Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Christmas Greetings! May the celebration of the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ, the Word made Flesh, flood your hearts and minds with an assurance of peace, joy and hope that the presence of God alone can provide. The year 2020, marked by the effects of a pandemic, social unrest, hurricanes, wildfires, a dramatic increase in violence and ever-growing political polarization, has been a rather challenging year, to say the least. Many have lost loved ones, homes, businesses and their livelihoods. Many have displayed heroic virtue in health care, emergency response, charitable outreach, education and unsung service. No one is looking forward to a repeat of this year in 2021. Still, amid all the chaos, hardship and uncertainty, we have cause to celebrate the Nativity of the Lord.

Throughout the course of salvation history—despite all the wars, plagues, intrigue, disasters and scandals—the saving grace of divine presence has remained with humanity. Since that very first Christmas of Jesus being born into poverty during a very tumultuous time of history, the Christian faith has not only endured but prospered in the face of difficulty, aggression and even persecution.

The birth of our Savior points to something beyond the mere experiences of this life. From the crib to the cross, Jesus Christ laid out for us the path to salvation. As St. Paul reminds us, there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God. There is nothing about 2020 that can separate us from God’s unconditional love, mercy, peace and saving grace. Jesus Christ, our Hope and Salvation, offers this assurance to us. To encounter Him, let us imitate the humility of the magi and the courage of the shepherds to seek and worship the Lord. May we find it within and among ourselves to be renewed in the spirit of Christmas joy made available to us by God becoming one like us in all things, from the face of difficulty, aggression and even persecution.

The birth of our Savior points to something beyond the mere experiences of this life. From the crib to the cross, Jesus Christ laid out for us the path to salvation. As St. Paul reminds us, there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God. There is nothing about 2020 that can separate us from God’s unconditional love, mercy, peace and saving grace. Jesus Christ, our Hope and Salvation, offers this assurance to us. To encounter Him, let us imitate the humility of the magi and the courage of the shepherds to seek and worship the Lord. May we find it within and among ourselves to be renewed in the spirit of Christmas joy made available to us by God becoming one like us in all things, but sin. Let us make the most of every opportunity to encounter Him in Word, Sacrament and Service. He is Emmanuel, God With Us. Come, let us adore Him. Christmas Blessings!

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

Mensage de Navidad del Arzobispo Charles C. Thompson

Queridos hermanas y hermanos en Cristo:

¡Reciban un cordial saludo navideño! Que la celebración del nacimiento de nuestro Salvador Jesucristo, el Verbo Hecho Carne, inunde sus corazones y mentes con la certeza de la paz, la alegría y la esperanza que solamente la presencia de Dios puede proporcionar.

El año 2020, marcado por los efectos de la pandemia, el malestar social, los huracanes, los incendios forestales, un drástico aumento de la violencia y una polarización política cada vez mayor, ha sido, como mínimo, bastante difícil. Muchos han perdido seres queridos, sus hogares, sus negocios y sus medios de vida. Muchos han demostrado una virtud heroica en el campo de la atención médica, de los servicios de emergencia, en las obras de caridad, la educación y la labor de servicio que ocurre tras bastidores. Nadie desea que en 2021 se repita lo ocurrido este año.

Aun así, en medio del caos, las dificultades y la incertidumbre, tenemos motivos para celebrar la Natividad del Señor. A lo largo de la historia de la salvación, y a pesar de todas las guerras, las plagas, las intrigas, los desastres y los escándalos, la gracia salvadora de la presencia divina ha permanecido con la humanidad. Desde aquella primera Navidad en la que Jesús nació en la pobreza, durante una época muy tumultuosa de la historia, la fe cristiana no solo ha soporado sino que ha prosperado ante las dificultades, la agresión e incluso la persecución.

El nacimiento de nuestro Salvador apunta a algo más allá de las meras experiencias de esta vida. Desde el pesebre hasta la cruz, Jesucristo nos trazó el camino de la salvación. Como nos lo recuerda San Pablo, no hay nada que pueda separarnos del amor de Dios. No hay nada en el 2020 que pueda separarnos del amor incondicional, la misericordia, la paz y la gracia salvadora de Dios. Jesucristo, nuestra esperanza y salvación, nos ofrece esta seguridad. Para encontrarlos con él, debemos imitar la humildad de los reyes magos y el valor de los pastores para buscar y adorar al Señor. Que hallemos en nuestro interior y entre nosotros la forma de inundar sus corazones y mentes con la certeza de la paz, la alegría y la esperanza que solamente la presencia de Dios puede proporcionar.

Queridos hermanos y hermanas en Cristo,

¡Bendiciones de Navidad!

Arzobispo Charles C. Thompson
As we approach the celebration of the birth of Jesus, who came to give us life, I once again appeal to the conscience of all humanity and ask our federal government to halt the upcoming executions within the Archdiocese of Indianapolis at the U.S. Penitentiary in Terre Haute. Several executions have been scheduled for December and January.

Indiana’s five Catholic bishops, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and other religious leaders in Indiana have respectfully appealed several times to no avail to federal officials to end federal executions since they were resumed this year after a 17-year hiatus. Opposition to the death penalty is rooted in principles of Catholic teaching, grounded in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (cf. CCC, #2267) as well as various papal traditions and conciliar pronouncements.

We must never forget the victims of violence and their families. In fact, closely related to the Church’s pastoral care of those who have fallen victim to crime, is our moral obligation to protect and defend the dignity of every person, particularly the vulnerable. Our concern for victims and their families must not prevent us from doing what we can to also care for the families of those who perpetrate such violence and crimes.

Regarding the death penalty, attention must also be given to its impact on those who work in the prison system, with particular concern for those who are designated to carry out an execution.

Among the various threats to human life and dignity in society, as Pope Francis has stated, the death penalty remains “inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person.” In his most recent encyclical letter, Fratelli Tutti (“On Fraternity and Social Friendship”), noting that “arguments against the death penalty are numerous and well-known,” the Holy Father reaffirms the Church’s commitment to calling for the abolition of the death penalty around the world:

Let us keep in mind that not even a murderer loses his personal dignity, and God himself pledges to guarantee this. The firm rejection of the death penalty shows to what extent it is possible to recognize the inalienable dignity of every human being and to accept that he or she has a place in this universe. If I do not deny that dignity to the worst of criminals, I will not deny it to anyone. I will give everyone the possibility of sharing this planet with me, despite all our differences. (#269)

The death penalty, far from resolving anything or providing “justice” for victims, ultimately contributes to the perpetuation of a culture of death. The urgency of this appeal is directed toward promoting a culture of life that takes into consideration the ultimate dignity and sacredness of every person as well as society itself. We must be committed to both prayer and action if we are to be agents of divine grace in transforming the hearts of individuals and communities to more fully embrace the sacredness of life. I urge Catholics and all people of good will to join in the urgency of this call, as we ask the federal government to restore its moratorium on the death penalty until it can be formally rescinded.

Church leaders in state are committed to ending injustice of death penalty

As we saddened and troubled by the news that after a 17-year moratorium, our federal government has decided to resume state-sponsored and sanctioned executions at the Federal Correctional Institution in Terre Haute. Several executions have been scheduled for December and January.

Indiana’s five Catholic bishops, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and other religious leaders in Indiana have respectfully appealed several times to no avail to federal officials to end federal executions since they were resumed this year after a 17-year hiatus. Opposition to the death penalty is rooted in principles of Catholic teaching, grounded in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (cf. CCC, #2267) as well as various papal traditions and conciliar pronouncements.

We must never forget the victims of violence and their families. In fact, closely related to the Church’s pastoral care of those who have fallen victim to crime, is our moral obligation to protect and defend the dignity of every person, particularly the vulnerable. Our concern for victims and their families must not prevent us from doing what we can to also care for the families of those who perpetrate such violence and crimes.

Regarding the death penalty, attention must also be given to its impact on those who work in the prison system, with particular concern for those who are designated to carry out an execution.

Among the various threats to human life and dignity in society, as Pope Francis has stated, the death penalty remains “inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person.” In his most recent encyclical letter, Fratelli Tutti (“On Fraternity and Social Friendship”), noting that “arguments against the death penalty are numerous and well-known,” the Holy Father reaffirms the Church’s commitment to calling for the abolition of the death penalty around the world:

Let us keep in mind that not even a murderer loses his personal dignity, and God himself pledges to guarantee this. The firm rejection of the death penalty shows to what extent it is possible to recognize the inalienable dignity of every human being and to accept that he or she has a place in this universe. If I do not deny that dignity to the worst of criminals, I will not deny it to anyone. I will give everyone the possibility of sharing this planet with me, despite all our differences. (#269)

The death penalty, far from resolving anything or providing “justice” for victims, ultimately contributes to the perpetuation of a culture of death. The urgency of this appeal is directed toward promoting a culture of life that takes into consideration the ultimate dignity and sacredness of every person as well as society itself. We must be committed to both prayer and action if we are to be agents of divine grace in transforming the hearts of individuals and communities to more fully embrace the sacredness of life. I urge Catholics and all people of good will to join in the urgency of this call, as we ask the federal government to restore its moratorium on the death penalty until it can be formally rescinded.
Plans for Indiana March for Life include vigil, Mass, march, rally

By Natalie Hoefer

The Indiana March for Life events set for Jan. 21 and 22, 2021, in solemn observance of the 1973 Supreme Court Roe v. Wade decision legalizing abortion—are similar to years past, although there will be a few changes.

The events will begin with a prayer vigil, organized by the Lafayette Diocese, from 7-9 p.m. on Jan. 21 at St. Elizabeth Seton Church, 10655 Haverstick Road, in Carmel, Ind. (Lafayette Diocese). The evening will include eucharistic adoration, praise and worship music and the opportunity to receive the sacrament of reconciliation. Seating is limited to 200 due to COVID-19 restrictions, and mask-wearing and social distancing will be observed. Registration is required at vsajorhiltecrgame2021.eventbrite.com.

The archdiocesan Office of Human Life and Dignity is sponsoring the Mass on Jan. 22. It will be celebrated by Archbishop Charles C. Thompson at Saint John the Evangelist Church, 26 W. Georgia St., in Indianapolis, at 10:30 a.m. Due to coronavirus safety measures, the church capacity is currently 250, so registration for the Mass is required. To register, go to www.archindy.org/humanlifeanddignity. The Mass will also be livestreamed at www.facebook.com/archindyand www.stjohnindy.org/mass-feed.html.

The march and rally, coordinated by Right to Life of Indianapolis, will take place at noon, starting on Georgia Street between Capitol Avenue and Illinois Street near St. John the Evangelist Church. The march will process to Monument Circle, then around the Indiana State Capitol building, ending on the south lawn for a rally. Masks and social distancing will be observed. For information on how to register for the march and rally and for updates, go to www.rtolindy.org.

The Indiana March for Life is a registered stop this year on March for Life Chicago’s “Moving the Movement” Midwest tour. The tour includes seven events in Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska and Wisconsin, as well as Indianapolis and Fort Wayne, Ind., between Jan. 2 and Jan. 23.

Also new this year as part of the Moving the Movement tour, participants are asked to donate diapers on the day of the march and rally. The goal is to gather 130,094 diapers, one for every child aborted on average annually in the Midwest. Diapers dropped off at the Indianapolis event will be donated to three local pregnancy care centers and ministries: Birthline, Life Centers and Women’s Care Center. The drop-off site is still being finalized—The Criterion will announce that information when it is available. Financial donations to purchase diapers can also be made at giv.lv/indyMarch4LifeDiapers, with the ability to direct the contribution to the three designated pregnancy care centers and ministries in Indianapolis. Changes and more details about the Roe v. Wade solemn observance events on Jan. 21 and 22 will be announced again in a future issue of The Criterion.

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

The Christmas liturgical schedules for SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, 1347 N. Meridian St., in Indianapolis, and the Archabbey Church of Our Lady of Einsiedeln of Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad, are as follows:

**SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing requirements, congregation size will be limited at the Cathedral for Christmas liturgies. All Cathedral liturgies will be livestreamed at: www.spcp.org/live. Dec. 24—5 p.m. Mass, then 10 p.m. Mass with Archbishop Charles C. Thompson as the principal celebrant. Parking will be available for both Masses from 4 p.m. to midnight behind the cathedral and at the Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center, 1400 N. Meridian St. Dec. 25—10 a.m. Mass.

**Saint Meinrad Archabbey Church**

While the Saint Meinrad Archabbey Church remains closed to the public during the COVID-19 pandemic, Christmas services will be livestreamed at saintmeinrad.org/live.

Dec. 24—Vespers (Liturgy of the Hours) 5 p.m. CT, and Mass 10 p.m. CT. Dec. 25—Mass 10:30 a.m. CT

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

Pope Francis’ intentions for December

- For Human Fraternity—May the Lord give us the grace to live in full fellowship with our brothers and sisters of other religions, praying for one another, open to all.

See Pope Francis’ monthly intentions at archindy.org/popesintentions.

**“BLESSED IS THE ONE WHO CONSIDERS THE POOR”**

**PSALM 41:1**

**Experiencing the True Spirit of Christmas**

CHRISTMAS isn’t just a time of GIVING and SHARING with those we LOVE and CARE for. It’s also about HELPING those less fortunate who we have never met and will never see.

Your faithful and ongoing contributions allow the ministries of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis to keep doing what they do best—which is bring the light of Christ to others. During this beautiful time of giving and sharing, please consider supporting ministry through a gift to the United Catholic Appeal so that we can continue to SHARE OUR LIGHT with others. MERRY CHRISTMAS!

**United Catholic Appeal**

**About Our Hope**

You can give securely online at www.bowling.org/UCA, or by scanning the QR code to the right.
Reflection/Tom Yost
Like the Grinch, coronavirus can’t stop message of Christmas

Since childhood, I have enjoyed watching the animated version of How the Grinch Stole Christmas. I prefer this version for its simple storytelling and creative rhyming. As you recall, the Grinch detested Christmas. He was determined to keep Christmas from coming. He went to great lengths to take away everything about Christmas from the people of Whoville. He took their stockings, presents, ornaments, decorations, candy canes, food for the Who-feast, the Christmas trees, and even the logs for the fireplace.

The Grinch thought he had stopped Christmas from coming by the losses he incurred upon the townspeople. However, he discovered even after he had taken so much from them, they still maintained an inspirational joy and spirit about the holiday. Many of us, after months of a worldwide pandemic, could write our own version of film—How the Coronavirus Stole 2020? The losses are many. Some of us experienced more painful losses than others.

Some of what the coronavirus has stolen—or taken away from us include the loss of a loved one, a loss of physical or mental health, loss of income or a job; loss of important material things such as a home or apartment, loss or postponement of major life events such as graduations or weddings, loss of visiting loved ones in isolation. The list of losses goes on.

Hope has been lost to fear. Compassion has been replaced by anger. How can we as we approach Christmas with so much less joy and anxiety?

There is a word, whose name means “God saves,” restores us. Emmanuel, which means “God is with us,” strengthens and renourishes us.

In a time where we wear masks, the Word made Flesh, the Son of God, comes into our world and brings us life (unmasking) who God is.

In a time when we are socially distant, God breaks through time and space and intimately becomes one with us in everything but sin. In a time when we are constantly washing our hands, God washes over sin and death as we begin a new life in the birth of his Son.

In the end, the Grinch did not steal Christmas. It was Christmas that stole his heart. In the end, the coronavirus cannot ultimately prevail in 2020—whatever our losses may be.

Christmas proclaims that “God saves” and restores all that he creates. Emmanuel is here walking with us, strengthening and renewing us on the journey. Blessed are we who believe. Amen.

(From Tom Yost is a pastoral associate at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in New Albany, His reflection will be shared at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish’s annual “Mass of the Longest Night” on Dec. 21.)

Be Our Guest/Edith Avila Olea
Choose love over fear of the other

There is a growing phenomenon happening across Catholic churches in this nation: the merging of parishes! This is a path that we took when I chose a parish close, no matter how small, naturally brings a certain sadness. It signals that a once thriving Catholic community is no longer present. Perhaps it’s a sign of something bigger.

Merges can have a negative impact on the local community, as I see it, if we can also be an opportunity to build bridges. There is only one kingdom. To paraphrase what my pastor said in a recent homily, in heaven, there are no divided communities. Sections for Anglos, Latinos, Blacks and other communities are nonexistent in heaven. There is only one body of Christ, and it’s crucial that we claim this as a Catholic principle.

Mergers can have a negative impact on the local community, as I see it, if we can also be an opportunity to build bridges. There is only one kingdom. To paraphrase what my pastor said in a recent homily, in heaven, there are no divided communities. Sections for Anglos, Latinos, Blacks and other communities are nonexistent in heaven. There is only one body of Christ, and it’s crucial that we claim this as a Catholic principle.

One of the first experiences that made me feel at home was the bilingual celebration of the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. There was standing room only at both Masses, and the fiesta was vibrant. Then there was the celebration of the Mexican Independence Day at the parish with English and Spanish music and activities. The volunteers were from both communities, too.

In both English and Spanish weekend Masses, it’s not uncommon to see Latinos in the English Mass and Anglos in the Spanish Mass. All the mandatory Catholic feast days are offered with a bilingual Mass.

The pastor doesn’t shy away from these challenges. Instead, he challenges the people to find their common ground. Again and again, his homilies urge that we must choose each other over division. It’s a challenge that we can learn from and apply to our own experiences.

As you recall, “Mass of the Longest Night” on Dec. 21.

Be Our Guest/Edith Avila Olea
Choose love over fear of the other

There is a growing phenomenon happening across Catholic churches in this nation: the merging of parishes! This is a path that we took when I chose a parish close, no matter how small, naturally brings a certain sadness. It signals that a once thriving Catholic community is no longer present. Perhaps it’s a sign of something bigger.

Mergers can have a negative impact on the local community, as I see it, if we can also be an opportunity to build bridges. There is only one kingdom. To paraphrase what my pastor said in a recent homily, in heaven, there are no divided communities. Sections for Anglos, Latinos, Blacks and other communities are nonexistent in heaven. There is only one body of Christ, and it’s crucial that we claim this as a Catholic principle.

One of the first experiences that made me feel at home was the bilingual celebration of the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. There was standing room only at both Masses, and the fiesta was vibrant. Then there was the celebration of the Mexican Independence Day at the parish with English and Spanish music and activities. The volunteers were from both communities, too.

In both English and Spanish weekend Masses, it’s not uncommon to see Latinos in the English Mass and Anglos in the Spanish Mass. All the mandatory Catholic feast days are offered with a bilingual Mass.

The pastor doesn’t shy away from these challenges. Instead, he challenges the people to find their common ground. Again and again, his homilies urge that we must choose each other over division. It’s a challenge that we can learn from and apply to our own experiences.

As you recall, “Mass of the Longest Night” on Dec. 21.

Be Our Guest/Edith Avila Olea
Choose love over fear of the other

There is a growing phenomenon happening across Catholic churches in this nation: the merging of parishes! This is a path that we took when I chose a parish close, no matter how small, naturally brings a certain sadness. It signals that a once thriving Catholic community is no longer present. Perhaps it’s a sign of something bigger.

Mergers can have a negative impact on the local community, as I see it, if we can also be an opportunity to build bridges. There is only one kingdom. To paraphrase what my pastor said in a recent homily, in heaven, there are no divided communities. Sections for Anglos, Latinos, Blacks and other communities are nonexistent in heaven. There is only one body of Christ, and it’s crucial that we claim this as a Catholic principle.

One of the first experiences that made me feel at home was the bilingual celebration of the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. There was standing room only at both Masses, and the fiesta was vibrant. Then there was the celebration of the Mexican Independence Day at the parish with English and Spanish music and activities. The volunteers were from both communities, too.

In both English and Spanish weekend Masses, it’s not uncommon to see Latinos in the English Mass and Anglos in the Spanish Mass. All the mandatory Catholic feast days are offered with a bilingual Mass.

The pastor doesn’t shy away from these challenges. Instead, he challenges the people to find their common ground. Again and again, his homilies urge that we must choose each other over division. It’s a challenge that we can learn from and apply to our own experiences.

As you recall, “Mass of the Longest Night” on Dec. 21.
Mary’s ‘yes’ makes the incarnation of Jesus a reality

“Yo soy la sierva del Señor. Hágase en mí según tu palabra” (Lc 1:38).

La temporada de Adviento llega a su perfección en la historia de la aceptación de María de la voluntad de Dios para ella. A pesar de su vacilación, esta humilde joven acepta convertirse en la theotókos, la madre de Dios. Con esta singular responsabilidad, acepta tanto la más profunda de las penas como la más elevada de las bendiciones que harán de ella la madre de Dios. María, Jesús. El ángel le dice a María: “Estableceré tu descendencia para siempre, y edificaré tu trono por todas las generaciones” (Sal 89:3-4).

Los cristianos creemos que gracias al ‘sí’ de María se cumplió todo lo prometido. El Espíritu Santo planta la semilla divina en el vientre de María, y se llama la encarnación un ‘misterio’ que se ha mantenido oculto desde tiempos eternos pero que ha sido manifestado ahora y que, por medio de las Escrituras proféticas se ha dado a conocer a todas las naciones para la obediencia de la fe al único algoz de Dios, sea la gloria mediante Jesucristo para siempre” (Rom 16:25-27).

Mary’s freely given “yes” to the invitation she received from God’s messenger made the great mystery we know as the incarnation a reality. The second person of the Blessed Trinity, God the Father’s only Son, became one of us by the power of the Holy Spirit and was nurtured in Mary’s womb until the time of his miraculous birth in Bethlehem. “And the Word became flesh,” St. John’s Gospel tells us (Jn 1:14), and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory of as the Father’s only Son, full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:14). The second reading from St. Paul’s letter to the Romans (Rom 16:25-27) calls the incarnation a “mystery” kept secret for long ages, but now manifested through the prophetic writings” (Rom 16:25), and “made known to all nations to bring about the obedience of faith, to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ” (Rom 16:26-27).

The mystery of God’s closeness to us is made manifest to all nations, above all, through the life, death and resurrection of Mary’s child, Jesus. “He will be great and will be called son of the Most High” (Lk 1:32), the angel tells Mary, “and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end” (Lk 1:32-33).

The first reading from the second Book of Samuel (2 Sm 7:1-5; 8-12, 14a, 16) contains the prophecy that a descendant of King David will one day establish a reign that will endure forever. We Christians believe that this descendant is the Lord Jesus, the Son of Mary, conceived in Bethelhem by the prophets. And in the responsorial psalm for the Fourth Sunday of Advent (Ps 89), we sing: “I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant: forever will I confirm your posterity and establish your throne for all generations” (Ps 89:4-5).

We Christians believe that it is Mary’s “yes” that brings about the fulfillment of all that has been promised. The Holy Spirit plants the divine seed in Mary’s womb, and she conceives the child “who will be called holy, the Son of God” (Lk 1:35). Thus, the mystery kept secret for long ages—that a virgin would conceive and bear a child who alone could save his people from their sins—is realized when Mary says, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38).

The Collect for this Sunday beautifully expresses the way we feel as we conclude this special time of year and look forward to Christmas: Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord, your grace into our hearts, that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ your Son was made known by the message of an Angel, may by his Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of his Resurrection. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gracias al ‘sí’ de María la encarnación de Jesús es una realidad.

“Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.” (Lk 1:38). The season of Adviento comes to its fulfillment in the story of Mary’s acceptance of God’s will for her. In spite of her hesitation, this humble young woman agrees to become the theotókos, the mother of God. With this singular responsibility, she accepts both profound sorrow and the greatest joy ever known by a human being.

The Fourth Sunday of Advent, which we celebrate this weekend, retells the familiar story of Mary’s encounter with the angel Gabriel. St. Luke’s Gospel (Lk 1:26-38) recalls her simple, straightforward question, “How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?” (Lk 1:34).

And it also gives Gabriel’s reply, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God” (Lk 1:35).

Mary’s freely given “yes” to the invitation she received from God’s messenger made the great mystery we know as the incarnation a reality. The second person of the Blessed Trinity, God the Father’s only Son, became one of us by the power of the Holy Spirit and was nurtured in Mary’s womb until the time of his miraculous birth in Bethlehem. “And the Word became flesh,” St. John’s Gospel tells us (Jn 1:14), and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory of as the Father’s only Son, full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:14). The second reading from St. Paul’s letter to the Romans (Rom 16:25-27) calls the incarnation a “mystery” kept secret for long ages, but now manifested through the prophetic writings” (Rom 16:25), and “made known to all nations to bring about the obedience of faith, to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ” (Rom 16:26-27).

The mystery of God’s closeness to us is made manifest to all nations, above all, through the life, death and resurrection of Mary’s child, Jesus. “He will be great and will be called son of the Most High” (Lk 1:32), the angel tells Mary, “and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end” (Lk 1:32-33).

The first reading from the second Book of Samuel (2 Sm 7:1-5; 8-12, 14a, 16) contains the prophecy that a descendant of King David will one day establish a reign that will endure forever. We Christians believe that this descendant is the Lord Jesus, the Son of Mary, conceived in Bethelhem by the prophets. And in the responsorial psalm for the Fourth Sunday of Advent (Ps 89), we sing: “I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant: forever will I confirm your posterity and establish your throne for all generations” (Ps 89:4-5).

We Christians believe that it is Mary’s “yes” that brings about the fulfillment of all that has been promised. The Holy Spirit plants the divine seed in Mary’s womb, and she conceives the child “who will be called holy, the Son of God” (Lk 1:35). Thus, the mystery kept secret for long ages—that a virgin would conceive and bear a child who alone could save his people from their sins—is realized when Mary says, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38).

The Collect for this Sunday beautifully expresses the way we feel as we conclude this special time of year and look forward to Christmas: Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord, your grace into our hearts, that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ your Son was made known by the message of an Angel, may by his Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of his Resurrection. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

The Fourth Sunday of Advent, which we celebrate this weekend, retells the familiar story of Mary’s encounter with the angel Gabriel. St. Luke’s Gospel (Lk 1:26-38) recalls her simple, straightforward question, “How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?” (Lk 1:34).

And it also gives Gabriel’s reply, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God” (Lk 1:35).

Mary’s freely given “yes” to the invitation she received from God’s messenger made the great mystery we know as the incarnation a reality. The second person of the Blessed Trinity, God the Father’s only Son, became one of us by the power of the Holy Spirit and was nurtured in Mary’s womb until the time of his miraculous birth in Bethlehem. “And the Word became flesh,” St. John’s Gospel tells us (Jn 1:14), and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory of as the Father’s only Son, full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:14). The second reading from St. Paul’s letter to the Romans (Rom 16:25-27) calls the incarnation a “mystery” kept secret for long ages, but now manifested through the prophetic writings” (Rom 16:25), and “made known to all nations to bring about the obedience of faith, to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ” (Rom 16:26-27).

The mystery of God’s closeness to us is made manifest to all nations, above all, through the life, death and resurrection of Mary’s child, Jesus. “He will be great and will be called son of the Most High” (Lk 1:32), the angel tells Mary, “and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end” (Lk 1:32-33).

The first reading from the second Book of Samuel (2 Sm 7:1-5; 8-12, 14a, 16) contains the prophecy that a descendant of King David will one day establish a reign that will endure forever. We Christians believe that this descendant is the Lord Jesus, the Son of Mary, conceived in Bethelhem by the prophets. And in the responsorial psalm for the Fourth Sunday of Advent (Ps 89), we sing: “I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant: forever will I confirm your posterity and establish your throne for all generations” (Ps 89:4-5).

We Christians believe that it is Mary’s “yes” that brings about the fulfillment of all that has been promised. The Holy Spirit plants the divine seed in Mary’s womb, and she conceives the child “who will be called holy, the Son of God” (Lk 1:35). Thus, the mystery kept secret for long ages—that a virgin would conceive and bear a child who alone could save his people from their sins—is realized when Mary says, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38).

The Collect for this Sunday beautifully expresses the way we feel as we conclude this special time of year and look forward to Christmas: Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord, your grace into our hearts, that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ your Son was made known by the message of an Angel, may by his Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of his Resurrection. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

The Criterion Friday, December 18, 2020

Page 5
Events Calendar

December 27
Airing “To Know Your Neighbor: Celebrating Religious Diversity in Indiana” documentary on WWVY Channel 20, sponsored by Center for Interfaith Cooperation, 4:5 p.m. Information: 317-538-5304.

January 6
MCL Cafeteria, 5520 Castleton Cemetery Lane, Indianapolis. Sole Seniors, 5 p.m., Catholic, educational, charitable and social singles, separated, widowed or divorced—age 50 and older, new members welcome, also call about regular Friday night dinner events. Information: 317-796-8605 or 317-243-0777.

January 12
Monthly Virtual Taizé Prayer Service, 7:8 p.m., silent and spoken prayers, simple music, silence. Link: Taize.SistersofProvidence.org. Information: 812-535-2952, provcr@spsumw.org

January 20

January 21
St. Joseph Church, 1401 S. Mickley Ave., Indianapolis. Third Thursday Adoration, interceding for women experiencing crisis pregnancy, 11 a.m.–7 p.m., with Mass at 5:45 p.m.


February 3
MCL Cafeteria, 5520 Castleton Cemetery Lane, Indianapolis. Sole Seniors, 5 p.m., Catholic, educational, charitable and social singles—separated, widowed or divorced—age 50 and older, new members welcome, also call about regular Friday night dinner events. Information: 317-796-8605 or 317-243-0777.

February 10
Monthly Virtual Taizé Prayer Service. 7:8 p.m., silent and spoken prayers, simple music, silence. Link: Taize.SistersofProvidence.org. Information: 812-535-2952, provcr@spsumw.org

February 14
The Third Option virtual marriage crisis/endorsement class, “Building a Climate of Respect,” 7-8 p.m., Thursdays bi-weekly through May 20, viewing all sessions recommended but not required, no registration needed, free. Log on: carmelheraldoption.org then click on link at top of page. Information: carmelheraldoption.org/web or Ethel Ingram, Ingramwthrncounsel.com or 317-324-8446.

February 15

February 21
Our Lady of the Greenwood Church, 335 S. Meridian St., Greenwood. First Friday bilingual celebration of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mass, 5:45 p.m., exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, following Mass until 9 p.m., sacrament of reconciliation available. Information: 317-796-8605 or 317-243-0777.

February 6
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. Mass with confessions prior. Information: 812-246-1552.

St. Michael Church, 145 St. Michael Blvd, Brookville. First Saturday Marian Devotional Prayer Group, devotional prayers, rosary, 8 a.m. Information: 765-647-5462.

February 9
Monthly Virtual Taizé Prayer Service, 7-8 p.m., silent and spoken prayers, simple music, silence. Link: Taize.SistersofProvidence.org. Information: 812-535-2952, provcr@spsumw.org

February 11
Sisters of Providence White Violet Center for Eco-Justice Virtual Workshop: Baking Sourdough Bread, via Zoom, 6:30 p.m. Information: 317-324-8446. Log on: carmelheraldoption.org/web then click on link at top of page. Information: carmelheraldoption.org/web or Keith Ingram, Ingramwthrncounsel.com or 317-324-8446.

February 17

The Third Option virtual marriage crisis/endorsement class, “Understanding Expectations,” 7-8 p.m., Thursdays bi-weekly through May 20, viewing all sessions recommended but not required, no registration needed, free. Log on: carmelheraldoption.org/web then click on link at top of page. Information: carmelheraldoption.org/web or Keith Ingram, Ingramwthrncounsel.com or 317-324-8446.

The Third Option virtual marriage crisis/endorsement class, “Building a Climate of Respect,” 7-8 p.m., Thursdays bi-weekly through May 20, viewing all sessions recommended but not required, no registration needed, free. Log on: carmelheraldoption.org/web then click on link at top of page. Information: carmelheraldoption.org/web or Keith Ingram, Ingramwthrncounsel.com or 317-324-8446.

The Third Option virtual marriage crisis/endorsement class, “Understanding Expectations,” 7-8 p.m., Thursdays bi-weekly through May 20, viewing all sessions recommended but not required, no registration needed, free. Log on: carmelheraldoption.org/web then click on link at top of page. Information: carmelheraldoption.org/web or Keith Ingram, Ingramwthrncounsel.com or 317-324-8446.

Indianapolis St. Vincent de Paul Society creates virtual food drive

Indianapolis St. Vincent de Paul Society has created a “virtual food drive” at gatt.is/SVPFoodOnline. The site offers donors the ability to contribute much-needed items for the organization’s food pantry in a safe, contact-free manner anywhere, anytime—especially during the ongoing pandemic when those in need of food assistance have increased well-beyond the pantry’s usual 3,000 families a week. On the virtual food drive site, a depiction of grocery shelves displays milk, eggs, peanut butter, canned tuna, pasta, canned vegetables, macaroni and cheese, soup, rice and canned fruit, or the option to feed a family of four for one week or to make a financial donation. Donors use their mouse (via computer) or finger (via cell phone) to select and drag an item to an area resembling a self-checkout kiosk in a store. Once the item is “scanned,” it moves to an area on the screen representing a receipt. When all of the desired items appear on the “receipt,” the user selects “Checkout” to complete the purchase.

Online instructions are available in the upper right corner of the virtual food drive screen. To remove the instructions from the screen, simply tap or click on the displayed instructions. For more information, send an e-mail to philanthropy@svpindy.org.

Thank you for joining SVP in Giving Tuesday! Your gift to the food pantry will be doubled.

SVP’s food pantry at 3001 E 30th Street in Indianapolis feeds more than 3,000 families each week. Our goal is to provide a wide variety of nutritious food to everyone who visits the food pantry. Thank you for your generosity and help to our brothers and sisters in need. If you have questions, please contact philanthropy@svpindy.org.

Events and retreats can be submitted to The Criterion by logging on to www.archindy.org/events/subscription, or by mailing us at 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202, ATTN: Ann Lewis, or by fax at 317-236-1593.

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

Recreation

December 26
Sisters of St. Francis, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. Audubon Bird Count, 7:30 a.m.-1 p.m., at Michaela Farm, no experience necessary, $10 for lunch. Information, registration: 812-535-2952, provcr@spsumw.org or oldenburgfranciscancenter.org/programs.html.

December 30
Mount Saint Francis Center for Spirituality virtual “Mondays at the Mount,” 30-minute study by Conventual Franciscan Father Vince Petersen and Andrew Hennessey on upcoming Sunday Scripture readings, saints and liturgical seasons, posted on Monday mornings at facebook.com/pg/MountSFFrancis.

January 4, 11, 18, 25
Mount Saint Francis Center for Spirituality virtual “Mondays at the Mount,” 30-minute study by Conventual Franciscan Father Vince Petersen and Andrew Hennessey on upcoming Sunday Scripture readings, saints and liturgical seasons, posted on Monday mornings at facebook.com/pg/MountSFFrancis.

January 6
Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. Consecrated Prayer, 12:30-1:30 p.m. Information: provcr@spsumw.org or oldenburgfranciscancenter.org/programs.html.

Providence Spirituality & Conference Center, Foley Room, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Art and Soul Creation Guild, 9:30 a.m.-noon, post-retreat meeting, 2 p.m., $50 individually, $45 per group, $20 per person. Log on: carmelheraldoption.org/web or Keith Ingram, Ingramwthrncounsel.com or 317-324-8446.

HARRIET AND ROBERTO (BEVIL) STEELE, members of Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish in Greenwood, will celebrate their 55th wedding anniversary on Dec. 29. The couple was married in St. Mary Church in Indianapolis on Dec. 29, 1965. They have five children: Susan Baker, Ginnie Hoover, Terri Runnehbohm, Randi Terry and Wesley Steele. The couple also has nine grandchildren.

For a complete list of events for the next four weeks as reported to The Criterion, log on to www.archindy.org/events.
Advent is the season of expectation. During this time before Christmas, we look forward to the coming again of the Prince of Peace, and we wait patiently for the Blessed Hope who has promised to come into our hearts once again.

Peace is the first Christmas gift ever received. On the night our Savior was born in Bethlehem, the angels appeared to poor shepherds and proclaimed, “Peace on Earth and good will to all” (Lk 2:14).

Peace is also the first Easter gift. As Pope Francis teaches, “The greeting of the resurrected Christ, ‘Peace be with you’ [Jn 20:19], is the watchword of definitive triumph. To participate in this peace, to receive it, means to participate already in the peace of the Resurrection.”

Peace is God’s gift to us, his weary, anxious and frightened children. But, the pope cautions, “We must not confuse true peace with the illusion of peace that is false “is the peace of ignorance, the peace with the illusion of peace.” A peace, to receive it, means to participate in the definitive triumph. To participate in this peace, we are called to embrace the truth about ourselves: that we are sinners in need of God’s mercy.

“The advent of this peace was made known to all on Christmas Eve, and the echo of this announcement resounds all the way to Palm Sunday,” the Holy Father says. “We have been asked to seek it, and to direct our feet into the way of peace [Lk 1:78].”

And with Pope Francis, we pray: “May this peace guard our hearts and minds and inspire us to seek peace with all men and women.”

(Daniel Conway is a member of The Criterion’s editorial committee.)

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

—Pope Francis, “Misericordiae Vultus” (“The Face of Mercy”)

“Jesús de Nazaret con su palabra, con sus gestos y con toda su persona revela la misericordia de Dios.”

—Papa Francisco, “Misericordiae Vultus” (“El rostro de la misericordia”)
By Katie Rutter

TRAFALGAR, Ind. (CNS)—Alena Beckwith may be only 7 years old, but she is already helping with the family business and evangelizing others in the process.

“I just like to give people trees so they remember Christmas and Jesus’ birthday,” said Alena, who attends St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis.

She spent Nov. 28 helping her grandparents, Don and Karen Beckwith, with their Christmas tree business in Trafalgar. The Beckwith family founded Emmanuel Tree Farm in 2007 aiming to bring other families together and place the season’s focus on Christ.

“A lot of people forget about the true meaning of Christmas,” explained Karen Beckwith, a member of St. Bernadus Parish in Indianapolis.

“So that was one of our goals, to bring Christ back into Christmas.”

The farm, which has four acres of Christmas trees, also offers faith-oriented activities for families. Alena and her siblings were quick to demonstrate the dress-up Nativity, where young ones don costumes and act out the holy scene. Their grandparents, Don and Karen Beckwith, want to use their Christmas tree business to evangelize. (CN photo/Katie Rutter)

Karen Beckwith said with a laugh.

“I just think of the joyfulness that it brings to people.”

Joyfulness is something that families need after a trying, pandemic-ridden year. A little fresh, pine-scented air certainly helps.

Is there anything joyful about the pandemic we are all experiencing right now? Certainly, no matter where you find yourself, there are days you have to choose to find joy in all that is going on around you.

You probably know someone who struggles to find joy as a result of the challenges in their life. Some could benefit from the generosity of others who are fortunate not to endure the same struggles.

If your journey through 2020 has given you pause to reflect on your financial support of the Church and those we serve, we are happy to help you match your generosity with a parish, school or agency that is in need of resources which in turn helps lessen the struggles of those in need.

May helping others in His name bring you an abundant amount of joy along your own journey. Wishing you and your loved ones a blessed holiday season.

CATHOLIC COMMUNITY FOUNDATION, INC.
Serving the archdiocese of Indianapolis since 1917
For God. For Others. Forever.

Check out our newly-updated website at www.archindy.org/CCF
Email: ccf@archindy.org
Phone: 317-256-1482

The Alexander family, from left, Jeffrey, Jaycie, Kyleigh and Jeff, pose with their Christmas tree after cutting it down at Emmanuel Tree Farm in Trafalgar on Nov. 28. The tree farm caters to families and has many faith-oriented activities. (CN photo/Katie Rutter)
WASHINGTON (CNS)—Expressing concern for the doctrinal soundness of some of the lyrics of Catholic hymns now available for use in Catholic liturgies, the U.S. bishops’ doctrine committee in a forthcoming report suggests guidelines for bishops in evaluating hymn lyrics and for selecting hymnals being considered for use in churches.

An accompanying memo said the document is to “assist bishops in their oversight of liturgical celebrations in their dioceses and in the granting of the imprimatur.” It also encouraged bishops to “share this resource with composers and hymn publishers in their dioceses as well as diocesan worship officers, pastors and parish musicians.”

The committee document identified six areas of particular concern, a principal one being the treatment of the Eucharist. It warned that “a steady diet” of doctrinally deficient hymns “would erode Catholic sensibility regarding the fullness of Eucharist teaching, on the Mass as sacrifice and eventually on the Church, as the sacrifice and eventual offering of himself on the cross.”

The report focused on six key deficiencies in some current hymns: the presentation of eucharistic doctrine; the presentation of Trinitarian doctrine; deficiencies in the doctrine of God and his relation to humans; “hymns with a view of the Church that sees her as essentially a human construction”; “hymns with doctrinally incorrect views of the Jewish people”; and “hymns with incorrect Christian anthropology.”

The committee document identified six areas of particular concern, a principal one being the treatment of the Eucharist. It warned that “a steady diet” of doctrinally deficient hymns “would erode Catholic sensibility regarding the fullness of Eucharist teaching, on the Mass as sacrifice and eventually on the Church, as the sacrifice and eventual offering of himself on the cross.”

The document, titled “Catholic Hymnody at the Service of the Church: An Aid for Evaluating Hymn Lyrics,” was produced by the Committee on Doctrine of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

A copy of the report and memo were obtained by Catholic News Service.

The report acknowledged several areas of doctrinal deficiency in some contemporary hymns and suggested two guidelines in “determining whether a hymn is doctrinally suitable for liturgical use.”

— Is the hymn in conformity with Catholic doctrine?

— Is the hymn expressed in image and vocabulary appropriately reflective of the usage of Scripture and the public liturgical prayer of the Church?

The report focused on six key deficiencies in some current hymns: the presentation of eucharistic doctrine; the presentation of Trinitarian doctrine; deficiencies in the doctrine of God and his relation to humans; “hymns with a view of the Church that sees her as essentially a human construction”; “hymns with doctrinally incorrect views of the Jewish people”; and “hymns with incorrect Christian anthropology.”

In a memo accompanying the document, the committee said its report is modeled on a 1997 report by Indianapolis Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein on “Ten Common Deficiencies in Catechetical Materials.”

Buechlein’s report prompted a long-running and wide-ranging review of catechetical materials used in religious education. The bishops’ Subcommittee on the Catechism met annually with religious publishers and set up an exhaustive voluntary review process to determine if texts were in conformity with the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

The memo accompanying the hymnal document acknowledged “over the years concerns have been raised regarding the lyrics of hymns and songs used in the liturgy that may be misleading or lacking in substance.”

“Given the power of music to reinforce the words that are sung by the people, great care must be taken to ensure the doctrinal integrity of the lyrics,” it said.

The first and lengthiest area of concern in the document focused on the presentation of eucharistic doctrine, reflecting a growing urgency among the bishops to address deficiencies in how some Catholics understand the Eucharist.

A 2019 survey by the Pew Research Center found that only about half of those surveyed correctly understood that the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ in the Mass, while half of respondents thought of the bread and wine as merely symbols of the body and blood of Christ.

The document said language that implies the bread and wine remain bread and wine after the consecration should be avoided, as should language that implies that the bread and wine “are merely symbols of another reality or person.”

The document cited examples of current hymnody that fall to make the distinctions required.

The concern, the bishops said, is that “Catholics nurtured on a steady diet of certain hymns will learn from them that at Mass we come together to share bread and wine, which remain bread and wine, a common meal, even if under special circumstances.” Further, “these hymns correspondingly also downplay or eliminate entirely reference to the sacrifice of Christ, his priesthood, and his status as both priest and victim, as well as to the role of the ministerial priesthood in the Church.”

Regarding the doctrine of the Trinity, the report criticized hymns where there appeared to be a “reluctance to use the word ‘Father.” Sometimes the word “Creator” is substituted for Father, although it applies to all three persons of the Trinity, and may imply that the Son and the Spirit are not God. “This is the heresy of Arianism, however unintentionally,” the report concluded.

The document concluded with an exhortation that “sacred song united to the words… forms a necessary or integral part of the solemn liturgy.”

“It is our hope,” added the bishops, “that this guidance will help ensure that all the sacred music employed in liturgical celebrations will achieve its purpose, which is the glory of God and the sanctification of the faithful.”
Mary is reminiscent of God's blessing, pope says
feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

Holy Name of Jesus in Brock Grove—

Martha Lujan

“Mary’s feast is all about how you give witness to God’s abundant love and how you use that love to help others,” said Jeannine English, who has been coaching basketball, volleyball and soccer at the parish level for more than 15 years.

Mary is referred to as the “Queen of the Rosary,” English explained. “Our Lady of Guadalupe is also another title of Mary. The feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe helps us remember Mary as the ‘Virgin of Guadalupe’ who appeared on the hill in Mexico in 1531. As a result of her appearance, the nation of Mexico was forged and the Church is spread to this very day. And so, we’re doing a bit of reflection on Mary’s feast, and how we’re going to do that is to come to today’s Mass and remember Mary.”

The feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe is celebrated in honor of the Virgin Mary’s appearance to Juan Diego on Dec. 12, 1531. According to Catholic tradition, Our Lady of Guadalupe is also known as Our Lady of Guadalupe of the New World. In her first appearance to Juan Diego, the Virgin Mary told him to build a shrine to her on the spot where he saw her. The Virgin Mary also promised to build a Church for the indigenous people. The Church was later built on the same site.

Mary is known as the “Queen of the Americas” because of her appearance to Juan Diego in Mexico. In her appearance to Juan Diego, Mary asked the Mexican Indians to be Catholic. The Virgin Mary also asked the indigenous people to build a Church on the spot where she appeared to Juan Diego. The Church was later built on the same site.

Mary is also known as the “Queen of the Americas” because of her appearance to Juan Diego in Mexico. In her appearance to Juan Diego, Mary asked the Mexican Indians to be Catholic. The Virgin Mary also asked the indigenous people to build a Church on the spot where she appeared to Juan Diego. The Church was later built on the same site.

Mary is also known as the “Queen of the Americas” because of her appearance to Juan Diego in Mexico. In her appearance to Juan Diego, Mary asked the Mexican Indians to be Catholic. The Virgin Mary also asked the indigenous people to build a Church on the spot where she appeared to Juan Diego. The Church was later built on the same site.

Mary is also known as the “Queen of the Americas” because of her appearance to Juan Diego in Mexico. In her appearance to Juan Diego, Mary asked the Mexican Indians to be Catholic. The Virgin Mary also asked the indigenous people to build a Church on the spot where she appeared to Juan Diego. The Church was later built on the same site.

Mary is also known as the “Queen of the Americas” because of her appearance to Juan Diego in Mexico. In her appearance to Juan Diego, Mary asked the Mexican Indians to be Catholic. The Virgin Mary also asked the indigenous people to build a Church on the spot where she appeared to Juan Diego. The Church was later built on the same site.

Mary is also known as the “Queen of the Americas” because of her appearance to Juan Diego in Mexico. In her appearance to Juan Diego, Mary asked the Mexican Indians to be Catholic. The Virgin Mary also asked the indigenous people to build a Church on the spot where she appeared to Juan Diego. The Church was later built on the same site.

Mary is also known as the “Queen of the Americas” because of her appearance to Juan Diego in Mexico. In her appearance to Juan Diego, Mary asked the Mexican Indians to be Catholic. The Virgin Mary also asked the indigenous people to build a Church on the spot where she appeared to Juan Diego. The Church was later built on the same site.

Mary is also known as the “Queen of the Americas” because of her appearance to Juan Diego in Mexico. In her appearance to Juan Diego, Mary asked the Mexican Indians to be Catholic. The Virgin Mary also asked the indigenous people to build a Church on the spot where she appeared to Juan Diego. The Church was later built on the same site.

Mary is also known as the “Queen of the Americas” because of her appearance to Juan Diego in Mexico. In her appearance to Juan Diego, Mary asked the Mexican Indians to be Catholic. The Virgin Mary also asked the indigenous people to build a Church on the spot where she appeared to Juan Diego. The Church was later built on the same site.

Mary is also known as the “Queen of the Americas” because of her appearance to Juan Diego in Mexico. In her appearance to Juan Diego, Mary asked the Mexican Indians to be Catholic. The Virgin Mary also asked the indigenous people to build a Church on the spot where she appeared to Juan Diego. The Church was later built on the same site.

Mary is also known as the “Queen of the Americas” because of her appearance to Juan Diego in Mexico. In her appearance to Juan Diego, Mary asked the Mexican Indians to be Catholic. The Virgin Mary also asked the indigenous people to build a Church on the spot where she appeared to Juan Diego. The Church was later built on the same site.

Mary is also known as the “Queen of the Americas” because of her appearance to Juan Diego in Mexico. In her appearance to Juan Diego, Mary asked the Mexican Indians to be Catholic. The Virgin Mary also asked the indigenous people to build a Church on the spot where she appeared to Juan Diego. The Church was later built on the same site.

Mary is also known as the “Queen of the Americas” because of her appearance to Juan Diego in Mexico. In her appearance to Juan Diego, Mary asked the Mexican Indians to be Catholic. The Virgin Mary also asked the indigenous people to build a Church on the spot where she appeared to Juan Diego. The Church was later built on the same site.

Mary is also known as the “Queen of the Americas” because of her appearance to Juan Diego in Mexico. In her appearance to Juan Diego, Mary asked the Mexican Indians to be Catholic. The Virg
175 years later, Navilleton parish founders ‘would be very impressed’

By Natalie Hoefer

As a lifetime member of St. Mary Parish in Navilleton, Elizabeth Kiesler (nee Naville) has many memories of the Floyd County faith community—parish picnics where she helped as a child, the drafty school, a woman’s frock catching fire. Of course, she doesn’t recall the parish’s founding. After all, at 95 she’s only been a member for a little more than half of its 175 years.

The parish was founded in 1845 by several German Catholic immigrant families. Today, many of those families’ descendants are still members of the parish.

“Everyone knows everybody, and the majority of the families are very close geographically,” said lifetime St. Mary parishioner Trevor Didat, 47. “It’s a small and very close community.”

His pastor, Conventional Franciscan Father Pius Poff, Aggs, agrees. The priest said the more than 400 families of the parish form a “close-knit community, very religious, very faithful. The spirit is very good here.”

A mission begins

Being a “close-knit” community is part of the parish’s heritage. In 1844, a group of 17 German Catholic families—including two with the surname Naville—immigrated to Floyd County. They settled five miles northwest of St. Mary-of-the-Knobs Parish in Floyd County and named their town Navilleton.

A credit to the importance they placed on their faith, the German settlers began building a log chapel to establish a mission parish to the one in Floyd’s St. Knobs.

The structure was completed the next year. On Sept. 8, 1845, the pastor of St. Mary-of-the-Knobs celebrated the first Mass in the log church dedicated it. The mission parish was named St. Mary.

It remained a mission parish for 63 years, though not always of St. Mary-of-the-Knobs. Priests from the custodian parish of the given time managed the faith community and though not always of St. Mary-of-the-Knobs.

That year, more than two decades of the mission parish became an independent parish, although this parishioners felled trees for the structure in 1890.

The boundaries of the log church now lie in the parish cemetery, where “half of the [the headstones] are the same six to eight names,” said Didat.

“It was a different world”

Kiesler doesn’t remember when the current church was stove-heated, but she does recall when a local resident “would arrive at 4 a.m. on Sunday mornings to get the furnace going so the church was warm for 6 a.m. Mass.”

She also has fond memories of the parish’s annual picnic, which began in 1906 and was only recently discontinued.

“I remember as a child, we kids did whatever we could do to help,” she said.

“Everyone donated chickens, and they had so be cleaned.” She chuckled before adding, “I remember one year, a lady cooking chickens got too close and her dress caught on fire.”

Kiesler also recalls her years as a student in the one-room schoolhouse the parish built on its property for use by the township in 1893.

“It had a coal stove in the middle for heating,” she said. “If you sat far away from it, you got cold.

“There were two privies, one for girls and one for boys, but you had to walk a ways to get to them. It was a different world.”

The school—which never had plumbing or electricity installed—was used until the mid-1990s. It is preserved today by parish volunteers as a non-profit museum.

“A family-oriented parish”

St. Mary became an independent parish with its own pastor in 1908, but reverted back to mission status in 1913.

That year, more than two decades of parish management began by priests from the Province of Our Lady of Consolation of the Conventual Franciscan Friars in nearby Mt. St. Francis, ending in 1935. Afterward, St. Mary again gained independent status and has remained so ever since.

Through the decades, the parish continued to grow, particularly after World War II. Its membership increased, and more structures were built on the property and new ministries were formed.

Didat remembers the “family” feeling of growing up in the faith community in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s.

“There were so many large families, some with eight and 12 kids,” he recalled. “It was such a family-oriented parish, and it wasn’t all by blood—your parents’ friends were like aunts and uncles.”

He recalls his parents’ involvement in the parish, particularly his late father serving as a coach for Catholic Youth Organization teams and chairing the parish picnic for several years, among other contributions. His mother, a lifelong member of St. Mary, is still active there.

Didat and his wife Stephanie now carry on the tradition of serving the parish and encouraging the participation of its members, “from the young crowd to the old.”

He admits lamenting the loss of families in recent years to “larger churches with bigger buildings and more amenities.” But there are new families in the parish as well.

“There’s been so many new people in the parish, to me it’s not as close as it used to be,” said Kiesler. “I used to know everybody who was there.”

“It makes you feel very rooted”

In February, the parish leadership talked about the need to form a committee to start making plans for the faith community’s 175th anniversary.

“Then the coronavirus hit,” said Father Pius. “We’ve come a long way from the log cabin. We have about seven buildings on the premises now, and every one of them is used.

“arid we still have so many members who are relatives of the families who founded the parish. I think if they could see the parish today, they’d be very impressed.”
Challenging Exodus 90 program draws men closer to God and vocation

By Sean Gallagher

The Bible’s Book of Exodus tells the story of how God liberated his chosen people from slavery in Egypt, creating an environment for them to find freedom on the path to freedom in the promised land. Although the events of Exodus took place thousands of years ago, they continue to lie at the heart of both the Jewish and Christian faiths. It’s also the inspiration for the creation of a 90-day spiritual program, Exodus 90, designed to liberate men from entrenched habits in life’s culture that draw them away from God, their families and the broader Church and community.

Father Jonathan Meyer, pastor of All Saints Parish in Dearborn County, has participated in the program twice—in 2018 with 57 of his parishioners, and in 2020 with a group of priests and seminarians.

“I have men [parishioners] who have participated in Exodus 90,” said Father Meyer. “It’s interesting to see them so alive.”

Other fathers who have participated in Exodus 90 have experienced such transforming effects through the program’s three pillars of prayer, asceticism and fraternity.

Men who participate in the program commit to a daily regimen of prayer time and fasting, which is based on a parish-read provided Scripture passages and reflections.

The system is the practice of self-denial that has been part of the spirituality of the Church, many other faith traditions and prophetic movements of the past. It fosters detachment from the things of this world in order to open men more to God, helping them, according to its website, turn “from that which will never satisfy, to the only one that does.”

Among the ascetic practices that are part of Exodus 90 are short, cold showers, regular exercise, and abstaining from alcohol, sodas, desserts, sweets, snacking between meals, television, movies, video games and unnecessary Internet and social media usage.

Men who face the challenges of daily prayer and asceticism in Exodus 90 find support in each participant. Many members for about 90 days are paired with a group of five to seven men who are also taking part in the program. Each member is assigned to the program to serve as “anchors” for each checker, in watching each other on a daily basis.

Joe Reitz, a retired offensive lineman for the Indianapolis Colts NFL football team, has participated in Exodus 90 twice. He explained.

“You mean I can’t watch sports on TV and have a cold beer?” recalled Reitz, a member of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish in Carmel, Ind., in the Louisville Diocese.

“Honestly, I almost didn’t do it in 2018 because I love watching March Madness so much.”

Looking back on it two years later, Reitz is amazed at his initial concerns.

“It seems silly now to say that, after completing the program and realizing the huge impact it has had on my faith,” he said. “God calls us to do so much more than sometimes we realize.”

Reitz said that Exodus 90 helped him prioritize his faith much more than sometimes we realize.

“All of the disciplines really exercise and strengthen your will to make it easier in the future to make the tough, unfulfilling decisions you need to make to be the great husband and father you are called to be,” he said.

Father Jonathan Meyer, pastor of All Saints Parish in Dearborn County, has participated in Exodus 90 since it was started.

“Exodus 90 is hard,” said Nathaniel Naumann, a group of priests and seminarians that participated in Exodus 90.

“My turn out, however, that one does not really have a choice,” Father Naumann said. “It is a lengthy delay in immunization that may have serious consequences for one’s health and the health of others,” the chairman said.

In such a case ... it would be permissible to accept the AstraZeneca vaccine.

Shortly after Pfizer and Moderna announced on Nov. 10 that their vaccines were 95% effective against COVID-19, critics claimed the vaccines have been produced using cells from aborted fetuses, leading to confusion over “the moral permissibility” of using these vaccines.

Bishop Rhodes and Archbishop Naumann addressed this issue in a Nov. 23 memo to their fellow bishops and addressed it again in their 2,400-word statement on Dec. 12. In the memo, they noted some were “asserting that if a vaccine is connected in any way with tainted cell lines, then it is immoral to be vaccinated with them. This is an inaccurate portrayal of Catholic moral teaching.”

In their statement, the two bishops acknowledged that any such cell lines were derived from tissue samples taken from fetuses aborted in the 1960s when he was an intern at the University of Minnesota. AstraZeneca is expected to apply to the FDA for emergency use of its vaccine in the coming weeks.

Bishop Naumann said.

“An important and very important relationship can benefit from such forms of exercise and thought and prayer.”

“Likewise, with regular physical activity being a big part of the program, a person could find concrete health improvements to the benefit of other aspects of his life.”

More than 30,000 men have participated in the program that was developed in 2013. The ministry that promotes Exodus 90 and provides resources for its participants is seeking men to take part in it beginning on Jan. 4, with the program concluding on Easter Sunday.

“Exodus 90 is hard,” said Nathaniel Binversie, the program’s director of communications. “It’s not for all men at every point in their life.

“However, if you’re ready to experience freedom from things you don’t even know you’re attached to, or to change your phone, your work, if you’re ready to do the Lord’s will this way, you can be the man your family needs you to be, then grab five to seven brothers and do Exodus 90.”

(For more information on Exodus 90, visit exodus90.com)

Bishops: Getting COVID-19 vaccines ‘act of charity, supports common good

WASHINGTON (CNS)—The “gravity” of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and availability of alternative vaccines,” are “sufficiently serious” reasons to accept the Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna vaccines, the chairman said.

Each state has a distribution plan for administering the doses across the country on Dec. 12, with the first doses to be distributed on Dec. 14. UPS and FedEx began shipping the doses across the country on Dec. 12, with the first shipments to arrive on Dec. 13.

Late on Dec. 11, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) gave emergency-use approval to the Pfizer vaccine, with some states expected for Moderna the week of Dec. 14. UPS and FedEx began shipping the doses across the country on Dec. 12, with the first shipments to arrive on Dec. 13.

Each state has a distribution plan for administering the doses across the country on Dec. 12, with the first shipments to arrive on Dec. 13.

Late on Dec. 8, the Lancet medical journal reported that for its final trial, with 99 volunteers, the vaccine produced “long-term care facilities to be first in line to get immunized.”

On Dec. 8, the Lancet medical journal reported that for its final trial, with 99 volunteers, the vaccine produced “long-term care facilities to be first in line to get immunized.”

On Dec. 8, the Lancet medical journal reported that for its final trial, with 99 volunteers, the vaccine produced “long-term care facilities to be first in line to get immunized.”

On Dec. 8, the Lancet medical journal reported that for its final trial, with 99 volunteers, the vaccine produced “long-term care facilities to be first in line to get immunized.”
VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Like everyone else, Pope Francis’ 2020 was dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Lockdowns, livestreamed Masses, video messages and even something akin to Zoom meetings became a regular part of his life, just like for millions of people around the world.

But when he walked alone into St. Peter’s Square on March 27 for an “extraordinary moment of prayer,” Pope Francis was unlike anyone else. Standing in the rain, he articulated the world’s suffering.

And before blessing the city and the world with the Blessed Sacrament, he began what would become months of pleading with people to use the crisis as an opportunity to rethink the way they treat their neighbors and the way they decide what and how much to buy, as well as to ask themselves larger questions about ways to make the global economy more fair and more respectful of the environment.

The year began normally enough. Italy’s severe lockdown went into effect less than three weeks after the 15th and final group of U.S. bishops made their weeklong “ad limina” visits to Rome to pray at the tombs of Sts. Peter and Paul, to meet Vatican officials and to spend more than two hours in a freewheeling conversation with Pope Francis.

Pope Francis told members of each group that a bishop must be close to God, close to his priests and close to his people. And, part of the way through the “ad limina,” he began talking about the importance of bishops being close to one another. Several bishops said the admonition was a recognition of how burning social, political and religious issues required bishops to be more respectful of the environment.

Instead, he focused on encouraging more missionaries to devote at least part of their lives to serving the communities and on efforts to ensure the rights of the region’s poor and indigenous are respected, local cultures are preserved, nature is protected, and the Catholic Church is present and active with “Amazonian features.”

While the pope said “Querida Amazonia” was his “dream” for that region of South America, his encyclical, “Fratelli Tutti,” on fraternity and Social Friendship, addressed burning social, political and religious issues on a global scale and his dream for a world marked by greater solidarity and concern for the poor and the Earth.

Published on Oct. 4, the encyclical insisted Christians, and all people of goodwill, must recognize that they are brothers and sisters and start living that way. Doing that, he wrote, would mean recognizing and taking concrete action against “certain trends in our world that hinder the development of universal fraternity,” and of acting as a neighbor to one another, including racism, extremism, “aggressive nationalism,” closing borders to migrants and refugees, polarization, politics as a power grab rather than a service to the common good, mistreatment of women, modern slavery and economic policies that allow the rich to get richer but do not help the poor.

Pope Francis spent much of the year trying to get his own house in order, too. On the first of the year, Jesuit Father Juan Antonio Guerrero began working as prefect of the Vatican Secretariat for the Economy, a position that had been vacant since Australian Cardinal George Pell took a leave of absence in 2017 to fight charges of sexual abuse in his homeland.

In June, the pope approved new laws governing the awarding of Vatican contracts with rules designed to prevent fraud and corruption, including barring Vatican employees from awarding contracts to their relatives. And, as questions continued over the Vatican’s massive financial loss in a property investment deal in London, in late September Pope Francis forced the resignation of Cardinal Angelo Becciu, who had been instrumental in making the deal before being appointed prefect of the Congregation for Saints’ Causes.

In November, after the Vatican Secretariat of State missed a papally imposed deadline to hand over the management and monitoring of its financial assets to two separate Vatican bodies, Pope Francis set up a commission to make the transfer and external oversight happen. The London property deal was made with funds from the Secretariat of State when Cardinal Becciu worked there.

Throughout the year, the pope and his international Council of Cardinals also continued working on the new constitution governing a reorganized Roman Curia. As the year ended, the council was reviewing suggested amendments. As he has done every year since 2014, Pope Francis created new cardinals, adding 13 prelates—including Cardinal Wilton D. Gregory of Washington— to the College of Cardinals in a November liturgy.

As the year was ending, the Vatican announced it would vaccinate all its residents and employees early in 2021 and that Pope Francis plans to travel to Iraq in March—both signs of hope that the pandemic’s days are numbered. 

Pope Francis leads a prayer service in an empty St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican on March 27. At the conclusion of the service, the pope held the Eucharist as he gave an extraordinary blessing “urbi et orbi” (to the city and the world). (CNS photo/Vatican Media)
Family Christmas celebrations can bring joy in difficult times

By Kendra Tierney

The 1991 blockbuster movie Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves might not be worth a revisit this holiday season (not with the kids, anyway), but if you saw it back in the day, Christmas 2020 probably brings to mind Alan Rickman’s Sheriff of Nottingham bellowing, “Cancel the kitchen scraps for lepers and orphans, no more merciful beheadings and canyoning.”

Virus concerns and public health mandates mean this Christmas is sure to look different than Christmases past. But that doesn’t mean it can’t be meaningful and memorable… in a good way.

Family undertakings: This is the year

The silver lining of the COVID-19 shutdowns for many families has been a step back from overscheduling and busyness. Perhaps there’s finally time in our schedules for prayerful devotional activities like a Jesse Tree or a Christmas novena, fun and crazy projects for decorations and gifts, Christmas baking with kids and reading chapter books together as a family.

Busting out grandma’s cookie recipes can be an opportunity for family togetherness (and growing in patience) and also a good way to deliver some homemade Christmas joy to neighbors and friends whom we might not be seeing in person this year.

Charitable giving

The Sheriff of Nottingham canceled the kitchen scraps, so it’s up to us to help. Especially this year, when the livelihoods of so many families have been affected by the shutdowns, many of us can stand to tighten our belts and help out those less fortunate.

Charitable organizations can help put us in touch with needy families who could use our financial help with gifts and Christmas dinners. Those of us who are able can donate our time at a shelter.

Tune in for the “urbi et orbis” blessing

Remember that very moving extraordinary blessing “urbi et orbis” (to the “city and the world”) offered by Pope Francis on March 27 at an early height of the pandemic before an empty St. Peter’s Square? This beautiful traditional blessing is offered every year from the Vatican on Christmas and Easter. The faithful who participate via television or livestream can gain a plenary indulgence (subject to the usual conditions).

Gathering together as a family for this special blessing on Christmas Day is a beautiful tradition just begging to be instituted in this unique year.

There’s an at-home version for that

There’s no getting around the fact that some beloved traditions at our schools and parishes have gotten the axe this year. But that doesn’t mean we have to give them up completely. We’ve been doing a family at-home Nativity play after Christmas dinner for the last decade and a half.

With dad’s T-shirts for costumes and stuffed animals and household objects for props, it has resulted in many memorable moments over the years. (Find a printable version of the script at CatholicAllYear.com.)

Remember that Christmas is a season

In our home, we like to observe the traditional—but not necessarily liturgically correct—“Twelve Days of Christmas.” We’ve been focused on waiting during Advent: waiting for Christmas treats and Christmas music and Christmas shows. So, we jump in and celebrate with those things on Christmas Day... and for the next 11 days as well. On each day, we sing or listen to carols and enjoy a different kind of Christmas cookie and watch a different Christmas movie together as a family.

We observe fun traditions associated with the different saints’ days that fall during the Octave of Christmas. The tree is still up (at least until Epiphany); there are toys in the living room; there are pajama days; there are more songs and prayers and treats and screens than usual. It truly feels like a unique and special season.

Maybe we can’t travel this year, but the Wise Men will

We observe Advent as a season of preparation, and we use incremental decorating in our home to help make that principle visible.

We put out the pieces of our Nativity scene slowly over the course of Advent, with at least a nod to historical accuracy. First the stable and the manger on the First Sunday of Advent, then the animals and other “extra” characters the second week, then Mary and Joseph the third week, and then on Christmas Eve we add Jesus with great fanfare, and… we start the Wise Men on their journey.

Our three Wise Men start out on the mantle with the rest of the set on Christmas Day, but as far as possible from the other pieces and pointing in the other direction. Each morning between Christmas and Epiphany, the kids look around to see where the Wise Men are stopped. (They only travel at night while watching the star, of course.)

Occasionally, the kids will find that the Wise Men haven’t moved overnight. This can happen if a camel gets sick or there’s a sandstorm or something. But not to worry, they always catch up and make it through the house and back to the mantle on Epiphany.

Have an eternal perspective

Our Catholic faith gives us an eternal perspective and a long memory. We know that Christmases have been celebrated by the faithful through war and famine, plague and persecution.

The beautiful traditions of the Church can give us a framework for a joyful, memorable Christmas that cannot be cancelled.

(Kendra Tierney is a wife and mother of 10 who, in her spare time, authors the blog “Catholic All Year.” Her books include “The Catholic All Year Compendium. A Little Book About Confession for Children,” and O Come, Emmanuel: Advent Reflections on the Jesse Tree for Families.)
Dec. 17 began a period of heightened anticipation in our Advent season. One of the ways we sense this growing excitement is in the Latin American Church. The O Antiphons are chanted or sung at Vespers (evening prayer) prior to the Magnificat. This year’s cycle of O Antiphons begin on Dec. 17 and end on Dec. 23, which is the last Vespers of Advent.

Each of the O Antiphon prayers says “Come.” Such a little word to sum up the experience of reflection, invitation, longing, and even crying out. In Advent in a particular way, we make our own the words of the psalmist to his Lord, “people, waiting for a savior, that began with Adam and Eve.”

“... such unceasing feelings especially strong this year in the midst of loss and loneliness, stress, illness, social and political unrest, and any number of divisions even in the midst of the Church. Jesus was, is and always will be the answer to our desires. The challenge is to allow ourselves to experience the waiting, the expectation and, dare I say it, the uncertainty. Moreover, the challenge is to not rush through the waiting to Christmas, ultimately letting the joy of Jesus’ coming for something of our own making, which will never last.

As we journey into the waiting, try praying evening prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours if you don’t already pray it. If you don’t have the four-volume set or Christian prayer book, you can find it online at www.liturgytools.net as well as on a few different apps on your phone. But if that is not feasible, here are the ones of the O Antiphons you can use for reflection.

O Wisdom, Holy Word of God, you are evermore the author of gentle care. Come and show your people the way to salvation.
O King of David, Royal Power of Israel, controlling at will the gate of heaven: come, break down the prison walls of death for those whom you dwell in darkness and the shadow of death; and lead your captive people into freedom.
O Emmanuel, King and lawgiver, desire of the nations, Savior of all people, come and set us free, Lord our God.

If this sounds a little familiar, it probably is! These antiphons are also taken up in the very popular hymn, “O Come, O Come Emmanuel,” which is another great way to pray, reflect and give voice to our own need and longing, especially during the final days of Advent.

All that said, while we are waiting for Jesus to come, participants in our recent Advent gathering for adults with disabilities were quick to point out that Jesus already has been with us. It is because he is within us, we can bring him to others, and all of us could think of a way that others could benefit. They suggested we do this by taking care of each other, forgiving and being forgiven, being present in moments of solitude and volunteering. So in the words of a song we shared during our retreat “Let there be peace, let it start now.”

So, God continues to invite me each day to renew my act of faith, both in my life as a parent and in my life as adopted son.

Joseph and Mary began their lives as parents by fleeing to Egypt after a false accusation, and then later by Mary expressing her trust in God when she told the angel, "Let it be to me according to your word." Joseph did the same in his immediate obedience to an angel’s command to take Mary into his home as his wife, even after he had been warned to “divorce her quietly” (Mt 1:19).

Even though they were both promised that the child would be called “Jesus,” Mary did not really know for sure who the child was until well after he or she has left home. Faith is crucial to parenting because parents must know that God really know for sure if the essential lessons about life that they try to pass on to their children have been hold.

So, parents, when doubt about the care you give to your children creep into your hearts and minds, call on Mary and Joseph for their prayers. They’ll help you renew your act of faith each day.
The Sunday Readings
Sunday, December 20, 2020

- 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16
- Romans 16:25-27
- Luke 1:26-38

The first reading for Mass this weekend is from the Second Book of Samuel. Once the two Books of Samuel were recognized as one volume, Translations and editions over the centuries divided this one volume into two. David is the principal figure in these books. The ancient Hebrews looked to David as more much as much more than a king. Beyond all else, he was God’s chosen representative, given the kingship so that laws and circumstances would provide an atmosphere in which the people more fervently would follow God and be loyal to the covenant.

For this weekend’s second reading, the Church offers us a passage from St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans. Scholars unanimously say that Paul of Tarsus indeed authored this epistle, and that it was his theological masterpiece. As indicated by its title, Paul sent this epistle to the faithful church in Rome. In the first century, Rome was the center of the Mediterranean world in every respect—political, economic and cultural. It was also the largest city in the Roman Empire. Not surprisingly, Rome, the cultural. It was also the largest city in the Roman Empire. In the first century, it was the center of the Mediterranean world in every respect—political, economic and cultural. Not surprisingly, Rome, the largest city in the Roman Empire. In the first century, Rome was the center of the Mediterranean world in every respect—political, economic and cultural.

Reflection
In each of these readings drawn from the Scriptures, the Church makes a vital point. God reaches out to us. This outreach is not vague, pointed only to a few, or impossible to see. It came in through people with whom we can relate—David, Paul and Jesus—so that we all may comprehend. This outreach has critical implications for us in our own inadequacy and limitations. God is almighty, but his supreme power over all creation is not the most consoling point here. Rather, the most reassuring feature is that God loves us. He continually dispatched messengers such as David, Paul and Jesus, to rescue us from ourselves and to guide us to peace in our hearts and life in eternity. He sent us Mary in her faithfulness. The Church approaches Christmas in its solid conviction of God’s love. We are not helplessly and doomed. God reaches out to us. Now, each of us must respond. Do we accept God? Do we love God? Or, do we reject God? It is that simple. 

The Sunday Readings
Monday, December 21
St. Peter Canisius, priest and doctor of the Church
Song of Songs 2:8-14
or Zephaniah 3:14-19a
Psalm 11:2-3, 11-12, 20-21
Luke 1:39-45

Tuesday, December 22
St. Samuel 1:24-28 (Response) and St. Samuel 1:2, 4-7, Subde Luke 1:46-56

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

Thursday, December 24
St. Psalm 11:5-8, 14b, 16
Psalm 89:2-5, 27, 29
Luke 1:67-79

Vigil of the Nativity of the Lord
Isaiah 62:1-5
Psalm 89:4-5, 16-17, 27, 29
Matthew 1:1-25
or Matthew 1:18-25

Friday, December 25
St. The Nativity of the Lord
Christmas Night
Isaiah 9:1-6
Psalm 90, 1-3, 11-13

Question Corner
Fr. Kenneth Doyle
Teaching on purgatory has basis in sacred Scripture

Q Some 50 years ago, I was received into the Catholic Church. But one question has always bothered me: Where will I find the word “purgatory” in the Bible? (Washington)

A This is a question that is often asked. The answer is that you won’t find the specific word “purgatory” in the Bible. But the concept is surely there—the notion of a period of purification after death before one is worthy to enter heaven. In fact, even before Christ, the Jewish people recognized that there could be such a need and believed that the prayers of those still living could aid in that cleansing. In the Second Book of Maccabees (2 Mct 13:9-94), Judas Maccabees prays for his fallen comrades who had died in battle while wearing amulets dedicated to pagan gods. That Old Testament passage tells us that Judas turned to prayer as an expiatory sacrifice, and “thus he made atonement for the dead that they might be absolved from their sin”—showing his belief that the deceased still could be helped by the intercession of the living.

In the New Testament, arguably the clearest reference to purgatory comes in Matthew’s Gospel (Mt 12:32), where Jesus states that “whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come”—implying that there are at least some sins that can be forgiven in the next life. Such scriptural references leads to the Church’s belief, stated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, that “all who die in faith, grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purgation, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven” (#1303).

After a series of work-related moves, I find myself on my fourth Catholic parish in the last 10 years. At the first one, after receiving Confirmation, people returned to their pews and knelt until the Confirmation vows were cleansed and the priest and deacon had returned to their chairs. Then there followed a few moments of silence. At the second church, everyone remaining standing until the priest returned to his seat. At the third one, the celebrant told everyone to “please be seated after the last person is served Communion. There’s nothing to be gained either by kneeling or standing.” My most recent parish is a mix of all of the above; the priest gives no signal at all as to the preferred posture after receiving. Could you comment? (Indiana)

A The common practice in the United States is that the faithful remain standing during the distribution and reception of Holy Communion. What happens next is that people have options. Typical is the guideline provided on its website by the Diocese of Cleveland:

“Beginning as soon as the distribution of holy Communion has been completed. At this point, the faithful may sit or kneel. The faithful should not be required to stand during the purification of the vessels, or until the reposition of the Blessed Sacrament.”

I believe that parishes should, within reasonable limits, allow for individual choice. In 2003, in response to a query from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops regarding the posture of the congregation following Communion, the Vatican’s Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments stated that it was not its intention to “regulate posture rigidly in such a way that those who wish to kneel or sit would no longer be free.”

Perhaps the wisest approach, then, is simply to let congregants choose their posture while they make their individual thanksgiving for the gift of the Eucharist.

(Questions may be sent to Father Kenneth Doyle at askfatherdoyle@gmail.com and 30 Columbus Circle Dr, Albany, New York 12203.)
Rest in peace

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

Beckman, Anna Marie


PROVIDENCE SISTER BETTY DONOHUE

served in education and health care

PROVIDENCE SISTER BETTY DONOHUE (formerly Sister Clare Patricia), a member of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, died on Dec. 1 at Union Terrace in Terre Haute. She was 83.

Because of the coronavirus pandemic, a virtual funeral service was held. Burial followed at the sisters’ cemetery.

Sister Betty earned a bachelor’s degree in education at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College. She received her 56th vows as a member of the Sisters of Providence, Sister Betty ministered as an educator for 19 years in schools in Illinois, Indiana, Massachusetts and New Hampshire. In 1976, she became a certified nurse’s aide and began service in the motherhouse infirmary for the next 25 years. After retiring from this ministry, she regularly visited patients in the community, praying with the residents until several months before her death.

Sister Betty was a spiritual companion for inmates on death row at the Federal Correctional Complex in Terre Haute, including one who was recently executed.

In the archdiocese, Sister Betty served at St. Philip Neri School in Indianapolis from 1963-69, as a nurse’s aide at the motherhouse infirmary from 1976-2001 and in ministry of care at the infirmary from 2002-2010.

Memorial gifts may be sent to the Sisters of Providence, 1 Sisters of Providence Road, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, IN 47876-1.

PROVIDENCE SISTER REGIS McNULTY

served as an educator and counselor

PROVIDENCE SISTER REGIS McNULTY, a member of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, died in St. Mary-of-the-Woods, on Dec. 4 at Signature Health Care in Terre Haute. She was 92.

Because of the coronavirus pandemic, a virtual funeral service was held. Burial followed at the sisters’ cemetery.

Sister Regis was born on June 5, 1927, in Melrose, Mass. She entered the Sisters of Providence on July 22, 1948, and professed final vows on Jan. 23, 1962.

During her 72 years as a member of the Sisters of Providence, Sister Regis ministered as an educator for 28 years in schools in Illinois, Indiana, Massachusetts and North Carolina. In 1969, she began serving as a nurse’s aide in counseling, she served for 20 years as a therapist and clinical supervisor at Breech Hill Hospital in Terre Haute, N.H., and then as an adjunct professor at Antioch University before retiring to the motherhouse in 2012. Beginning in 2015, she served as a spiritual companion for inmates on death row at the Federal Correctional Complex in Terre Haute.

In the archdiocese, Sister Regis served at the former St. Ann School in Terre Haute in 1954. Memorial gifts may be sent to the Sisters of Providence, 1 Sisters of Providence Road, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, IN 47876.

During her 59 years as a member of the Sisters of Providence, Sister Margaret ministered as an educator for 12 years in schools in Indiana. In the archdiocese, she served on the Governor’s Task Force on Child Abuse from 1966-67 and at the former Archdiocesan School for the Deaf in 1967-69. Sister Margaret also ministered at Our Lady of Providence High School in Clarksville from 1969-78.

After leaving educational service, Sister Margaret served for nine years at the Catholic Indian Mission in Fort Yates, N.D. before taking up parish ministry in Owensboro, Ky. She later served as a hospital chaplain in Paduch, Ky and in Oak Lawn, Ill. Sister Margaret returned to the motherhouse in 2003 and dedicated herself entirely to prayer beginning in 2017. She is survived by sisters Kathleen Caffigan of Chico, Mary Ann Johnson-Pintanich, N.C., Sally Smith of Libertyville, Ill., and a brother, Thomas Nau of River Grove, Ill.

Memorial gifts may be sent to the Sisters of Providence, 1 Sisters of Providence Road, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, IN 47876-1.

PROVIDENCE SISTER MARGARET NAU

served in schools, parishes and hospitals

PROVIDENCE SISTER MARGARET NAU (formerly Sister Mary Antis), a member of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in St. Mary-of-the-Woods, died on Nov. 10 at Mother Theodore Hall at the oeder’s motherhouse. She was 81.

Because of the coronavirus pandemic, a virtual funeral service was held. Burial followed at the sisters’ cemetery.

Sister Margaret, known in her community as Sister Peggy, was born on Nov. 7, 1939, in Hammond, Ind. She entered the Sisters of Providence on Sept. 18, 1961, and professed final vows on Nov. 19, 1962.

Sister Margaret earned a bachelor’s degree in journalism at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, a master’s degree in communications arts at the University of Notre Dame in northern Indiana and a master’s degree in pastoral studies at the Divinity School at Chicago. During her 59 years as a member of the Sisters of Providence, Sister Margaret ministered as an educator for 12 years in

Online Lay Ministry Formation

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis has partnered with the University of Notre Dame and the Catholic Distance University (CDU) to offer not-for-credit online theology classes:

• Complete 12 courses online with ND STEP program
• CDU offers classes on Catechism of the Catholic Church
• 20% discount for all employees, volunteers and parishioners

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

The Criterion • Friday, December 18, 2020 Page 18

One way to help

• Donate online with your credit card at www.archindy.org/donate

Memorial gifts may be sent to the Sisters of Providence, 1 Sisters of Providence Road, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, IN 47876.
Investing with Faith
Jolinda Moore

Our joy comes in knowing that God has a plan for us.

Long ago, I stopped making New Year’s resolutions. Instead, I started selecting a single word to strive for or grow toward understanding.

This year, my word is joy. If I’m being honest, that has been my word for the last several years—each time trying to spiritually understand how to find joy in the hardships and challenges that are present each day.

The focus of joy these last years has helped me understand that I am not my circumstances, nor am I the challenges of the day. Instead, each day is an opportunity to find and treasure the blessings around me.

While I wandered on holding joy as my goal in 2020, I don’t think I could have picked anything more appropriate! It has been a focal point that brings me out of my frustration, stressful moments and times of doubt.

My family and close family friends know that my joy is my word. During a rather unpleasant situation at home, I even overheard my daughter say to my son, “how do you think she is going to find joy in this situation?”

No doubt, it took a deep breath; but the glimmer of joy I found was that my children know that I am focused on living fully the life which God has planned for me.

In a recent reflection on the Gospel of Luke 1:26-28, where the Blessed Mother Mary states that she is the handmaid of the Lord, I read, “We may not have asked for whatever it is that God has in mind for us; we may not have even hoped for it, but we have truly found favor with God!”

While this has been a difficult year, it has also been a time of slowing down, pausing to understand what is most important, and shifting our thoughts to the all-powerful God who shows us his mercy and grace.

Within the archdiocesan Office of Stewardship and Development, we strive to assist individuals who desire to align their personal mission and vision with the ministries of the Church. That alignment could be with their home parish or the archdiocese, or perhaps it fits within the work of a specific agency, ministry or a school.

If your journey through 2020 gave you pause to reflect on your financial support of the Church, we are happy to engage in conversations that might help you achieve your goals.

I pray that we take what we have learned this year and apply it to the days ahead, and that our joy comes in knowing that God has a plan in mind for us. It is simply our job to trust and follow him.

(Jolinda Moore serves as executive director of the archdiocesan Office of Stewardship and Development. Contact her at 317-236-1462 or the office at www.archindy.org/CEG.)

Show the world the joy of faith, Pope Francis says at weekly Angelus

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Joy should be the hallmark of a Christian’s life, a reflection of knowing that one is loved by God, saved by Jesus Christ and a mercy and grace.

“Think well today: how do I behave? Am I a joyful person who knows how to transmit the joy of being Christian, or am I always like those sad people, as I said before, who seem to be at a funeral wake?” the pope said. “If I do not have the joy of my faith, I cannot believe have a face from a funeral wake.’

“Many Christians have that face—yes, a face from a funeral wake, a face of sadness,” the pope said. “But Christ is risen! Christ loves you! And you have joy!”

As the celebration of Christmas approached, Pope Francis asked Christians to think about how they communicate the joy of being loved and saved.

“That well today: how do I behave? Am I a joyful person who knows how to transmit the joy of being Christian, or am I always like those sad people, as I said before, who seem to be at a funeral wake?” the pope said. “If I do not have the joy of my faith, I cannot bear witness and others will say, ‘But if faith is so sad, it is better not to have it.”

Mary, Joseph and John the Baptist knew joyful expectation and the happiness of seeing the Savior arrive, the pope said.

And all three of them, he said, always prayed to Jesus, never to themselves.

“The Lord is always at the center,” and the saints point to him, the pope said.

“Who does not indicate the Lord is not holy.”

John the Baptist “is a model for all those in the Church who are called to proclaim Christ to others,” he said. They must do so “only by detaching from themselves and from worldliness, by not attracting people to themselves but directing them toward Jesus.”

After reciting the Angelus, Pope Francis spoke directly to a few children in the square and many others watching the Angelus on their computers or on television.

Gaudete Sunday usually is the day that Rome children bring the baby Jesus figures from the Nativity scenes they are preparing to the Vatican for the pope’s blessing.

After blessing the figures, the pope told the children, “When you pray at home, before the Nativity scene with your families, allow yourselves to be drawn by the tenderness of baby Jesus, born poor and frail among us, in order to give us his love.”

READINGS

continued from page 17

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

Tuesday, December 29
Sixth Day within the Octave of Christmas
St. Thomas Becket, bishop and martyr
1 John 2:3-11
Psalm 96:1-3, 5b-6
Luke 2:22-35

Wednesday, December 30
Sixth Day within the Octave of Christmas
St. Sylvester I, pope
1 John 2:12-17
Psalm 96:7, 10
Luke 2:36-40

Thursday, 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

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

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

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

Monday, January 4
St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, religious
Psalm 2:7bc-8, 10-12a
Matthew 4:12-17, 23-25

Tuesday, January 5
St. John Neumun, bishop
1 John 4:7-10
Psalm 72:1-4, 7-8
Mark 3:34-44

Wednesday, January 6
St. André Bessette, religious
1 John 4:11-18
Psalm 72:1-2, 10, 12-13
Mark 4:55-42

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

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

Saturday, January 9
1 John 5:14-21
Psalm 149:1-6a, 9b
John 1:14-19b

Sunday, January 10
The Baptism of the Lord
Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7
or Isaiah 55:1-11
Psalm 29:1-2, 4-9, 10
or (Response) Isaiah 12:2-3, 4bcd, 5-6
Acta 10:34-38
or (1 John 5:9-10)
Mark 1:7-11

Classified Directory

Construction

Emerson Heights • Brothers Construction
Chimneys sweeped & inspected $99
Concrete & Brick Specialist
Stainless & Steps
Call 317-505-4830
5000 E. Michigan Street—Serving the eastside since 1944

School Superintendent

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Indianapolis is seeking a School Superintendent to provide proactive leadership for 57 elementary schools and 11 high schools with combined enrollment of nearly 22,000 students. The person in this position is responsible for articulating the vision, values, and achievements of Catholic education, collaborating with pastors, principals, commission members and community leaders, and providing leadership to fully develop the human and financial resources necessary for quality Catholic education.

Candidates must be professed and practicing Catholics in good standing with and faithful to the Church with a minimum of 10 years of highly successful educational leadership experience. A master’s degree in education, business, or a related field is required. Candidates must be eligible for state school administrator certification. Participation in a wide variety of educational experiences and settings is essential, including familiarity with urban and rural populations and ethnically and racially diverse communities. Expertise in curriculum development, grant administration, student achievement measurement, and faculty and administrator development is also required.

To apply, please e-mail your cover letter, resume, and list of references, in confidence, to:

Ed Isakson
Director, Human Resources
Archdiocese of Indianapolis
1400 N. Meridian St.
Indianapolis, IN 46202
E-mail: eisakson@archindy.org

Application deadline is January 31, 2021.

Equal Opportunity Employer
WE WILL BE FREE.

Exodus is a 90-day Catholic spiritual exercise for men that provides a path to freedom through prayer, asceticism and fraternity.

Your freedom begins January 4: EXODUS90.COM