience” to cooperate with civil authorities and communities.

But the pope said every act of war is “a form of fratricide that destines people to a vocation to brotherhood,” and all violence has a lasting effect “on the body and soul of humanity.”

Wars often begin with the inability to accept the diversity of others and is fueled “by a perversity of relationships, by hegemonic ambitions, by abuses of power, by fear of others and by seeing diversity as an obstacle,” he said.

Peacemaking, he said, requires “a perversity of relationships, by hegemonic ambitions, by abuses of power, by fear of others and by seeing diversity as an obstacle,” he said.

Peace also requires “ecological conversion,” he said, which basically is a “new way of looking at life,” he said.

People, he said, need “a new way to dwell in our common home, to accept our differences, to respect and celebrate the life that we have received and share, and to seek living conditions and models of society that favor the continued flourishing of life and the development of the common good of the entire human family.”

Pope Francis ordered in a new “Instruction On the Confidentiality of Legal Proceedings,” published on Dec. 17 the pope abolished the obligation of secrecy for abuse victims during Vatican trials and proceedings.

(12 Dec 2023; Vaticannews.va)
New initiative aims to ‘LEAD’ parishes into the future

By Jennifer Lindberg

Leadership like this doesn’t come along every day.

“This really helps parish leaders in a totally new way,” said Father Jeffrey Godecker, who is helping pilot a new leadership program in the archdiocese called LEAD.

“I’ve been around a lot in my 50 years of being a priest and it’s really just about the best I’ve seen,” said Father Godecker, who serves as the program’s clergy educator. “It really engages the participants in a very thoughtful way. It’s not going to replace the priest. The priest still has the bottom line, but in an age where there are fewer of us, we need better collaboration and a way to do that that enables everybody.

LEAD, an acronym for Leader Education and Development, is a unique guided learning process that helps pastors, parish life coordinators, parish staff and parish volunteer leaders learn a new type of leadership. Described as a “journey of discovery,” the program focuses on a leader’s deep underling assumptions about leadership, beliefs, motives and the thoughts that drive their behavior.

Underwritten in full by a grant from Lilly Endowment, Inc., the program at the University of Indianapolis is meant to coach leaders throughout the process as they implement it at their unique parish community. The program assists even parish priests in the evangelization process at the parish level to have better leadership skills so the priest can focus on the spiritual needs of one parish community.

Today, many priests serve more than one parish community. In 1970, there were 992 priests compared to 36,580 in 2018, according to statistics from CARA (Center for Applied Research in the Professions).

“Sometimes, leadership is always focused on the leader,” said Father Godecker. “If that leader is charismatic, they usually say, ‘Well, let him do it all,’ but that’s not a healthy way to function as a pastor. There is another piece of this. The archbishop [Charles C. Thompson] says we need to grow parachurians who is a part of them.”

The LEAD program is about helping Catholics in the new evangelization. St. Thomas More Parish in Indianapolis was named in his honor after the football field at St. Lawrence Parish in Indiana was named in his honor after the football field at St. Lawrence Parish in Indiana was named in his honor after the football field at St. Lawrence Parish in Indianapolis.

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Gold Mass sponsors the Gold Mass for Scientists. It follows in the tradition of special Masses for members of particular professions such as the Red Mass for lawyers and lawmakers, the White Mass for health care professionals and the Blue Mass for those in public safety. "The promoting Gold Masses for Scientists around the world, the SCS hopes to create spiritual fellowship among local Catholic scientists, technologists, engineers and mathematicians, as well as educators and students in those fields. It was "a pleasant surprise" for Giesting when roughly 25 qualifying Catholics turned out for the Gold Mass. While many were from the Indianapolis area, others traveled from as far as Terre Haute and Richmond to participate in the liturgy. "Scientists help us try to understand the mysteries that are in nature, a nature created by God," said Father Lawrence Richard, a retired priest of the archdiocese, during the homily. "It's a great service that these men and women do for us."

"The gathering was "a good reminder that most of us are very busy, there are these men and women expanding into the universe—both the cosmos and the micro-universe," he said. He ended his homily noting that all "are called to look at the meaning of our life both from a scientific point of view as well as a faith point of view. We give thanks to God for the work of these men and women." "The most plausible explanation" About 15 of those participating in the Gold Mass met afterward for food and fellowship. Lay Dominican Tom Rohn, a member of St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis and a statistician for the United States Department of Defense, said he felt it was "a really important part of modern Catholicism to explain to the modern world why Catholicism is the most plausible explanation for why reality is the way it is." The Gold Mass "is a wonderful thing, especially if trying to get professional Catholics re-engaged with the faith," he said. "Without the Catholic Church, there would be no conception of the sciences as we know them today." A computer science teacher at Cathedral High School in Indianapolis, Ria Pereira said she already has an advantage in helping her students see the relationship of faith and reason. "We pray before every class," she noted. "That brings the focus back to the bigger picture, that it is God behind everything, and whatever we do is for his greater glory, be it through computer science or robotics or anything." "A great service these men and women do..." "That cost her a lot of friends," Giesting noted. Fr. John Hollowell has also been a guest on the podcast. He is pastor of Annunciation Parish in Brazil and St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Green Castle, where he also serves as chaplain for DePauw University's Catholic students. "He talks with students a lot," noted Giesting. He said the priest mentioned how the idea of faith and science being separate is "endemic, that we exist in a renaissance environment where the idea is everywhere that faith is fading and worn out." Consequently, scientists tend to hide their faith and beliefs. "You can go months and months without knowing anyone in science has faith at all," says Giesting. "I interviewed one of my past professors and turned out she's a very dedicated Christian. I never knew that." At the University of Notre Dame in June, he and Schmitt had the opportunity to interview for their podcast the Society of Catholic Scientists' conference speakers. "I just think it's a great thing that the society is trying to increase more awareness among Catholic scientists," said Giesting. "We've lost sight of the fact that science and faith can coexist and are both simultaneously true." "For more information on becoming involved in a local Society of Catholic Scientists group, contact Paul Giesting at giesting@alum.mit.edu. For more information on the Society of Catholic Scientists, the Gold Mass or starting a local chapter, go to www.catholicscientists.org"
Holly Land craftsmen share gift of Christmas with the world

By Judith Sudilovsky

For Ashraf Jaraysa, 53, handcrafting olive wood handicrafts is a way of life. A fourth-generation artisan, Jaraysa began working with his father in the family’s olive wood workshop after school when he was 8 years old.

“As the oldest son, I would come to the workshop and sit with my father, and we would talk and work together,” recalled Jaraysa.

Today, he runs the family’s workshop in the village of Beit Sahour that neighbors Bethlehem in the West Bank. His younger brother works with him fashioning carved religious figurines from both the Old and New Testaments, Nativity scenes and wooden crosses from traditional and new designs.

Other members of the family also take part in the family business, with his sisters and mother doing gluing and finishing work on rosaries and smaller pieces. His middle son has come on as a marketer and salesman for his father’s work.

Though not as directly involved with the workshop, his other three children help out when they can.

“As long as we can, we will keep the work with my family,” said Jaraysa, whose late father was among the founders of the Holy Land Handicraft Cooperative Society, which was founded in 1981 and represents 35 olive wood and mother-of-pearl workshop owners.

“We are four generations in this work so we have many of our designs from the older generations. This is our tradition. We give people our voice of love and peace as Christians,” he said.

In addition to selling work by its members, the cooperative also sells handicrafts made by non-members including ceramics, glass, embroidery, olive soap and stationary.

For many of the artisans, including himself, said Jaraysa, the cooperative allows them to get a fair price for their work.

Much of the work continues to be done in the same way as it was done by his grandfather and great-grandfather. In the autumn, when olive farmers prune their trees, Jaraysa purchases the wood and leaves it to dry in a special drying room for at least two years. Only then is it ready to be carved.

“If you love your work, you love God, and we always want to make new and beautiful things. This is our job, but we also share our voice about God and Jesus. We share the love with these pieces,” he said.

Another olive wood artisan and member of the cooperative, Kamal Abu Sada, 70, said that creating religious sculptures from olive wood strengthens his Christian faith.

“I am happy we can be here, on our land, doing this work,” said Abu Sada, whose two sons are also craftsmen, one in his own workshop and the youngest with his father. He began his workshop as a young man out of the love of the art of carving, he said. Indeed, said his wife Rima, Abu Sada is rarely without some sort of carving tool in his hands.

“I am proud of the work my husband does,” she said. “I am proud they work in something which belongs to Jesus and the Holy Family.”

On a practical level, Abu Sada said, the olive wood handicrafts and other handmade crafts local artisans produce are an important source of livelihood for many local residents.

“This has been our work from the beginning. We are in our land, in our workshops,” he said. “I believe the olive trees are blessed and we are passing on that blessing, especially with the Nativity sets.”

Jaraysa also feels it is especially significant to work with olive wood, calling the olive tree holy because of its association with Jesus, who prayed in an olive grove in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives before he was crucified.

“We present the story of Jesus. Many people do not have the chance to come here. When we make a crèche and sell it in Europe or the USA, they can live the story,” said Jaraysa. “The children can put in the pieces of Mary and Joseph, and the shepherds and then the three kings and baby Jesus. We share this Christmas time for all.”

As more and more Christians are emigrating from the Holy Land because of the difficult political and economic situation, it is important to maintain this traditional handicraft, he said.

“We will continue to build on love, because without love there is no life,” he said.

(Author is a freelance writer based in the Holy Land.)
Mentoring changes lives. I have witnessed people change their outlook on life, what they believe, and even how they perceive other people. All of this has occurred for me since I started mentoring five years ago, with incarcerated mentors for more than 10 years ago. As I mentioned earlier, mentoring certainly changes lives for mentees. I work for an agency called Trusted Mentors, which for more than 15 years has connected and trained volunteer mentors with at-risk adults and resources to help keep them housed and out of prison. Here are some documented statistics from the group’s annual report in the re-entry track that did not re-offend while in contact with their mentors; 98 percent of our matched adults at risk of homelessness remained housed; and 95 percent of our matched young adults also remained housed. When we help people stay out of prison or from homelessness, they can become successful employees, can give back to their community, and can act as parents such that their children will have a better chance to succeed. Mentoring changes the lives of those being mentored. And, I can’t tell you how many mentors have told me they have been changed for the better as well. Mentors really get to know, often for the first time, someone involved in the criminal justice system. They learn how it is to succeed when people leave prison because of the design of the system, the lack of transportation, the lack of landlords willing to rent to them, the lack of employers willing to hire them … the list of obstacles goes on and on. I have mentored several folks over the past 10 years. My renewed faith brought me to mentoring. I won’t say that it has absolutely been a slam dunk that I feel I have learned a great deal about what it means to “love thy neighbor.” I am happy to share with any of you my experiences with Herman, Charles, David, Mark, Leroy, Sue, Terry, Gene, Anita and others. Reach out to me at gwitulski@trustedmentors.org for coffee to discuss. Trusted Mentors provides training and ongoing support for mentors because we realize that people can’t do it alone. It takes time for others to change and, as mentors, we also need this support in becoming a mentor, progress can be “three steps forward and two steps back.” A big part of mentoring is being there to help your mentee pick or herself back up, help them dust themselves off, and help them move forward with a fresh start. At the end of the day, it is about compassion, love, forgiveness, perseverance, patience and listening with the understanding that can influence the life of another. Mentoring changes lives. What can be better than building a new relationship that changes your life and the life of a person working to stay housed or out of prison? For more information about Trusted Mentors, go to www.trustedmentors.org.

(Ed Witulski is the Mentor Match Coordinator for Trusted Mentors and is a member of the archdiocese’s Corrections Ministry Advisory Committee. He is also a member of St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis.)

Christmas will soon unfold before us. Trees twinkling. Wreaths well hung. Candles set ablaze. All to celebrate us. Trees twinkling. Wreaths well hung. Christmas and help them keep that joy as the joy we see in our children at Christmas morning when I unwrapped the presents my parents had chosen for me. The discovery was joyful. Then there was the excitement of spending whatever the gifts offered and playing them out in the carefree days of Christmas break.

That’s in part because I don’t really yearn for special gifts like I did then. Thankfully, I’m pretty much oblivious to the marketers who want to persuade adults to get the latest digital device, a new TV or a new fashion trend. Most important to me, I tend to focus more at Christmas on what my family around me is experiencing. Seeing my boys’ excitement at opening their gifts renewal my memories of the same when I was a child. As I was in the last sentence, I wasn’t concerned about the commercialization of Christmas and how it can distract us from the spiritual meaning and good news of the feast of our Lord’s birth in Bethlehem. Thankfully, my parents instilled the faith in me so that it is at the heart of my life as an adult. My wife Cindy and I are trying to do that now for our sons. We do it at Christmas by limiting the gifts we give to them. We’ve applied the advice of a friend and gave each of our boys two gifts each (in addition to what they receive in their stockings) something they want, something they need, something they can use, something they can share.

We’ve noticed after doing this for some years that the boys don’t get fixated on a long list of gifts. Instead, they want to understand the Christmas tree. They certainly have gift ideas in mind, but they tend not to go overboard. Hopefully, we’ll create space in them where a personal appreciation of the gift of Christ at Christmas can grow in their hearts.

As an adult, I’ve come to learn that desire to receive the gift of Jesus is ultimately rooted in the yearning God placed in our souls for the gift of eternal life.

It’s easy in our culture, though, to allow the desire for material things to push the spiritual foundation of our lives to the back of our hearts and minds.

That’s a main reason why Cindy and I try to keep the material focus in Christmas within limits in our home. In setting them, we’re not being Grinches. Indeed, we hope the boys experience real joy in what they receive. Thankfully, we’ve seen that in them over the years.

In our hope they can keep that youthful joy at Christmas as they grow into adulthood.

I don’t want that part of what our Lord meant when he said that “whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it.” I don’t want the joy of the- childlike joy of the gift to be open to the childlike joy of the gift to himself (Mt 10:15) when our children in unwrapping gifts on Christmas morning can be a small taste of the infinite happiness we, as Christians, look forward to when God willing, we see our Lord face to face when we pass from this life to the next, to the faith that my boys and I yearn for: we’re alive when that blessed day dawned. So, let us who are parents, with the help of our children, create the space in their lives the joy we see in our children at Christmas and help them keep that joy as they grow.

(Sean Gallagher is a reporter for ...
**The Sunday Readings**

**Sunday, December 22, 2019**

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

This weekend, the Church celebrates the fourth and last Sunday of Advent 2019. For its first reading, this weekend’s Mass offers a reading from the first section of the Book of Isaiah. This reading refers to King Ahaz of the southern Hebrew kingdom of Judah. Ahaz reigned in the last third of the eighth century B.C.E.

To be kind, he is not regarded as having been a remarkably successful king. Prompting Isaiah’s interest in Ahaz or in any king was not necessarily the monarchical’s obvious power and renown, but rather the fact that the king and foremost was intended to be the principal servant of God among his chosen people. He urged to be loyal and devoted, Ahaz was promised a sign of God’s favor. It was the birth of a son, whose mother was Ahaz’s young bride, a virgin.

St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans provides the second reading. Introducing himself, Paul firmly states that he is an Apostle, called by the Lord to proclaim the Gospel. Above and beyond everything, he insisted, he was God’s servant.

For its last reading, the Church presents a section from the Gospel of St. Matthew. Only the Gospels of Matthew and Luke recount the birth of Jesus.

This weekend’s reading recalls the conception of Jesus. It says clearly, as the Gospel states, that the coming of the Messiah is a sign, perfect and penultimate, of God’s everlasting love for humankind. God never fails, and is never absent from people.

**Reflection**

This weekend, the Church calls us to observe the last Sunday of Advent. The season of Advent is the careful and focused period preceding Christmas. In our culture, it is a time to prepare gifts to present to the people we love.

The custom of gift-giving has religious origins. It imitates the Magi, who brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to the baby Jesus. We give gifts to others in whom we see Jesus, precious because the Lord died for them. Love, the very essence of God, impels us. Advent calls us to give ourselves to God.

An old European legend has a message. Once, in a great city, at Christmas, the people presented gifts before the Nativity scene in the cathedral. The rich and mighty vied with each other to offer the most expensive gift. A poor orphan boy dreamed of something beautiful than anyone could remember. The bells rang out in a melody more beautiful than anyone could remember.

**The Promise**

By Hilda Buck

In Him salvation is won.

Fulfilling the age-old promise.

The long-awaited Savior has come.

Angel choirs singing hosannas—

Over the place where He lay.

Star shining in splendor

That it would not be a mortal sin if you stopped going to Mass on Sundays and holy days. I believe that your diagnosed anxiety/mood disorder, coupled with your heightened sensitivity to smells and sounds, dispenses you from regular attendance. Your disease is as real as any high fever you would have.

At the same time, I don’t want you to be deprived of the Eucharist, which is the highest form of prayer and the strongest help to Christian holiness. Would you be comfortable going to Mass instead on a weekday, when there would be fewer distractions and hazards to your sense of peace?

You might also see if there is a religious community near where you live, where you could participate in Sunday and holy day Masses that would not negatively affect your well-being.

In any case, I recommend that you speak about this with your pastor.

Can a homosexual man become an extraordinary minister of holy Communion in a Catholic church? (New York)

It depends. If a person is engaged in an active, open same-sex relationship, I believe that person should not be selected as an extraordinary minister of holy Communion. The Catechism of the Catholic Church, referencing the Scriptures, is clear in stating that homosexual acts are “disordered” and “contrary to the natural law” (#2357).

And “Redemptoris Sacramentum,” a 2004 instruction from the Vatican’s Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments, has stated that those chosen to assist at liturgical celebrations “must be those whose Christian life, morals and fidelity to the Church’s magisterium recommend them” (#46).

But many people with a homosexual orientation are not actively sexually active. Such people, if they otherwise meet the requirements listed in “Redemptoris Sacramentum,” can serve as an extraordinary minister of holy Communion.

(See READINGS, page 19)
Martyrdom comes from following Christ without compromise, pope says

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—There always will be martyrs among Christians in the world, Pope Francis said.

“Martyrdom is the sign that we are on Jesus’ path; it’s a blessing from the Lord that within the people of God there is someone who gives this witness of martyrdom,” he said on Dec. 11 during his weekly general audience in the Vatican’s Paul VI Hall, which was decorated with a large Christmas tree and Nativity scene.

The pope continued his series of talks on the Acts of the Apostles by looking at the increasing amount of suffering and persecution the Apostle Paul faced as he spread the Gospel.

“Jesus is not an evangelizer filled with passion, the intrepid missionary among pagans who brings new Christians to communities to life, he is also a suffering witness of the Risen One,” the pope said in his catechesis.

“Paul teaches us perseverance amid trials and the ability to see everything with the eyes of faith,” the pope said. “Let us ask the Lord today, through the Apostle’s intercession, to rekindle our faith and help us to be completely faithful to our vocation as Christians, as disciples of the Lord, as missionaries.”

To further underline how, even in modern times, Christians still face suffering and persecution, the pope spoke about meeting with pilgrims from Ukraine earlier that morning.

He explained how Eastern-Rite Catholics in Ukraine had been persecuted for their faith under communism, “but they did not negotiate the faith.”

“In the world today, including in Europe, many Christians are being persecuted. And they give their life for their faith,” he said.

They are persecuted with ‘white gloves,’ that is, they are pushed aside, emarginated,” the pope said. “Martyrdom is the context of a Christian, of a Christian community. The martyrs will be martyrs among us.”

The group of pilgrims that met with Pope Francis included bishops, priests, religious and laypeople from the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Mukachevo, which was celebrating the 30th anniversary of no longer having to celebrate the faith clandestinely under Soviet oppression.

The pope told them that their Church “is the mother of many martyrs,” recalling the example of their bishop, Blessed Theodore Romzha, who was killed by the Soviet secret police in 1947 and who was beatified as a martyr by St. John Paul II in 2001.

“In the darkest hours of your history,” Pope Francis said, “he knew how to guide the people of God with evangelical wisdom and courage, a tireless man,” who, like Christ the good shepherd, gave his life for his flock, the pope said.

Pope Francis noted that many of the pilgrims’ own relatives had to risk their freedom or life in order to hand down the “teaching of the truth of Christ” to them and future generations. 

Online Lay Ministry Formation

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis has partnered with the University of Notre Dame and Catholic Distance University (CDU) to offer for-fee or-credit online theology classes.

• Earn certificate in Lay Ministry
• Complete 12 courses online with ND STEP program
• CDU offers classes on Catechesis of the Catholic Church
• 20% discount for all employees, volunteers, and parishioners

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

SPRED is an approach to faith formation for persons with disabilities supported by the archdiocesan Office of Catechesis. For more information, contact catechesis@archindy.org or 317-236-1550. Joan Rainer, a member of St. Simon the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis, is a member of the Advent Retreat planning team.

Soon, I was laughing. Everyone was laughing. I looked at them, 27 прекрасные people—all of them—these, the most unlikely. I realized I was looking directly at the Incarnation, the very scene I’d never imagined.

It was an unlikely place, an unlikely group and an unlikely moment to find Jesus in the second row, wearing a Santa hat, sipping a Coke while smiling at me.

I was laughing. Everyone was laughing. I looked at them, 27 прекрасные people—all of them—these, the most unlikely. I realized I was looking directly at the Incarnation, the very scene I’d never imagined.

Dirty animal pen is the most unlikely, the last place one would expect to find Jesus?” Heads went down.

“Paul teaches us perseverance amid trials and the ability to see everything with the eyes of faith,” the pope said. “Let us ask the Lord today, through the Apostle’s intercession, to rekindle our faith and help us to be completely faithful to our vocation as Christians, as disciples of the Lord, as missionaries.”

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The archdiocesan Office of Catechesis of the Catholic Church (CDU) to offer for-fee or-credit online theology classes.

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Diocese of Indianapolis raised to the status of archdiocese 75 years ago

On Dec. 19, 1944, 75 years ago this month, a decree of Pope Pius XII was implemented that raised the then-Diocese of Indianapolis to an archdiocese. As a result, the shepherd of the Church in central and southern Indiana at the time, Bishop Joseph E. Ritter, became an archbishop.

Archbishop Amleto G. Cicognani, apostolic delegate to the United States at the time, came to SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis for ceremonies to mark the occasion. They included a formal reading of the decree and a Mass.

On the same date, the Diocese of Evansville, Ind., was created out of territory that previously was part of the Diocese of Indianapolis.

Then-Father Henry J. Grimmelsman was ordained and installed as the first bishop of Evansville on Dec. 21, 1944. He led the Church in southwestern Indiana until retiring in 1965.

Archbishop Ritter was named archbishop of St. Louis in July 1946.

READINGS

continued from page 17

Saturday, December 28
The Holy Innocents, martyrs
1 John 1:5-2:2

Psalm 124:2-5, 7c-8
Matthew 2:13-18

Sunday, December 29
The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph
Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14

Psalm 128:1-5
Colossians 3:12-21
or Colossians 3:12-17
Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

Monday, December 30
Sixth Day within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord
1 John 2:12-17
Psalm 96:7-10
Luke 2:36-40

Tuesday, December 31
Seventh Day within the Octave of Christmas
St. Sylvester I, pope
1 John 2:18-21
Psalm 96:1-2, 11-13
John 1:1-18

Wednesday, January 1
Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God
Octave Day of the Nativity of the Lord
Numbers 6:22-27
Psalm 67:2-3, 5-6, 8
Galatians 4:4-7
Luke 2:16-21

Thursday, January 2
St. Basil the Great, bishop and doctor of the Church
St. Gregory of Nazianzen, bishop and doctor of the Church
1 John 2:22-28
Psalm 98:1-4
John 1:19-28

Friday, January 3
The Most Holy Name of Jesus
1 John 2:29-3:6
Psalm 98:1, 3-6
John 1:29-34

Saturday, January 4
St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, religious
1 John 3:7-10
Psalm 98:1, 7-9
John 1:35-42

Sunday, January 5
The Epiphany of the Lord
Isaiah 60:1-6
Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-13
Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6
Matthew 2:1-12

Monday, January 6
St. André Bessette, religious
1 John 3:2-4, 6-8
Psalm 2:7-8, 10-12a
Matthew 4:12-17, 23-25

Tuesday, January 7
St. Raymond of Penyafort, priest
1 John 4:7-10
Psalm 72:1-4, 7-8
Mark 6:34-44

Wednesday, January 8
St. François de Laval, bishop
1 John 4:11-18
Psalm 72:1-2, 10, 12-13
Mark 6:45-52

Thursday, January 9
1 John 4:19-3:4
Psalm 72:1-2, 14, 15b, 17
Luke 4:14-22a

Friday, January 10
1 John 5:5-13
Psalm 147:12-15, 19-20
Luke 5:12-16

Saturday, January 11
1 John 5:14-21
Psalm 149:1-6a, 9b
John 3:22-30

Sunday, January 12
The Baptism of the Lord
Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7
Psalm 29:1-4, 3, 9-10
Acts 10:34-38
Matthew 3:13-17
Pope Francis tells his elderly peers the prayers of the old are powerful

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—On the eve of his 83rd birthday, Pope Francis met with a group of his peers—although many were a few years younger—and told them that “old age is a time of grace.”

Grandparents, who have received the blessing of seeing their children’s children, are entrusted with a great task: transmitting the experience of life and the history of the family, the community, the people,” the pope said on Dec. 16 during an audience with members of the Italian National Association of Senior Workers.

The association represents workers with at least 20 years of seniority in a company, defending the rights of older workers and promoting volunteer service by older people.

Pope Francis, who was born on Dec. 17, 1936, told association members that one’s later years will be a “season of dialogue,” because “the future of a person naturally presupposes a dialogue and encounter between the old and young to build a society that is more just, more beautiful, has more solidarity and is more Christian.”

As one grows older, he said, “the Lord renews his call to us. He calls us to press on and hand on the faith; he calls us to pray, especially to intercede; he calls us to be alongside those who are in need.”

“Every church, grandparents, have a unique and special ability to understand the most problematic situations” the pope continued. “And when they pray for these situations, their prayer is strong, it’s potent.”

“Having one’s senior years as a gift and a time for dialogue, he said, the elderly show the lie of “the traditional stereotype of the elderly ill, handicapped, dependent, isolated, besieged by fear, left out, having a weak identity after losing their social role.”

Active seniors, he said, also fight a system that focuses more on “costs and risks” than on “resources and potential.”

“The future—and this is not an exaggeration—will be found in dialogue between the young and the old,” he said. “We are all called to fight this poisonous throwaway culture. With tenacity we are called to build a different society, one that is more welcoming, more human, more inclusive,” and one where the young aren’t ignored because they aren’t working yet and the old aren’t ignored because people think their financially productive years are over.

“Remember,” the pope told them, “talk to young people, not to clobber them, no. To listen to them, to sow something. This dialogue is the future.”

St. Malachy


School dedication at Nativity Parish in Indianapolis

In this photo from Aug. 28, 1955, priests, Sisters of Providence and parishioners of Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ Parish in Indianapolis process into the church’s new school on the occasion of its dedication. Archbishop Paul Schulte can be seen near the rear of the procession. The original church building, which appears in the background of this photo, was destroyed by fire on Nov. 17, 1965.

(Would you like to comment on or share information about this photo? Contact archdiocesan archivist Julie Motyka at 800-382-9836, ext. 1538, 317-236-1538, or by e-mail at jmotyka@archindy.org.)

Chairs

The task of building the chairs, however, was not easy.

“Chairs are among the most challenging of furniture items to build,” says Kasnak. “And these were exceptionally so due to the unusual, diagonally-oriented [legs], the extra-large size to fit the grand sanctuary space and the difficulty of the construction and decorative detail.”

Details like crafting a separate wooden Celtic-style cross and circle inlay for the backrest of the presider’s chair. Or adding a Celtic trinity knot in 23-karat gold-leaf on the backrest of the deacon’s chairs. Or using the same gilding to cover the spires atop the back legs of all three chairs.

“It took four times longer than we thought it would,” Kasnak admits with a laugh. “The wives were getting impatient.”

Nevertheless, the team completed the presider’s chair in time for the September 2018 Mass, and the deacons’ chairs were finished for the parish’s feast day Mass in November.

In total, says Kasnak, the project took “a minimum of 1,600 hours and tens-of-thousands of dollars of volunteer labor.”

Father Danda appreciates the parishioner-made pieces.

“To my five years of [priest formation] in Rome, I was so blessed to see generation after generation of art and handicraft in the churches of Europe,” he says. “Nowadays, we only allow the ‘professionals’ to build and adorn our churches.”

“So this was a breath of fresh air to me to receive the creation of some skilled parishioners in these beautiful liturgical chairs.”

Seeing the chairs when he was worshiping at Mass at St. Malachi gives Kasnak “a sense of pride and satisfaction,” he says. “And I like where Father Danda set them under the crucifix. Before, the chairs were placed in the back behind the altar.”

The move of the sanctuary chairs serves a deep purpose, says Father Danda.

“Why we placed them at the foot of our crucifix in our sanctuary symbolizing how the priest stands in persona Christi capite [‘the persons of the head’], especially in celebrating the Mass.”

He says the young men of our parish will make this connection and begin to imagine themselves in that same role one day [as discussing the potential of a vocation to the priesthood in our archdiocese].

And if one such young man discerns a call from God to be a shepherd, and another to be a permanent deacon, perhaps one day they will sit in the unique, hand-crafted, aesthetic sanctuary chairs with the year 2018 carved on the bottom.