



The birth of Jesus is depicted in a stained-glass window at St. Mary of the Isle Church in Long Beach, N.Y. The feast of the Nativity of the Lord, a holy day of obligation, is celebrated on Dec. 25.
(CNS photo/Gregory A. Shemitz)

A Christmas Message from the Archbishop

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 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!

+ Charles C. Thompson

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

Mensaje 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 soportado 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 encontrarnos 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 renovarnos en el espíritu de la alegría navideña, puesta a nuestra disposición por Dios al convertirse en uno de nosotros en todo, menos en el pecado. Aprovechemos todas las oportunidades para encontrarlo en la Palabra, los Sacramentos y el Servicio. Él es Emmanuel, *Dios con nosotros*. Vengan, vamos a adarlo.

¡Bendiciones de Navidad!

+ Charles C. Thompson

Arzobispo Charles C. Thompson



Indiana's bishops met with the Indiana Catholic Conference on Dec. 9 at the Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center in Indianapolis. Pictured are: Evansville Bishop Joseph M. Siegel, left; Gary Bishop Robert J. McClory; Indianapolis Archbishop Charles C. Thompson; Fort Wayne-South Bend Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades; and Lafayette Bishop Timothy L. Doherty. (Submitted photo by Angela Espada)



Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

December 20, 2020–January 14, 2021

<p>December 20 – 8:30 a.m. Mass at St. Vincent de Paul Church in Shelby County</p> <p>December 24 – 10 p.m. Christmas Eve Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis</p> <p>January 6 – 10 a.m. Pastoral Ministry Directors' Meeting, Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center, Indianapolis</p> <p>January 7 – 10 a.m. Leadership Team Meeting, Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center</p>	<p>January 12 – 10:30 a.m. Priest Personnel Board, Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center</p> <p>January 14 – 8:15 a.m. Judicatories virtual meeting</p> <p>January 14 – 10 a.m. Leadership Team Meeting, Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center</p> <p>January 14 – 2 p.m. Legal Review Meeting, Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center</p> <p>January 14 – 7 p.m. Confirmation Mass, St. Malachy Church, Brownsburg</p>
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Statement from Archbishop Charles C. Thompson calls again for end to federal executions in Indiana

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 and curial 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 our 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

We are 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.

The murder of a human person by another human person is abhorrent and deeply painful.

Like you, we grieve the murder of any person and reach out in pastoral care for those who mourn their deaths. However, it is important to underscore that the United States of America is the only developed nation that continues to believe that state-sponsored execution is a deterrent to others who commit violent crimes including murder.

Earlier this summer, at the request of the U.S. Attorney General, the Supreme

Court, in a 5 to 4 decision, supported the notion that the state can humanely execute persons on death row.

For more than 60 years, our faith traditions have affirmed their opposition to the death penalty, that it is repugnant and an affront to God, which diminishes all of us.

It is also true that the death penalty is disproportionately applied to the poor, to Black, indigenous and other persons of color.

The life and teachings of Jesus remind us again and again that every person is made in God's image and likeness, and that loving God and our neighbor requires us to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation.

We are committed to seeking ways to end this kind of violence and to work for peace, justice and reconciliation.

Chad Abbott | Conference Minister
Indiana-Kentucky Conference of the United Church of Christ

Jennifer Baskerville-Burrows | Bishop
Episcopal Diocese of Indianapolis

William O. Gafkjen | Bishop
Indiana-Kentucky Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Jennifer Burns Lewis | Visioning and Connecting Leader
Presbytery of Wabash Valley of the Presbyterian Church (USA)

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Phone Numbers:
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Toll free: 1-800-382-9836, ext. 1570
Circulation: 317-236-1585
Toll free: 1-800-382-9836, ext. 1585

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

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

Web site: www.CriterionOnline.com

E-mail: criterion@archindy.org

Published weekly except the last week of December and the first week of January.
Mailing address: 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367. Periodical postage paid at Indianapolis, IN. Copyright © 2020 Criterion Press Inc. ISSN 0574-4350.

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

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

Periodical postage paid at Indianapolis, IN.
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Plans for Indiana March for Life include vigil, Mass, march, rally

By Natalie Hoefler

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 vigilforlifecarmel2021.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 St. 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 cutt.ly/IndyMarch4LifeMass. Guidelines and regulations may change per Marion County recommendations, so the number of tickets available will be updated to allow as many people to attend the Mass as possible. Updates can be found at www.archindy.org/humanlifeanddignity. The Mass will also be livestreamed at www.facebook.com/stjohnsindy and www.stjohnsindy.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.rtlindy.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 cutt.ly/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*. †



During the third annual Indiana March for Life on Jan. 22 in Indianapolis, a mass of about 1,100 pro-life advocates march up Meridian Street toward Monument Circle, far outnumbering a small group of protesters on the monument steps. (*Criterion* file photo by Natalie Hoefler)

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.sppc.org/streaming.

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. †

The Criterion and Catholic Center are closed from Dec. 23 to Jan. 3 for Christmas holiday

This week's issue of *The Criterion*, which is our annual Christmas publication, is the last issue of 2020.

The Criterion will be published again on Jan. 8, 2021, and resume its weekly schedule.

The Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center will be closed from Dec. 23 through Jan. 3 in observance of the holidays.

Archdiocesan agencies will reopen at 8 a.m. on Monday, Jan. 4, 2021. †



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/popessintentions.

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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!

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The Criterion

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Mike Krokos, *Editor*

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John F. Fink, *Editor Emeritus*

Editorial

Getting ready for Christmas

What are we doing to prepare for the Christmas holiday? Are we decorating for the season? Or buying presents? Or planning Christmas dinner? These are necessary preparations for the holiday—a special time for family togetherness, friendship and good cheer.

But what are we doing to prepare for the holy day, the day when we celebrate the mystery of the incarnation, the birth of the God-man, the miraculous appearance of the long awaited “Emmanuel,” which means “God is with us”? Isn’t it just as important (or more important) to prepare ourselves spiritually for Christmas?

We know how to celebrate the Christmas holiday. But the holy day is more elusive. It’s easy to get distracted by the wonderful things that are happening all around us—the joyous music, the good food, the bright lights and the old favorites we watch on television, Blu-ray discs or through streaming services. How do we use this time productively from a spiritual point of view? How do we celebrate the holy day in spite of all the holiday’s customary and enjoyable distractions?

Especially during this time of pandemic, it’s a struggle to prepare ourselves spiritually for the miracle of Christ’s coming again. We are tempted to forget what this great feast of Christmas is really all about.

We have been so distracted by COVID-19, by politics and social unrest, and by whatever hardships we have had to endure for what seems like forever, that it’s hard to let go of our anxieties and be ready for the simple beauty of our Lord’s birth.

So, understanding the difficulties, here are some suggestions to help us get ready for Christmas the holy day, not Christmas the holiday:

- Let’s set aside time for prayer. This should be quiet time, time for each of us to be alone with God. Let’s spend some quality time with Jesus. Thank him for the gift of Christmas and for all the blessings in our lives. Ask for his help with all the things that are bothering us during this difficult time. Then listen quietly for his response. We may not know it, or understand it, but God always responds to our prayers. The best way to prepare for the Christmas holy day is to give our hearts to him in prayer.

- Go to confession. There is no better way to prepare ourselves spiritually than to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation, to confess our sins, to do penance and to begin again filled with God’s grace. “Do not be afraid,” the Lord tells us repeatedly. We don’t have to carry secret burdens of guilt deep inside us, and we don’t have to let past hurts and disappointments ruin our Christmas celebration. We can ask for (and confidently receive) God’s forgiveness for our own sins as well as the grace to forgive those who have



Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio of Brooklyn, N.Y., and New York Mayor Bill de Blasio, unveil “Angels Unawares,” a replica of the artwork that sits in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican, on Dec. 8 in front of the Diocese of Brooklyn’s public Christmas tree at Grand Army Plaza. (CNS photo/Ed Wilkinson, The Tablet)

sinned against us. This sacrament is a great gift from God. Let’s accept it gratefully, and use it wisely!

- Let’s be more faithful—and more attentive—in our Mass attendance even if we have to participate virtually. Advent liturgies are among the most beautiful and hope-filled celebrations in the Church calendar. Masses on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and throughout the entire Christmas season can fill our hearts with gladness and remind us that God truly is with us (especially in his gift-of-self, the holy Eucharist).

- Give spiritual gifts. Gift-giving is an important part of the Christmas tradition, but the gifts we give (and receive) don’t have to be material things. Even with social distancing, a smile, a kind word, and a virtual helping hand can all be precious gifts, especially when given at the right moment to persons in need. Let’s make this truly the season of giving, but let our gifts be spiritual gifts of self as well as material gifts!

Preparing ourselves spiritually for the Christmas holy day isn’t easy, especially in these unsettling times. Many things seek to distract us from concentrating on the wonder of Christ’s birth and the promise that he will come again in glory. Let’s resist the temptation to experience Christmas as just another holiday. Let’s make it a day of holiness, a day of hope, and a day when we experience once again the powerful presence of Jesus—who really is God-with-us—in our personal lives and in our world.

Come, Lord Jesus. Bring healing, hope and peace to our troubled world. Enter into our hearts and homes this Christmas. Teach us to give generously as you do. Help us welcome you, love you and serve you—this Christmas Day and always!

—Daniel Conway

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 stole 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 them.

Many of us, after months of a worldwide pandemic, could write our own version of *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 or death of a loved one, 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 lost to anger. How “merry” can we be as we approach Christmas with so much loss and anxiety?

The birth of Jesus, whose name means “God saves,” restores us. Emmanuel, which means “God is with us,” strengthens and renews us.

In a time where we wear masks, the Word made Flesh, the Son of God, comes into the world completely revealing (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 seems lost. Emmanuel is here walking with us, strengthening and renewing us on the journey. Blessed are we who believe. Amen.

(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. Watching 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 current times.

Merges can have a negative impact on the local community or, as I see it, also can 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 our earthly parishes be a representation of it.

While hearing this homily, I couldn’t help but notice the irony. In almost every parish that I’ve seen with both a Hispanic and an Anglo ministry, these ministries are explicitly divided. In many instances, there are few attempts to bridge or blend these communities. I think it’s because leaders have confused the difference between assimilation and integration.

I’m speaking as a member of St. John Paul II, a parish in Kankakee, Ill., in the Diocese of Joliet, born from the closing of three older parishes. As you can imagine, there were mixed feelings about this significant moment. Ask anyone, and they’ll share stories both good and bad.

I came into this parish three years after the merge, and I’ve witnessed a transformative and empowered community. In building a new community, it’s clear that the pastor prioritized the integration of the three former communities and helped shepherd a new church where all are welcomed.

St. John Paul II has become my home away from home. Like most young adults, I was a parish visitor for about 10 years. After I left my childhood parish, I never

felt inclined to join another community. I didn’t see the need to join a parish. Yet, I knew I did miss one thing about my home parish in Georgia: the community, the feeling of walking in a parish and knowing the people you feasted with every Sunday.

When I walked into the doors of St. John Paul II, I quickly felt welcomed. First, it was the instant welcome that two parishioners and staff members gave me and my husband. But what kept us coming back was the culture of the community. It was the inclusion of all parishioners. It was the diversity of the parishioners. It was the representation in the parish leadership and staff.

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.

There have been struggles in getting here. When the Latino children joined the English religious education classes, there were several families who chose to leave the parish.

The pastor doesn’t shy away from these challenges. Instead, he challenges the community to choose love over fear. Again and again, his homilies urge that we must choose each other over division. It’s this Gospel message that speaks to me. When we choose love, it brings healing to a broken world.

It’s natural to fear change, but one does not have to succumb to it. This is the type of community I’ve desired for a very long time. It’s a joy to be a part of a community who chooses daily to overcome fear of the other.

(Edith Avila Olea is associate director of justice and peace for the Diocese of Joliet, Ill.) †



Christ the Cornerstone

Mary's 'yes' makes the incarnation of Jesus a reality

"Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38).

The season of Advent 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 the power of the Most High will 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 as of 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, 8b-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 Mary's son, Jesus, is the one foretold 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.*

We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Mary of Nazareth whose humility and simplicity brought about the fulfillment of humanity's longing 2,000 years ago. And because Advent looks forward to the Second Coming of this same God incarnate, we rightly look to Mary to help us get ready for her son's return in glory.

As we conclude this time of preparation, let us pray that Mary's example will inspire us to be receptive to God's will for us. May we always say "yes" to God's messengers who speak to us in prayer, in sacred Scripture and in our encounters with all God's people. And may God's only son, the child of Mary, come into our hearts this Christmas with abundant gifts of forgiveness, peace and joy. †



Cristo, la piedra angular

Gracias al 'sí' de María la encarnación de Jesús es una realidad

"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 mayor alegría jamás conocida por un ser humano.

El cuarto domingo de Adviento, que celebramos este fin de semana, cuenta la historia familiar del encuentro de María con el ángel Gabriel. El Evangelio según san Lucas (Lc 1:26-38) recuerda la pregunta sencilla y directa de María "¿Cómo será esto, puesto que soy virgen?" (Lc 1:34).

"El Espíritu Santo vendrá sobre ti, y el poder del Altísimo te cubrirá con su sombra; por eso el santo Niño que nacerá será llamado Hijo de Dios" (Lc 1:35).

El "sí" libremente dado por María a la invitación que recibió del mensajero de Dios hizo realidad el gran misterio que conocemos como la encarnación. La segunda persona de la Santísima Trinidad, el único Hijo de Dios Padre,

se convirtió en uno de nosotros por el poder del Espíritu Santo y se nutrió en el vientre de María hasta el momento de su milagroso nacimiento en Belén. "Y el Verbo se hizo carne," nos dice el Evangelio según san Juan (Jn 1:14), "y habitó entre nosotros, y vimos su gloria, gloria como del unigénito del Padre, lleno de gracia y de verdad" (Jn 1:14).

La segunda lectura de la Carta de san Pablo a los romanos (Rom 16:25-27), 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 sabio Dios, sea la gloria mediante Jesucristo para siempre" (Rom 16:25-27).

El misterio de la cercanía de Dios a nosotros se manifiesta a todas las naciones, sobre todo a través de la vida, la muerte y la resurrección del hijo de María, Jesús. El ángel le dice a María: "Él será grande y será llamado Hijo del Altísimo y el Señor Dios le dará el trono de David, su padre, y reinará sobre la casa de Jacob para siempre y su reino no tendrá fin" (Lc 1:32-33).

La primera lectura del segundo Libro de Samuel (2 Sm 7:1-5; 8-12; 14; 16)

contiene la profecía de que un descendiente del Rey David establecerá un día un reinado que perdurará para siempre. Los cristianos creemos que el hijo de María, Jesús, es el que predijeron los profetas. Y en el salmo responsorial del cuarto domingo de Adviento (Sal 89), cantamos:

*"Yo he hecho un pacto con mi escogido, he jurado a David mi siervo:
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 ella concibe al niño que "será llamado Hijo de Dios" (Lc 1:35). Por lo tanto, el misterio que se ha mantenido en secreto durante mucho tiempo—que una virgen concebiría y daría a luz a un niño quien, por sí solo podría salvar a su pueblo de todos sus pecados—se materializa cuando María dice, "Yo soy la sierva del Señor. Hágase en mí según tu palabra" (Lc 1:38).

La colecta de este domingo expresa bellamente la forma en que nos sentimos al concluir esta época especial del año y esperamos con ansias la Navidad:

*Derrama tu gracia en nuestros
corazones, te lo suplicamos, Señor,
para que nosotros, a quienes la
Encarnación de Cristo tu Hijo se dio a
conocer por el mensaje de un ángel,
por su Pasión y su Cruz seamos
llevados a la gloria de su Resurrección.
Que vive y reina contigo en la unidad
del Espíritu Santo, un Dios, por los
siglos de los siglos.*

Tenemos una enorme deuda de gratitud con María de Nazaret, cuya humildad y simplicidad hicieron que se cumpliera el anhelo de la humanidad hace 2,000 años. Y como el Adviento espera la Segunda Venida de este mismo Dios encarnado, miramos con razón a María para que nos ayude a prepararnos para el regreso de su hijo en la gloria.

Al concluir este tiempo de preparación, recemos para que el ejemplo de María nos inspire a ser receptivos a la voluntad de Dios para nosotros. Que siempre digamos "sí" a los mensajeros de Dios que nos hablan en la oración, en la Sagrada Escritura y en nuestros encuentros con todo el pueblo de Dios. Y que el único hijo de Dios, el hijo de María, venga a nuestros corazones esta Navidad con abundantes regalos de perdón, paz y alegría. †

Events Calendar

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

December 18-23

Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. **BIG Sale in the Little Shop**, Mon.-Fri. 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Saturdays in Dec. 9 a.m.-noon, items marked 50% off original prices, mention seeing this in *The Criterion* and receive an additional 15% off your purchase of \$50 or more. Information: 317-788-7581.

December 27

Airing of "To Know Your Neighbor: Celebrating Religious Diversity in Indiana" documentary on WFYI Channel 20, sponsored by Center for Interfaith Cooperation, 4-5 p.m. Information: 317-318-5304.

2021

January 6

MCL Cafeteria, 5520 Castleton Corner Lane, Indianapolis. **Solo 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, provctr@spsmw.org.

January 20

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

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.

Our Lady of Peace Cemetery and Mausoleum, 9001 Haverstick Road, Indianapolis. **Monthly Mass**, 2 p.m. Information: 317-574-8898 or www.catholiccemeteries.cc.

February 3

MCL Cafeteria, 5520 Castleton Corner Lane, Indianapolis. **Solo 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 4

The Third Option virtual marriage crisis/enrichment 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: carmelthirddoption.org/web then click on link at top of page. Information: carmelthirddoption.org/web, or Keith Ingram, kingram@aicinest.com or 317-324-8446.

February 5

Women's Care Center, 4901 W. 86th St., Indianapolis. **First Friday Mass**, 5 p.m., optional tour of center to follow. Information: 317-829-6800, www.womenscarecenter.org.

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: 317-750-7309, msross1@hotmail.com.

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: 812-246-3522.

St. Michael Church, 145 St. Michael Blvd., Brookville. **First Saturday Marian Devotional Prayer Group**, Mass, 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, provctr@spsmw.org.

February 11

Sisters of Providence White Violet Center for Eco-Justice Virtual Workshop: Baking Sourdough Bread, via Zoom, 6:30-8 p.m., \$45 includes instruction materials and sourdough bread starter, register by Feb. 4. Registration and information: 812-535-2952, provctr@spsmw.org or www.spsmw.org/event.

The Third Option virtual marriage crisis/enrichment class

"Responsibility and Blame Game," 7-8 p.m., Thursdays bi-weekly through May 20, viewing all sessions recommended but not required, no registration needed, free. Log on: carmelthirddoption.org/web then click on link at top of page. Information: carmelthirddoption.org/web, or Keith Ingram, kingram@aicinest.com or 317-324-8446.

February 17

Calvary Mausoleum Chapel, 435 W. Troy Ave.,

Indianapolis. **Monthly Mass**, 2 p.m. Information: 317-784-4439 or www.catholiccemeteries.cc.

February 8

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.

Our Lady of Peace Cemetery and Mausoleum, 9001 Haverstick Road, Indianapolis. **Monthly Mass**, 2 p.m. Information: 317-574-8898 or www.catholiccemeteries.cc.

The Third Option virtual marriage crisis/enrichment 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: carmelthirddoption.org/web then click on link at top of page. Information: carmelthirddoption.org/web, or Keith Ingram, kingram@aicinest.com or 317-324-8446. †

Indianapolis St. Vincent de Paul Society creates virtual food drive

The Indianapolis St. Vincent de Paul Society has created a "virtual food drive" at cutt.ly/SVdPFoodOnline. 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@svdpindy.org. †



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

SVdP'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 support to help us serve those who are most in need. If you have questions, please contact philanthropy@svdpindy.org.

Try rotating your device for more product choices.



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

Retreats and Programs

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

December 26

Sisters of St. Francis, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **Audubon Bird Count**, 7:30 a.m.-1 p.m., meet at Michaela Farm, no experience necessary, \$10 for lunch. Information, registration: center@oldenburgosf.com or oldenburgfranciscancenter.org/programs.html.

December 28

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 m.facebook.com/pg/MountStFrancis.

2021

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 m.facebook.com/pg/MountStFrancis.

January 6

Oldenburg Franciscan Center,

22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **Contemplative Prayer**, 3-4:30 p.m., Franciscan Sister Olga Wittekind facilitating, freewill donation. Information, registration: center@oldenburgosf.com, oldenburgfranciscancenter.org/programs.

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, annual membership \$30 per person plus \$5 for each additional monthly session. Information, registration: 812-535-2952, provctr@spsmw.org, spsmw.org/event. †

Wedding

ANNIVERSARIES

55 Years



HARRY AND ROBERTA (BEUOY) 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 Runnebohm, Randi Terry and Wesley Steele.

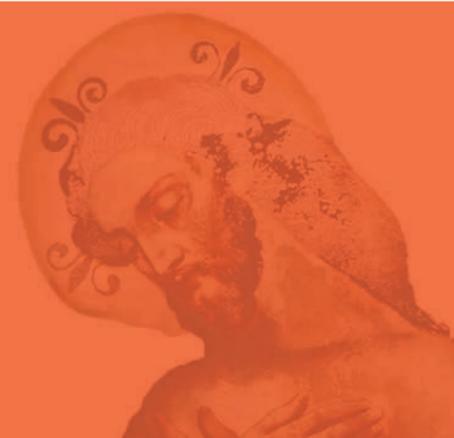
The couple also has nine grandchildren. †

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



The Face of Mercy

By Daniel Conway



Liturgical seasons remind us our God is the God of Peace

Advent is the season of expectation. During these four weeks 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." A peace that is false "is the peace of ignorance, the peace of feigned innocence that dances around difficulties, the peace of the rich man who ignores Lazarus." The illusion

of peace comes from self-deception, complacency and the sin of indifference. This is not true peace.

"True peace grows out of the tension between two contrary elements," the Holy Father tells us, "the acceptance of a present in which we recognize our weakness as sinners, and, at the same time, passing beyond the same present as if we were already freed from the burden of sin."

The peace of Christ (*Pax Christi*) includes the tension that exists between our present reality, which is always fraught with imperfection, and a future reality we are called to embrace—the reign of God which is in our midst now, but which will not be fully realized until Christ comes again at the end of time. In the meantime, we wait in joyful hope for the peace that Christ assures us is both with us now and yet to come.

"We are not talking about an easy peace, but rather a demanding one," Pope Francis teaches. "Peace does not eliminate fragility or deficiencies. This peace enables us to choose a state of life and to do God's will. It is not the peace the

world gives, but the peace of the Lord."

The Lord's peace is not complacent or indifferent. This is what Jesus means when he says: "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on Earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's foes will be those of his own household" (Mt 10:34-36).

This is the tension Pope Francis warns us about. Following Jesus, the Prince of Peace, is not easy. It means accepting our crosses in life, and it can mean suffering—even martyrdom—as we reject the ways of the world and strive to live the Beatitudes, the way of lasting peace. True peace can be unsettling, uncomfortable and even painful. It is a sword that cuts us off from selfishness and sin. But if we are patient, and persevere in following Christ, his peace will bring us lasting joy.

"Our God is the God of peace," the pope assures us. "He desired to give us this peace, by pacifying us in his Son, so

that we too would transmit it in turn, as the bond of communion that preserves unity."

The angels' song of peace, like the greeting of the risen Christ, is meant to comfort us in our anxiety and fear, but it is not false hope or empty promises. Because it is also a sword, the peace of Christ challenges us to let go of our illusions and 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 1:79], for all of us have been called to live in peace."

Come, O Prince of Peace. With St. Augustine, we pray: "Our heart is restless until it rests in you." 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")

El rostro de la misericordia/Daniel Conway

Los tiempos litúrgicos nos recuerdan que el nuestro es el Dios de la Paz

El Adviento es la temporada de la expectativa. Durante estas cuatro semanas antes de Navidad, esperamos la llegada del Príncipe de la Paz, y esperamos pacientemente a la Bendita Esperanza que ha prometido entrar en nuestros corazones una vez más.

La paz es el primer regalo de Navidad que se recibe. La noche en que nació nuestro Salvador en Belén, los ángeles se aparecieron a los humildes pastores y proclamaron: "paz entre los hombres de buena voluntad" (Lc 2:14).

La paz es también el primer regalo de la Pascua. Tal como el papa Francisco nos enseña, "El saludo de Cristo resucitado, 'la paz sea con ustedes' [Jn 20:19], es la consigna del triunfo definitivo. Participar en esta paz, recibirla, significa participar ya en la paz de la Resurrección."

La paz es un regalo de Dios para nosotros, sus hijos cansados, ansiosos y asustados. Pero el Papa advierte que "no debemos confundir la verdadera paz con la ilusión de la paz." Una paz falsa "es la paz de la ignorancia, la paz de la inocencia fingida que esquivo las dificultades, la paz del rico que ignora a Lázaro." La ilusión de la paz proviene

del autoengaño, la complacencia y el pecado de la indiferencia. Esta no es la verdadera paz.

"La verdadera paz nace de la tensión entre dos elementos contrarios," explica el Santo Padre, "la aceptación de un presente en el que reconocemos nuestra debilidad como pecadores y, al mismo tiempo, pasar más allá de ese mismo presente como si ya estuviéramos liberados de la carga del pecado."

La paz de Cristo (*Pax Christi*) incluye la tensión que existe entre nuestra realidad presente, que siempre está llena de imperfecciones, y una realidad futura que estamos llamados a acoger: el reino de Dios que está en medio de nosotros ahora, pero que no se perfeccionará hasta que Cristo vuelva al final de los tiempos. Mientras tanto, esperamos con alegre esperanza la paz que Cristo nos asegura que está con nosotros ahora y aún por venir.

"No hablamos de una paz sencilla, sino más bien exigente," aclara el Sumo Pontífice. "La paz no elimina la fragilidad o las deficiencias. Gracias a esta paz elegimos un estado de vida y podemos cumplir la voluntad de Dios. No es la paz que da el mundo, sino la paz del Señor."

La paz del Señor no es complaciente o indiferente. Esto es lo que Jesús quiere decir cuando afirma: "No penséis que vine a traer paz a la tierra; no vine a traer paz, sino espada. Porque vine a poner al hombre contra su padre, a la hija contra su madre, y a la nuera contra su suegra; y los enemigos del hombre serán los de su misma casa" (Mt 10:34-36).

Esta es la tensión de la que el papa Francisco nos advierte. Seguir a Jesús, el Príncipe de la Paz, no es fácil. Significa aceptar nuestras cruces en la vida, y puede implicar sufrimiento, incluso martirio, al rechazar los caminos del mundo y esforzarse por vivir las Bienaventuranzas, el camino de la paz duradera. La paz verdadera puede resultar inquietante, incómoda e incluso dolorosa ya que es una espada que nos aparta del egoísmo y el pecado. Pero si somos pacientes y perseveramos en el seguimiento de Cristo, su paz nos traerá una alegría duradera.

"Nuestro Dios es el Dios de la paz," nos asegura el Papa. "Él quiso darnos esta paz, pacificándonos en su Hijo, para que nosotros también la transmitamos, como el vínculo de comunión que

preserva la unidad."

El canto de paz de los ángeles, como el saludo de Cristo resucitado, está destinado a consolarnos en nuestra ansiedad y miedo, pero no es una falsa esperanza ni una promesa vacía. Porque también es una espada, la paz de Cristo nos desafía a dejar nuestras ilusiones y a acoger la verdad sobre nosotros mismos: que somos pecadores necesitados de la misericordia de Dios.

"El advenimiento de esta paz se dio a conocer a todos en la víspera de Navidad, y el eco de este anuncio resuena hasta el Domingo de Ramos," afirma el Santo Padre. "Se nos ha pedido que la busquemos y que encaminemos nuestros pies por caminos de paz [Lc 1:79], porque todos hemos sido llamados a vivir en paz."

Ven, oh Príncipe de la Paz. Con san Agustín, rezamos: "Nuestro corazón no tendrá sosiego hasta que descansa en ti." Y con el papa Francisco, rezamos: "Que esta paz guarde nuestros corazones y mentes, y nos inspire a buscar la paz con todos los hombres y mujeres."

(Daniel Conway es integrante del comité editorial de The Criterion.) †

Christmas tree farmers provide patrons with a religious encounter

By Katie Rutter

Catholic News Service

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. Barnabas 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. A homemade blue veil and tunic completed Alena’s portrayal of Mary, while feathery wings and a halo transformed her sister, Ava Beckwith, into an angel.

Kids also can take home crafts and have their hands painted -- an adaption of the usual face painting because of COVID-19.

Near the back of the property, families walked along Nativity Trail. Eight small wooden stations line a pathway through uncleared woods. Each station contains statues that depict part of the Christmas story, beginning with the Annunciation

and ending with the Holy Family’s flight to Egypt.

Information pamphlets at the beginning of the trail contain Scripture readings for each station.

“We still really enjoy watching the families go back” on the trail, Don Beckwith told Catholic News Service.

“One member of the family will read the Bible passages that go along with those scenes and it’s really heartfelt to watch that happen,” he said.

Picking out a live Christmas tree had been a family tradition for the Beckwiths, one they shared with friends of their children

and, eventually, their children’s spouses.

Planting their own tree farm seemed the natural way to continue sharing that tradition.

On Nov. 28, families zigzagged through the rows of pines, carefully selecting and cutting down the “perfect” tree. Often, each child would take a turn at the saw, or several siblings would use their collective strength to drag the evergreen to the car.

“It’s like team-building almost, but for the family, it brings everybody closer,” explained Peter Heugel, a member of St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis who was at



Dru, Alena and Ava Beckwith demonstrate the dress-up Nativity at Emmanuel Tree Farm in Trafalgar on Nov. 28, where young ones can don costumes and act out the holy scene. Their grandparents, Don and Karen Beckwith, want to use their Christmas tree business to evangelize. (CNS photo/Katie Rutter)

the farm to select a tree with his family.

For the Beckwiths, too, the business has turned into a team-building opportunity.

The owners’ two children, in-laws and five grandchildren all help to plant around 400 new pines each spring.

When the farm opens for the Christmas season, the whole crew turns out: family, friends, neighbors, even students from Roncalli High School, a Catholic school in Indianapolis where one of the Beckwiths work.

“Everybody’s included and gets a job, including the little ones,” said Karen Beckwith.

The teenagers prepared cut trees for customers: blowing off dry needles, drilling a hole in the stump and netting the branches securely.

Friends managed the children’s craft area and snapped photos for visitors. Karen Beckwith and other matrons sold decorations at small gift shop.

“Honestly, at 60-some years old, I never thought I would be working this hard in my retirement years,” Karen Beckwith said with a laugh.

“You just feel yourself drawn to the project. It was like we’re being guided. We’re not choosing this path necessarily all on our own,” Don Beckwith added.

For them, though, the journey is more than worth the effort.

“When it’s a hot day and I’m working, I picture a day like today when we have families coming out and spending time with their loved ones and sharing the story of the Christ child’s birth,” summarized Karen Beckwith.



Evan Schrader, a neighbor to the business owners and member of SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi Parish in Greenwood, prepares a Christmas tree for a customer at Emmanuel Tree Farm in Trafalgar on Nov. 28. Don and Karen Beckwith founded the farm in 2007 and include family, friends and neighbors in their business. (CNS photo/Katie Rutter)

“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 doesn’t hurt, either.

(Katie Rutter is a freelance writer and member of St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Bloomington. To watch a related video, go <https://cutt.ly/VhGw4WM>.)†



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.

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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. (CNS photo/Katie Rutter)

Doctrine committee sets standards for evaluating, improving Church hymns

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." It also said that the doctrine committee "is available for any bishop who desires assistance in the evaluation of hymns or hymnals."

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 formed by that sacrifice."

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.

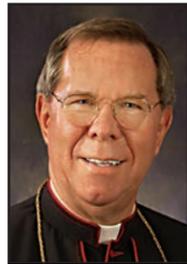
The report acknowledged several areas of doctrinal deficiency in some contemporary hymns and suggests two guidelines in "determining whether a hymn is doctrinally suitable for liturgical use":

- "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."



Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein

Archbishop 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 fail 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



Members of The Catholic University of America Chamber Choir sing during an Oct. 10, 2017, rehearsal at St. Vincent de Paul Chapel on the campus of the Washington university. 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. (CNS photo/Chaz Muth)

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." †



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CYO presents the St. John Bosco Medal, it's highest honor, to five individuals

Editor's note: On Oct. 22, the archdiocese's Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) presented the St. John Bosco Medal, its highest honor, to five individuals. Here are their stories.

Coach's focus on family and faith started with her dad

By John Shaughnessy

Joanie English became overwhelmed with emotion when she read the letter. The letter informed the mother of five boys that she was chosen for a 2020 St. John Bosco Award, the highest honor that the archdiocese's Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) gives—the same honor that her dad, Dick Kidwell, was scheduled to receive in 1977 before he died in a car accident.



Joanie English

"I was 14," recalls English, the ninth of her parent's 10 children. "My oldest brother received the award for my mom because she was too emotional to go up. That's why this is so heartfelt. It just brought back memories of him. I love my dad. I was just proud I received an award that he did. That's why I got so overwhelmed."

Following in her dad's footsteps, the 57-year-old English has coached for 35 years, including kickball, girls' soccer, boys' basketball and girls' volleyball. She has mostly coached at her home parish of Holy Name in Beech Grove, but she has also led teams at other parishes when they needed a coach.

She has also coached undefeated, championship teams, but she says her "most memorable and heartfelt" team was a girls' volleyball squad that finished with an 0-6 record for the season. She coached that St. Barnabas Parish team at the request of her brother Richie who said his daughter Casey—English's niece—"would love to be coached" by her aunt.

"It was fun," English recalls. "I just enjoyed the girls so much. I still keep in touch with them. That's one thing about CYO. You all end up being family."

English has helped create that extended CYO family by the approach she brings to the sports and the players. "I've always tried to develop every child and not just the athlete. CYO is about developing all of them, getting the best out of each child.

"My goal is to teach them not only to be a good athlete, but to let them know they are playing because of God's love. I try to have them be confident in themselves. I start out by telling them that I'll never be upset with them for making a mistake. It's always about looking

forward to the next play. It's all about learning to live and have fun."

English is still having fun after 35 years of coaching. "I love sports and being able to share my Catholic faith is important to me," says English, who has also been a referee for CYO volleyball for 20 years. "I love kids. I love people. That's my happy zone.

"After all these years, I'm most proud of my past players who come up and acknowledge that I've coached them, and that they're coaching now. CYO is all about faith and family. I'm honored to be a part of it." †

Award winner's biggest victory: leading others to Christ

By John Shaughnessy

When Scott Sanneman is asked about his favorite part of coaching, he says, "Honestly, the wins were pretty great."



Scott Sanneman

He then shares how he helped his son Shane and his friends to a Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) city championship in boys' basketball when he coached them in their eighth-grade year at St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis.

Still, the more Sanneman talks about the members of that team, the more it becomes clear that winning also has a deeper meaning for the father of three.

"It's fun when you can see a group of kids grow from going to kindergarten together, to see their relationships grow. I actually coached those same kids through high school in CYO. I still see some of them. It's interesting to hear them talk about what they're doing in their lives and that they want to tell you about it."

Building relationships is at the heart of Sanneman's life and his concept of "winning."

It's been there in his 23 years of coaching track, cross country, soccer and boys' and girls' basketball.

It's there in the time he served as the chairperson of St. Jude's youth commission, as a chaperone for the parish's teens at three National Catholic Youth Conferences (NCYC) in Indianapolis, and his involvement with parishioners in Christ Renew His Parish.

All that relationship-building has led to him becoming a recipient of a 2020 St. John Bosco Award, the highest honor the archdiocese's CYO gives its volunteers.

Sanneman is also clear that his main emphasis in relationship-building is deepening the one he has with Jesus and helping others do the same.

"I know him as the closest friend I have," he says.

"Growing up Catholic, you grow that relationship, but you may not be that close. Christ Renew His Parish challenges you to take it to a new level, to let Jesus be your friend, to lean on him when you're struggling. After attending Christ Renew His Parish, my faith grew a ton."

That's the hope he has for the players he coaches, the youths he chaperones, and for the children that he and his wife Wendy have—Madison, Shane and Tess.

"Just that they love Jesus," he says. "To me, that's the reason why you coach, why you do the things you do to help them go to NCYC.

"You want them to have that relationship with Jesus, that he is there for them at any time. You plant the seed and then Jesus and the Holy Spirit will help it grow. It's neat to see how the youths can grow in their faith, that they can share their faith with others." †

Coach wants to share family legacy with a new generation

By John Shaughnessy

When Joseph Schaefer received a 2020 St. John Bosco Award, he became the sixth member of his family to earn the highest honor given by the archdiocese's Catholic Youth Organization (CYO).

His grandfather won the award. So did a great-uncle, his father-in-law and an uncle. And Joe's dad, Steve Schaefer, was given the award posthumously in 2019 for his positive, faith-filled approach to coaching children in CYO sports.

"It's a very nice honor," Joe says. "It brought me back to being little again, when my dad was my coach. And it's made me think of all the years that I've coached."

Still, Joe insists that to focus on the family's tradition of winning an award is to miss the true legacy that has been handed down through the generations of his family.

"I saw how my parents were with their Catholic faith," says Joe, a member of St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis. "They were very much a man and woman of action. We struggled financially at times, but they had plenty of time to serve others. I feel I wanted to fulfill their legacy—showing our Catholic faith through our actions more than our words."

Joe has lived that legacy. Now 50, he has coached 60 seasons of sports in the past 28 years, leading CYO teams in boys' and girls' basketball, girls' kickball and girls' volleyball.

"As I've gotten older, the focus has shifted away from the wins and losses to developing relationships with the

players and relationships with the families. Developing those relationships with as many people as you can is what keeps you going."

That emphasis on relationships always leads him back to his dad, who was the best man at his wedding "and the best coach I ever had." Father and son also coached youth soccer together. Joe also savors coaching kickball with his wife, Kim, volleyball with his sister, Therese, and basketball with his close friend, Jeff Kirkhoff.

"Coaching my three children—Jack, Maddie and Mary—that was the most fulfilling part. By this point, I thought I'd be done. But I want to continue as long as I can."

He also hopes to instill that legacy of volunteering for the CYO into the younger generation that has benefitted from its programs.

Toward that goal, he has recruited a college student, Jeff Kirkhoff's son, Joe, to help him coach a boys' basketball team this year.

"As a 50-year-old guy, maybe my best way of helping the CYO now is as a mentor. I want to inspire the younger generation to take over the reins and help the CYO continue on." †

Volunteer seeks to create and capture a child's joy

By John Shaughnessy

John Smith has dedicated a lot of time and energy through the years in taking countless photographs of young people in action in sports and theater at Roncalli High School and St. Mark the Evangelist School, both in Indianapolis—photographs he makes available to families for free.

"I love seeing the kids smile," says Smith, a 2020 recipient of the St. John Bosco Award, the highest honor the archdiocese's Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) gives a volunteer. "I try to take unposed photos, just when they're natural, when you can see the joy on their face."

Still, the best image that Smith shares wasn't captured on his camera. Instead, it's in his mind, and he becomes emotional when he describes one of his favorite moments in coaching at St. Mark, where he has guided children in football, wrestling, basketball and track.

"I was coaching football, and one of the kids didn't play a lot. He never had played football before, but he wanted to play. We were in a playoff game and we were winning, but it was a close game—six points. We could

lose the game. I put him in at nose tackle, right over the center. And he jumped outside. I'm thinking, 'Oh, no, is this going to cost us?'"

"But he needs to play. He needs to have his moment. And the next play he did. He recovered a fumble, and we were able to run out the clock and win the game."

It's one of those moments that's insightful about a person—in this case, Smith as a coach.

"I had a really good time when I played sports," says the father of three grown children. "I encouraged my kids to be involved in as many CYO sports as they could. Sports are good for you. They teach discipline, teamwork and how you need to put in the work to improve. You learn to lose with grace. You learn to win with humility."

Smith has also learned that he has needed the support of other people to put him in a position to impact the lives of youths. He credits the late Patrick Kennedy, his boss who died of COVID-19 earlier this year, for letting him adjust his schedule to coach, take photos and help lead a Boy Scouts troop.

Smith also sees all those volunteer efforts as a reflection of his desire to live his Catholic faith.

"I wasn't raised RCIA. I chose to be Catholic. I went through RCIA [Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults]. I felt like God gave me this opportunity, and I needed to do something with it.

"I've tried to give my time and whatever talent I have as a coach and a photographer. I felt I had the time to give these kids. That's what motivated me." †

Love for the game and her players guides award winner

By John Shaughnessy

Her intensity is on full display as she stomps, claps and yells to her players from the sidelines.

Her joy and playfulness shines through in the post-season awards she gives, such as the Cuisinart Award that she gave to one of her girls "because she mixed things up all the time, creating chaos on defense."

Those qualities all come together with the two main ingredients that Liz Turner Suscha brings to coaching—a love for her players and a love for the game of basketball.

"It's all done with love," says Turner Suscha, a recipient of a 2020 St. John Bosco Award, the



Liz Turner Suscha

CYO recognition highlights volunteer efforts of adults and youths

2020 St. John Bosco Award recipients

- Holy Name of Jesus in Beech Grove—*Joanie English*
- St. Barnabas Parish—*Joseph Schaefer*
- St. Jude Parish—*Scott Sanneman*
- St. Mark the Evangelist Parish—*John Smith*
- St. Thomas Aquinas Parish—*Liz Turner Suscha*

2020 Msgr. Albert Busald Award recipients

- Holy Spirit Parish—*Kevin Griffin, Joey Koontz and Penii Plunkett*
- Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ Parish—*Ali Leffler and Jay Scheil*
- Our Lady of Lourdes Parish—*Nick Petrone and Roesmary Tudor*
- St. Barnabas Parish—*Mike Hegwood and Clint Meinerting*

- St. Christopher Parish—*Heather Newman*
- St. Jude Parish—*Jeff Gore*
- St. Mark the Evangelist Parish—*Julie Albertson, Chrissy Geier and Reggie Geier*
- St. Matthew the Apostle Parish—*Pete Berg*
- St. Pius X Parish—*Steven Douglas and Chris Scherrer*
- St. Thomas Aquinas Parish—*Lori Herrera and Thomas Mulhern*

2020 Spirit of Youth Award recipients

- Good Shepherd Parish—*Sarah Wulf*
- Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish—*Caroline Potts*
- Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ Parish—*Sydney Silcox and Jacob Sitzman*
- SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi Parish in Greenwood—*Alexandra Dafforn*
- St. Mark the Evangelist Parish—*Cassidy Cross and Olivia Hornek*

- St. Pius X Parish—*Nathaniel Hillenburg*
- St. Roch Parish—*Celeste Gorbail, Patrick Luttrell and Avery Schaub*
- St. Thomas Aquinas Parish—*Maggie Gonzalez, Gabriel Sommerkamp and Reilly Thomas*

2020 Edward J. Tinder Official of the Year Award

- St. Pius X Parish—*Carol Nungester*

Book sales will benefit CYO

As the executive director of the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, Bruce Scifres is offering his book *True Impact: 25 Short Stories and Insights That Inspire Transformational Leadership* as a fundraiser for the organization.

To order the book, visit the CYO's website at www.cyoarchindy.org. †



Pope Francis raises the Eucharist during a Mass marking the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican on Dec. 12. (CNS photo/Paolo Galosi, pool)

Mary is reminder of God's blessing, pope says on the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—The humble image of Our Lady of Guadalupe is a reminder of the gift of God's abundant blessings to all men and women, Pope Francis said.

By contemplating her, Christians can fully understand God's gift "in the abundance of his Son by nature and his mother by grace," the pope said in his homily during a Mass in St. Peter's Basilica on Dec. 12, the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

"This is the gift that God presents to us and has wanted to continuously highlight and reawaken throughout revelation," he said.

At the start of the Mass, the pope—dressed in white, the symbol of purity—made his way to a replica of St. Juan Diego's *tilma*, which bears the image of Mary,

who appeared to the indigenous saint in 1531.

With a choir singing a Marian hymn accompanied by a guitar, the pope stood before the image, bowing reverently and incensing it three times.

In his homily, the pope reflected on the Gospel reading from St. Luke, which recalled Mary's visit to her cousin Elizabeth.

The reading, as well as the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, offer a reflection of three realities in the lives of Christians: abundance, blessing and gifts, he said.

Unlike human beings, who "by our very nature, by our limitations" always "need comfortable quotas," he said, God "always offer himself in abundance" and "gives in abundance.

"Thinking about the mystery of Christmas, the Advent

liturgy takes much of this idea of abundance from the prophet Isaiah," the pope said. "Generosity can be—I like to think of it as—at least one 'limitation' that God has: the impossibility of giving himself in any way that isn't in abundance."

Recalling Elizabeth proclaiming Mary as "blessed among all women" (Lk 1:42), the pope said that it reflects the reality of blessing. "God's style is always to say 'good,'" while the devil's style is to curse others, be mean and be "unable to give oneself totally.

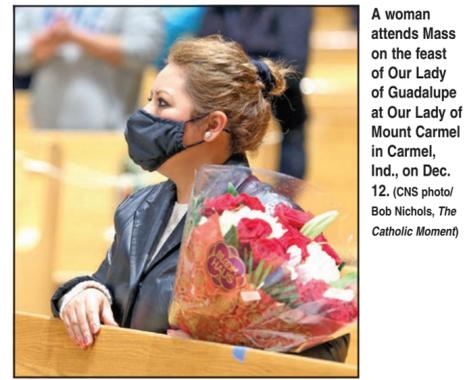
"God always is to say what is good. And he says it with pleasure, he says it by giving himself," he said. "He gives of himself in abundance by saying what is good, by blessing."

Pope Francis said that the final reality—the "gift"—is reflected in the coming of Christ, who was "given to us in the one who is 'full of grace.'"

By "contemplating the image of our mother today, we 'steal' from God a bit of this style that he has: generosity, abundance, blessing—never cursing—and transforming our life into a gift, a gift for all," the pope said. †



Even with pews marked off for social distancing and with everyone wearing masks as protection against the coronavirus, the faithful are treated to the sounds of Mariachi musicians during the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe celebration at Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Carmel, Ind., on Dec. 12. (CNS photo/Bob Nichols, The Catholic Moment)



A woman attends Mass on the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe at Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Carmel, Ind., on Dec. 12. (CNS photo/Bob Nichols, The Catholic Moment)

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, Conventual Franciscan Father Pius Poff, agrees. The priest said the more than 400 families of the parish form a “close-knitted 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 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 to the mission parish 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 traveled there to celebrate the sacraments.

Construction on a new church began in 1890.

As their parents and grandparents did four and a half decades earlier, parishioners felled trees for the structure from their own properties, although this time the trees were milled into lumber.

On Sept. 8, 1891, 46 years to the day of St. Mary’s founding, Mass was celebrated

in the new church. It was where Kiesler’s father was baptized in 1893, and it still serves the faith community today.

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 to 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-1950s. 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, 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



Parishioners pose in their horse-drawn wagons in front of St. Mary Church in Navilleton in this photo from 1900, nine years after the structure was built. The church looks much the same today. (Submitted photo)

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 didn’t even have the chance to make any plans.”

With the church capacity limited to 60 per social distancing guidelines, even a



Conventual Franciscan Father Pius Poff, pastor of St. Mary Parish in Navilleton, poses in the church’s sanctuary with Ashlyn Waterbury, left, Ethan Easton, Jarrett Jacobi and James Pierce, the parish’s 2019 graduating seniors. (Submitted photo)

special Mass is not possible until safety restrictions are lifted.

“Hopefully, we’ll be able to have a Mass and dinner next year,” he said, “even if it’s on our 176th anniversary!”

Didat regrets that such a significant anniversary “was overshadowed by the [COVID-19] pandemic.”

Nevertheless, he finds the milestone “very exciting.”

“I grew up here. I got all my sacraments here,” he reflected.

“I think of the few massive families that started the parish, and the large, core group of families in the 1960s and 1970s that helped us get to 175 [years]. It makes you feel very rooted.”

As for the parish physical growth, 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.

“And 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.” †

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Challenging Exodus 90 program draws men closer to God and vocation

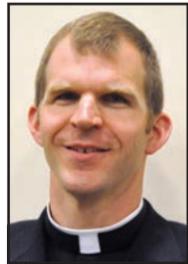
By Sean Gallagher

The Bible's Book of Exodus tells the story of how God liberated his chosen people from slavery in Egypt, created an eternal covenant with them and set them on the path to freedom in the promised land.

Although the events of Exodus took place more than 3,000 years ago, it continues to lie at the heart of both the Jewish and Christian faiths.

In recent years, it's also inspired the creation of a 90-day spiritual program, Exodus 90, designed to liberate men from tendencies and habits in today'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



Fr. Jonathan Meyer

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 awakened to their true callings as husbands,

fathers and men of the parish in a pretty profound way," said Father Meyer. "It's inspiring to see them so alive."

Father Meyer and many others 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 holy hour and to read provided Scripture passages and reflections.

Asceticism is the practice of self-denial that has been part of the spirituality of the Church, many other faith traditions and secular philosophies. In Exodus 90, it fosters detachment from the things of this world in order to open men more to God,

helping them, according to its website, turn away "from that which will never truly satisfy, to the only one who does."

Among the ascetic practices that are part of Exodus 90 are short, cold showers, regular intense 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 fraternity. Each participant meets for about an hour each week with a group of five to seven men who are also taking part in the program. Each man also pairs up with another man in the program to serve as "anchors" for each other, checking in with 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 said the ascetic practices almost kept him from doing it the first time.



Joe Reitz

"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 Lafayette 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 be so much more than sometimes we realize. Exodus 90 helped me prioritize my faith as truly the most important thing in my life."

Matt Faley, director for the archdiocesan secretariat for pastoral ministries, participated in Exodus 90 in 2018 and found the fraternity in it crucial to continuing the program when facing its daily challenges.



Matt Faley

"It was a gift to have other men journeying with me chasing after the same things," Faley said. "That was what helped me push through when it seemed easy to give in. Knowing that there were a group of guys struggling through the same thing and not choosing the easy road helped me grow a heart for the sacrifices associated with Exodus 90."

Dave Olecki, a member of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Parish in Indianapolis, agrees.

"Honestly, the fraternity of brothers that walk with you on this journey is the best part," Olecki said. "Thanks to Exodus 90, I met eight of the greatest men that I have ever met that truly inspired and showed me how to become a better Catholic, husband and father."

Nearly three years after participating in the program, Olecki continues to see its benefits in his daily life.

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

Fellow Holy Rosary parishioner Joshua Haywood appreciated Exodus 90's balance between the spiritual and physical aims of the program when he took part in it earlier this year.

"Reading and reflecting on Bible passages and spending time in daily prayer can provide a focus to life that can be all too easily lost," Haywood

said. "A participant's vocation and many relationships can benefit from such focus and the lessons learned.

"Likewise, with regular physical activity being a big part of the program, a participant's physical health improves to the benefit of other aspects of his life."

More than 30,000 men have participated in Exodus 90 since it 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 mission. "It's not for all men at every point in their life.



Nathaniel Binversie

"However, if you're ready to experience freedom from things you don't even know you're attached to [your ego, your phone, your work] if you're ready to

do the Lord's will, if you're ready to 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.) †

EXODUS

Bishops: Getting COVID-19 vaccine is 'act of charity,' supports common good

WASHINGTON (CNS)—The "gravity" of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and "the lack of availability of alternative vaccines," are "sufficiently serious" reasons to accept the Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna vaccines, the chairmen of the U.S. bishops' doctrine and pro-life committees said on Dec. 14.

"Receiving the COVID-19 vaccine ought to be understood as an act of charity toward the other members of our community," they said. "In this way, being vaccinated safely against COVID-19 should be considered an act of love of our neighbor and part of our moral responsibility for the common good."

The bishops addressed the moral concerns raised by the fact the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines have some connection to cell lines that originated with tissue taken from abortions.

However, this connection to morally compromised cell lines is so remote and the public health situation is too grave to reject the vaccines, said Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Ind., chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Committee on Doctrine, and Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City, Kan., chairman of the USCCB's Committee on Pro-Life Activities.

Late on Dec. 11, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) gave emergency-use approval to the Pfizer vaccine, with approval 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 arriving on Dec. 14.

Each state has a distribution plan for administering them. National guidelines call for health care workers and those in nursing homes and long-term care facilities to be first in line to get immunized.

On Dec. 8, *The Lancet* medical journal reported that four clinical trials of a third vaccine, being developed by the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca "appears to have moderate efficacy in preventing symptomatic illness, and may significantly reduce hospitalization from the disease." AstraZeneca is expected to apply to the FDA for emergency use of its vaccine in the coming weeks.

Bishop Rhoades and Archbishop Naumann said they found the AstraZeneca vaccine to be "more morally compromised," and concluded this vaccine "should be avoided" if there are alternatives available.

"It may turn out, however, that one does not really have a choice of vaccine, at least, not without a lengthy delay in immunization that may have serious consequences for one's health and the health of others," the two prelates stated. "In such a case ... it would be permissible to accept the AstraZeneca vaccine."

Shortly after Pfizer and Moderna announced on Nov. 11 and on Nov. 16, respectively, 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 Rhoades 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 new lengthy statement, the two committee chairmen emphasized that any such cell lines were derived from tissue samples taken from fetuses aborted in the 1960s and 1970s and have been grown in laboratories all over the world since then.

"It is important to note that the making of the rubella vaccine—or that of the new COVID-19 vaccines—does not involve cells taken directly from the body of an aborted child," Bishop Rhoades and Archbishop Naumann said. "Cells taken from two abortions in the 1960s were replicated in a laboratory to produce two cell lines that can be reproduced again and again, indefinitely.

"To make the rubella vaccine, cells from these cell lines are stimulated to produce the chemicals necessary for the vaccine," they explained. "It is not as if the making of the vaccine required ever more cells from ever more abortions."

The two committee chairmen said the Vatican, through the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Pontifical Academy for Life, "has offered guidance on the question of whether it is morally acceptable to receive a vaccine that has been created with the use of morally compromised cell lines."

Both the congregation and the academy "emphasize the positive moral obligation to do good," they said, "and in so doing to distance oneself as much as possible from

the immoral act of another party such as abortion in order to avoid cooperation with someone else's evil actions and to avoid giving scandal, which could happen if one's own actions were perceived by other people to ignore or to minimize the evil of the action.

"Our love of neighbor should lead us to avoid giving scandal, but we cannot omit fulfilling serious obligations such as the prevention of deadly infection and the spread of contagion among those who are vulnerable just to avoid the appearance of scandal," the two prelates said.

At the same time, the bishops also cautioned Catholics against complacency about the moral issue of abortion and ethical issues surrounding the development of some vaccines.

"While having ourselves and our families immunized against COVID-19 with the new vaccines is morally permissible and can be an act of self-love and of charity toward others, we must not allow the gravely immoral nature of abortion to be obscured," Bishop Rhoades and Archbishop Naumann said.

"It is true that one can receive benefits from an evil action in the past without intending that action or approving of it. The association with the evil action that comes with receiving benefits from that evil action, however, can have a corrupting influence on one's perception of the evil action, making it more difficult to recognize it as evil," they explained.

"One might become desensitized to the gravely evil nature of that action. One might become complacent about that action and ignore the obligation to do what one can to oppose the evil action," they said, adding that others might see "one's acceptance of benefits from an evil action" and feel the action isn't really evil, feel less urgency "to oppose that evil" or even miss opportunities to do what they can "to oppose it."

"We should be on guard so that the new COVID-19 vaccines do not desensitize us or weaken our determination to oppose the evil of abortion itself and the subsequent use of fetal cells in research," Bishop Rhoades and Archbishop Naumann said.

(The full text of Bishop Rhoades and Archbishop Naumann's statement can be found online at <https://www.usccb.org/moral-considerations-covid-vaccines>.) †

Pope's pandemic year in review: Prayer, online meetings, hopes for change

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 liminas," he began talking about the importance of bishops being close to one another. Several bishops said the admonition was a recognition of how election-year political divisions in the U.S. risked dividing U.S. Catholics as well.

The topics in the "ad limina" conversations with the pope included: the clerical sexual abuse scandal; youth

and young adult ministry; being joyful witnesses of the Gospel; creating a more welcoming environment for migrants and refugees; abortion and the sanctity of all human life; racism; safeguarding the environment; the growing Spanish-speaking Catholic population; and the importance of Catholic schools.

And, repeatedly, U.S. bishops asked the pope to release, as promised, a report on how Theodore E. McCarrick managed to rise to the position of cardinal and archbishop of Washington despite decades of rumors of sexual misconduct. The report finally was released on Nov. 10.

Also in the pre-pandemic period, Pope Francis released "Querida Amazonia," his apostolic exhortation reflecting on themes discussed during the 2019 Synod of Bishops for the Amazon. Some people were hoping or fearing that he would mention the idea of ordaining married men to the priesthood so that far-flung Catholic communities would have regular access to the Eucharist.

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 create jobs and 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



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)

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. †



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In the spirit of St. Francis, we wish you all the joys and blessings of the Advent and Christmas seasons! Thank you!

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Faith *Alive!*

A supplement to Catholic newspapers published by Catholic News Service, 3211 Fourth Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20017-1100. All contents are copyrighted © 2020 by Catholic News Service.

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 call off Christmas!"

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.



A glass Nativity set catches the sun in a display area at the home of Shirley Squires of Guilford, Vt. Families can decorate for Christmas incrementally. They can wait to place Jesus in the manger until Christmas Eve, and have the Wise Men "travel" closer to the Nativity set each day until the feast of the Epiphany. (CNS photo/Cori Fugere Urban, Vermont Catholic)

Tune in for the "urbi et orbi" blessing

Remember that very moving extraordinary blessing "urbi et orbi" (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 current—"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 baby 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 Eve, but as far away 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*.) †



An angel played by second-grader Sarah Glazier visits Mary and Joseph at the end of "The Living Creche," a Christmas production presented by students at St. Rita School in Webster, N.Y. While living Nativities may not happen in schools or churches this year due to the coronavirus pandemic, families can organize living Nativity plays at home. (CNS photo/Mike Crupi, Catholic Courier)

Corrections Corner/Tom Elliott

Inmate's immersion into Christmas play is a lesson in rebirth

Christmas in prison can often be tough on an inmate, as I know firsthand.

Like most people in prison at this time of the year, my thoughts would naturally turn to family, friends and joyous times. Separation from family and friends, however, made Christmas time an emotional rollercoaster. I would try to reminisce about the friends and family with whom I had created lifelong memories—some of whom had passed from this world. This would start the grieving process all over again, recalling the good times, lamenting the new times I was missing out on, and regretting the criminal act for which I was serving my debt to society.



As a repeat offender, I had lost most of my family and friends. The sadness and loneliness could at times become paralyzing. Hate, anger, dislike for myself, the situation I created for my family and the wrong I committed against the community would become overwhelming. I grew tired of being stuck in the past. Christmas is supposed to be a time of rebirth. Why could it not be for me also?

Thanks to a “relentless hound”—Benedictine Father Jeremy King—to whom I will be eternally grateful, I experienced rebirth within the Church through baptism. After baptism, the single factor that had the biggest impact on my Christian growth was a Christmas play directed by some wonderful volunteers that I became involved with during my last two years in prison. Very quickly this play became for me “the greatest story ever told.”

I stopped grieving and started changing my life into something better. Those last two Christmases became the best I had ever experienced. I opened myself up to others. I found great support in this new community, which in turn inspired in me an unshakable belief in the possibility of my own success. I stopped being angry at myself and the world. I began to feel the joy of Christmas: Love.

Now outside, this is my third Christmas enjoying a changed heart, under the watchful support of my Church and newfound community. I can only thank our merciful God and the wonderful people who have been so instrumental in my own rebirth, made possible for me once I completely immersed myself in “the Christmas Story.”

(Tom Elliott is a member of Annunciation Parish in Brazil.) †

Faith and Family/Sean Gallagher

Parenting is an act of faith renewed daily

Parenting is an act of faith renewed every day. Catholic mothers and fathers place their trust in God day after day,



from the moment they discover that they have been blessed with a new life until well after he or she has left home.

Faith is crucial to parenting because parents so often never really know for sure

if the essential lessons about life that they try to pass on to their children have taken hold.

From time to time, parents are blessed with moments when their children open their hearts and show that those lessons have taken root there.

That happened to me recently as I read to my 11-year-old son Philip at bedtime. We were just starting J.R.R. Tolkien's *Fellowship of the Ring*.

The character Bilbo, a “hobbit” in Tolkien's fantasy world of Middle Earth, was leaving his home for good on a journey at the end of a very long life when his wizard friend Gandalf reminded him of his decision to leave behind his magical ring that made him invisible when wearing it.

Bilbo resented the reminder and began talking of taking the ring with him.

“You will be a fool if you do. Bilbo,” Gandalf said. “You make that clearer with every word you say. It has got far too much hold on you. Let it go! And then you can go yourself, and be free.”

Bilbo retorted obstinately, “I'll do as I choose and go as I please.”

After I read that interchange, I paused and began to explain to Philip how it was an example of two different ways of understanding freedom.

I hadn't gotten far, though, when Philip took over and said that real freedom was doing what a person should do and not simply the ability to do whatever one wants to do. He said it with much more eloquence than my short summary.

As Philip went on, I took in his words with wonder. When he was finished, I looked at him with love, paused, and said, “Philip, if you live your life this way, you'll be a happy man.”

Not too long afterwards, I came back to Earth, remembering that Philip will face daily temptations to live according to Bilbo's understanding of freedom and will often give in to those temptations. Why do I know that? Because these two views on freedom continue to battle within me day after day.

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 his adopted son.

Joseph and Mary began their lives as parents of Jesus with acts of faith. Mary expressed her trust in God when she told the angel, “Let it be done to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38). Joseph did so in his immediate obedience to an angel's command to take Mary into his home as his wife, even after he was convinced to “divorce her quietly” (Mt 1:19).

Even though they were both promised that the child to be born was the Son of God, Joseph and Mary had to renew their acts of faith again and again when they experienced so many hardships at the time of Jesus' birth—from his being born in a stable to having to flee to Egypt from Herod's soldiers.

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. †

That All May Be One/Fr. Rick Ginther

Virtual events to highlight religious diversity in Indiana

Virtual reality has become reality, it would seem—ecumenically and inter-religiously! Two such virtual events are coming our way here in central and southern Indiana.

The first is a documentary: “To Know Your Neighbor—Celebrating Religious Diversity in Indiana.” A co-production of the Center for Interfaith Cooperation and WFYI-TV Channel 20, it will air at 4 p.m. on Dec. 27 on WFYI.

The documentary will explore religious diversity in our community.

There are more than 10 unique faith traditions and a myriad of religious denominations that call central Indiana home.

These many beautiful faiths, traditions, cultures and communities combine to make central Indiana vibrant and diverse.

Jill Ditmire of WFYI and Charlie Wiles, CEO of the Center for Interfaith Cooperation, will co-host. Viewers will be exposed to a montage of varied interreligious gatherings, local sacred worship sites and interviews with respective religious leaders.

It will be a “packed” one hour worth viewing.

The second virtual event is the 2021 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Service. Filmed on location at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis, this annual service will bring together many of the leaders of varied Christian denominations.

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson will be the primary presider as well as preacher for this year's service. Music will be provided by Andrew Motyka, director of archdiocesan and cathedral liturgical music.

The prayer service will be available online through a variety of denominational websites. The connection for Catholics will be through the archdiocesan Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs' web page, www.archindy.org/ecumenism, and the website for Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Indianapolis, www.ollindy.org/church-home.

Worship and Evangelization Outreach/Erin Jeffries

O Antiphon prayers remind us of the coming of the Prince of Peace

Dec. 17 began a period of heightened anticipation in our Advent season. One of the ways we sense this growing

expectation is in the Liturgy of the Hours. The O Antiphon prayers are chanted or recited at Vespers (evening prayer), prior to the *Magnificat*. These 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 experiences of anticipation, invitation, longing, and even crying out. In Advent in a particular way, we make our own the anticipation of God's people, waiting for a savior, that began with Adam and Eve.

The longing and urgency feels 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 giving up the joy of Jesus' coming for something of our own making, which will never last.

As a way of entering 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.ibreviary.com/m2/breviario.php as well as on a few different apps on your phone. But if that is not feasible, here are some of the O Antiphons you can use for reflection.

O Wisdom, O holy Word of God, you govern all creation with your strong yet gentle care. Come and show your people the way to salvation.

O Key of David, O royal Power of Israel, controlling at your will the gate of heaven: come, break down the prison walls of death for those who 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 verses of the 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 at our recent Advent gathering for adults with disabilities were quick to point out that Jesus is already here, within us. And because he is within us, we can bring him to others, and all of us could think of times when others were Jesus to us. They suggested we do this by taking care of each other, forgiving and being forgiven, being present to one another and volunteering. So in the words of a song we shared during our retreat “Let there be peace, let it start in me.”

(Erin Jeffries is the coordinator of Ministry to Persons with Special Needs in the archdiocesan Office of Catechesis. She can be reached at 317-236-1448 or erjeffries@archindy.org.) †



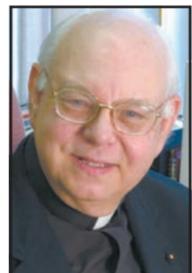
Fourth Sunday of Advent/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

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 a single 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 upon David 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 of the 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 great imperial capital, had within its borders a great array of ideas and religions, Christianity among them.

In this weekend's reading, as often elsewhere, Paul asserts his vocation as an Apostle. His vocation from God came so that "all the Gentiles" might believe in, and obey, God, "who alone is wise" (Rom 16:26-27).

For the final reading this weekend, the Church proclaims a beautiful passage from the infancy narrative of St. Luke's Gospel. It is the story of the annunciation,

the event when the angel Gabriel came into the presence of Mary, a young Jewish woman in Nazareth in Galilee, to inform her that she would be the mother of the long-awaited Redeemer.

The reading abounds with meaning. Luke makes clear that Mary was a virgin, and that the conception of the Redeemer would not be the result of any human relationship. Behind this fact is the reality that God, as Creator and the provider of order to the universe, can do anything. He is almighty. The Redeemer will be the Son of God. He will be David's successor.

The Redeemer's coming will fulfill God's promises, spoken by the prophets all through the ages, to bring life and salvation to the people. The birth of this Redeemer will be the ultimate fulfillment of the ancient covenant.

Vital to the message of the story is Mary's response. "I am the maidservant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say" (Lk 1:38).

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 factor 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 helpless 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. †

My Journey to God

Christmas Faith

By Sister Susan Lindstrom, O.S.B.

Mary and Joseph,
 quarantined in a tiny stable,
 far from friends and family
 and the support of the familiar,
 trusted in the memory of angel-whispers,
 the promise of the birth
 of Emmanuel,
 an event that would forever change
 the sense of what was normal
 as God took up residence among God's people.
 We are still touched
 by the ripples of that cosmic birth,
 of the gift of a Messiah who walked the Earth
 and taught us how to live and love
 and trust in the in-between times.



(Benedictine Sister Susan Lindstrom is a member of the Benedictine Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove. Art: The "Adoration of the Shepherds" is pictured in this painting by Italian artist Guido Reni. The feast of the Nativity of Christ, a holy day of obligation, is celebrated on Dec. 25.) (CNS/Bridgeman Images)

Daily Readings

Monday, December 21

St. Peter Canisius, priest and doctor of the Church
Song of Songs 2:8-14
 or *Zephaniah 3:14-18a*
Psalm 33:2-3, 11-12, 20-21
Luke 1:39-45

Titus 2:11-14
Luke 2:1-14

Dawn
Isaiah 62:11-12
Psalm 97:1, 6, 11-12
Titus 3:4-7
Luke 2:15-20

Tuesday, December 22

1 Samuel 1:24-28
 (Response) *1 Samuel 2:1, 4-7, 8abcd*
Luke 1:46-56

Day
Isaiah 52:7-10
Psalm 98:1-6
Hebrews 1:1-6
John 1:1-18
 or *John 1:1-5, 9-14*

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

Saturday, December 26

St. Stephen, the first martyr
Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59
Psalm 31:3cd-4, 6-8b, 16bc, 17
Matthew 10:17-22

Thursday, December 24

2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16
Psalm 89:2-5, 27, 29
Luke 1:67-79

Sunday, December 27

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph
Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14
 or *Genesis 15:1-6; 21:1-3*
Psalm 128:1-5
 or *Psalm 105:1-6, 8-9*
Colossians 3:12-21
 or *Colossians 3:12-17*
 or *Hebrews 11:8, 11-12, 17-19*
Luke 2:22-40
 or *Luke 2:22, 39-40*

Vigil of the Nativity of the Lord

Isaiah 62:1-5
Psalm 89:4-5, 16-17, 27, 29
Acts 13:16-17, 22-25
Matthew 1:1-25
 or *Matthew 1:1:18-25*

Friday, December 25

The Nativity of the Lord
 Christmas Night
Isaiah 9:1-6
Psalm 96:1-3, 11-13

See READINGS, page 19

Question Corner/Fr. Kenneth Doyle

Church teaching on purgatory has basis in sacred Scripture

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)



This is a question I am 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 Mc 12:39-46), Judas Maccabeus prays for his fallen comrades who had died in battle while wearing amulets dedicated to pagan idols.

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 could still 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 God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven" (#1030).

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 Communion, people returned to their pews and knelt until the Communion vessels were cleaned and the priest and deacon had returned to their chairs. Then there followed a few moments of quiet reflection.

At the second church, everyone remained 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)

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: "The period of sacred silence should begin 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 said 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 Columbia Circle Dr., Albany, New York 12203.) †

Rest in peace

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

AMBURGEY, Debra (Wells), 66, All Saints, Dearborn County, Dec. 4. Mother of Samantha Peddepohl, James and Shane Amburgey. Sister of Sharon Beiersdorfer, Chuck, Cliff and Jim Wells. Grandmother of two.

BECKMAN, Anna Marie, 56, St. Pius X, Indianapolis, Nov. 27. Wife of William Beckman, Jr. Daughter of Frank and Susan DeLisle. Sister of Theresa Holland,

James and Patrick DeLisle. Aunt of several.

BRODERICK, Richard T., 85, St. Luke the Evangelist, Indianapolis, Nov. 30. Husband of Cathryn Broderick. Father of Karen Green, Adam, Kevin, Michael and Tom Broderick. Brother of Ray Broderick. Grandfather of 13.

BUCHMAN, Jerome A., 77, St. Malachy, Brownsburg, Dec. 7. Husband of Cecilia Buchman. Father of Jennifer Gentry and Anthony Buchman. Brother of Joan Faust, James and John Buchman. Grandfather of two.

CLEMENTS, Reba H., 81, St. Anne, New Castle, Dec. 1. Wife of William Clements. Mother of Denise Burke, Donna York, Diana, Donald and Robert Clements. Sister of Rosie Bidwell. Grandmother of 13. Great-grandmother of 11.

COOK, Wilmont, 76, St. Michael, Greenfield, Dec. 6. Wife of Bill Cook. Mother of Christina Davis and Andrea Smitty. Sister of Rosemarie Johnson and James Kaululauu Wright.

CROWL, Dick, 88, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Richmond, Dec. 3. Husband

of Vera Crowl. Father of David and Gordon Crowl. Grandfather of eight. Great-grandfather of eight.

FLETCHER, Mark, 74, St. Lawrence, Lawrenceburg, Nov. 28. Father of Mary Lewis, Elizabeth Olhant and William Fletcher. Brother of Gail Soft. Grandfather of 11.

GRAY, Jr., John B., 85, St. Luke the Evangelist, Indianapolis, Nov. 26. Husband of Carolyn Gray. Father of Cathy Bertling. Grandfather of three.

HEIDELBERGER, Richard, 91, SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi, Greenwood, Nov. 15. Husband of Rosemary Heidelberg. Father of Chris Wise, Dan, Dave, Dennis, Mark and Mike Heidelberg. Brother of Roseann Acker. Grandfather of 18. Great-grandfather of 24.

HELLMICH, William A., 87, St. Mary, Greensburg, Dec. 3. Father of Dana Lowien, Melinda Rushing, Sandra Sandefur, Nanci and Todd Hellmich. Brother of Anna Hall, Carl and Jim Hellmich. Grandfather of 10. Great-grandfather of seven.

HOLLCRAFT, Janet S., 77, St. Roch, Indianapolis, Dec. 6. Mother of Anna Harris,



People enjoy a snowy day on Feldberg Mountain in Schmitten, Germany, on Dec. 9. (CNS photo/Kai Pfaffenbach, Reuters)

Andy, Anthony, Chris, John, Matthew and Phil Hollcraft. Grandmother of 15. Great-grandmother of two.

KAPPES, John W., 70, St. Vincent de Paul, Shelby County, Dec. 2. Husband of Barbara Kappes. Father of Martina Dellinger and Rachele Richards. Grandfather of two.

KOCH, Helen A., 97, St. Louis, Batesville, Dec. 2. Mother of Donna Borgman, Debbie Caudill, Janet McQueen, Bill, Dennis and Rick Koch. Sister of Rita Manovey. Grandmother of 19. Great-grandmother of 48. Great-great-grandmother of one.

LEWIS, Norman, 72, St. Bartholomew, Columbus, Nov. 14. Husband of Linda Lewis. Father of Laura Nelson and Kelly Sims. Brother of Jeff and Richard Lewis. Grandfather of five.

OLIVER, Robert, 74, St. Michael the Archangel, Indianapolis, Nov. 29. Husband of Barbara Oliver. Father of Brian and Christopher Oliver. Brother of Patty Enders, Barbara Marquis, Susan Oslos, Joseph and Thomas Oliver. Grandfather of two.

PFEIFER, Wayne J., 65, St. Jude, Indianapolis, Nov. 26. Brother of Sue Ann Delaney, Therese Schoettle and Larry Pfeiffer. Uncle of several.

PFENNINGER, Marcelle M., 95, St. Charles Borromeo, Bloomington, Nov. 29. Mother of Jeanne Childs, Anne and Margaret Pfenninger. Grandmother of four. Great-grandmother of two.

RAVENNA, James E., 89, St. Vincent de Paul, Bedford, Dec. 2. Husband of Beulah Ravenna. Father of Luanne, Anthony and Chris Ravenna. Brother of Mary Lou Elchynski and Paul Ravenna.

RUPP, Timothy S., 49, Immaculate Conception, Millhousen, Dec. 6. Son of Sharon Rupp. Brother of Nicole Johannigman, Georgia West, Sarah, Joe and John Rupp.

SHELBY, Carolyn R., 89, St. Mary, Greensburg, Dec. 4. Mother of Sandra McLean, Donald, II, and Timothy Shelby. Sister of Margaret Haylin. Grandmother of three. Great-grandmother of six. Great-great-grandmother of two.

SINGER, Helen, 95, St. Elizabeth of Hungary,

Cambridge City, Dec. 3. Mother of Janet Creech, Teresa Grimes and Veleta Sue Meyer. Grandmother of 16. Great-grandmother and great-great-grandmother of several.

STENGER, Rita (Glaub), 89, All Saints, Dearborn County, Nov. 26. Mother of Cindy Morse, Randy, Rick and Russell Stenger. Grandmother of 13. Great-grandmother of 10.

WESSELER, Janet, 80, All Saints, Dearborn County, Dec. 3. Wife of Bernard Wesseler. Mother of Anita Boppeler, Lori Sweeney, Connie and Bernie Wesseler. Sister of Cheryl Wilhelm, John and Ron Dudley. Grandmother of five. Great-grandmother of three.

YEAGY, Hal R., 63, St. Roch, Indianapolis, Nov. 19. Husband of Carol Yeagy. Father of Erika Biddix, Alecia Coss, Kari and Brian Yeagy and Josh Caplinger. Grandfather of 11.

ZOBEL, Edward O., 93, St. Vincent de Paul, Shelby County, Nov. 30. Father of Jonell Frankowski, Jaleen Monroe, Doug, Ed, George and Mike Zobel. Brother of Kate Carpenter and Tom Zobel. Grandfather of 14. Great-grandfather of three. †

Providence Sister Betty Donoghue served in education and health care

Providence Sister Betty Donoghue (formerly Sister Clare Patrice), a member of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in St. Mary-of-the-Woods, died on Dec. 1 at Union Hospital 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 was born on June 5, 1937, in Melrose, Mass. She entered the Sisters of Providence on July 22, 1954, and professed final vows on Jan. 23, 1962.

Sister Betty earned a bachelor's degree in education at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College.

During her 66 years 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, supported and prayed 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 2002-20.

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

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 in St. Mary-of-the-Woods, died 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 Sept. 10, 1928, in Chelsea, Mass. She entered the Sisters of Providence on Feb. 11, 1948, and professed final vows on Aug. 15, 1955.

Sister Regis earned a bachelor's degree in education at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, and master's degrees in educational psychology at Boston College in Boston and counseling/psychology at Antioch University in Keene, N.H.

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, New Hampshire and North Carolina. After earning a certificate in counseling, she served for 20 years as a therapist and clinical supervisor at Beech Hill Hospital in Dublin, N.H., then as an adjunct professor at Antioch University before retiring to the motherhouse in 2012. Beginning in 2015, she committed herself entirely to prayer.

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, St. Mary-of-the-Woods, IN 47876. †

Providence Sister Margaret Nau served in schools, parishes and hospitals

Providence Sister Margaret Nau (formerly Sister Jude Ann), 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 order'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. 15, 1969.

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 Loyola University in Chicago.

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 in Terre Haute at the former Sacred Heart School from 1966-67 and at the former Archbishop Schulte High School from 1967-69. Sister Margaret also ministered at Our Lady of Providence High School in Clarksville from 1969-78.

After leaving education, 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 Paducah, Ky. and in Oak Lawn, Ill. Sister Margaret returned to the motherhouse in 2013 and dedicated herself entirely to prayer beginning in 2017.

She is survived by sisters Kathleen Cuffigan of Chicago, Mary Ann Johnson of Salisbury, 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, St. Mary-of-the-Woods, IN 47876. †

REPORT SEXUAL MISCONDUCT NOW

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

1 Ethics Point
Confidential, Online Reporting
www.archdioceseofindianapolis.ethicspoint.com or 888-393-6810

2 Carla Hill, Archdiocese of Indianapolis, Victim Assistance Coordinator
P.O. Box 1410, Indianapolis, IN 46206-1410
317-236-1548 or 800-382-9836, ext. 1548
carlahill@archindy.org

Online Lay Ministry Formation

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

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



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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 on 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 wavered on holding joy as my word during 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 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/CCF.) †

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 committed to leading others to him, Pope Francis said.

"The closer the Lord is to us, the more joy we feel; the farther away he is, the more sadness we feel. This is a rule for Christians," the pope said on Dec. 13, *Gaudete* Sunday.

Speaking to visitors in St. Peter's Square for the noon recitation of the *Angelus* prayer, Pope Francis told them, "Once a philosopher said something more or less like this: 'I do not understand how one can believe today, because those who say they

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 no joy?"

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

"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

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 pointed to Jesus, never to themselves.

"The Lord is always at the center," and the saints point to him, the pope said. "One 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 figurines from the Nativity scenes they are preparing to the Vatican for the pope's blessing.

After blessing the figurines, 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 1:5-2:2
Psalm 124:2-5, 7c-8
Matthew 2:13-18

Tuesday, December 29

Fifth 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
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 3:2-3a, 5-6
Matthew 2:1-12

Monday, January 4

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, religious
1 John 3:22-4:6
Psalm 2:7bc-8, 10-12a
Matthew 4:12-17, 23-25

Tuesday, January 5

St. John Neumann, bishop
1 John 4:7-10
Psalm 72:1-4, 7-8
Mark 6:34-44

Wednesday, January 6

St. André Bessette, religious
1 John 4:11-18
Psalm 72:1-2, 10, 12-13
Mark 6:45-52

Thursday, January 7

St. Raymond of Penyafort, priest
1 John 4:19-5:4
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 3:22-30

Sunday, January 10

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

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