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It's All Good
Look to God’s gifts, and your hearts will be full, page 12.

They make Christmas special for us

Sharing smiles and gifts, Patti Jensen and Helen Burke are among the Red Aprons core group of volunteers at the Christmas Store, the annual effort by Catholic Charities Indianapolis to make the holy day extra special for families in need. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)

Christmas Store gives the gift of joy to families—and the volunteers who make it happen

By John Shaughnessy

From her memory box at the Christmas Store, Stephanie Davis shares one of the best gifts she has ever received during this special season.

The unexpected gift came from a woman—a mother—who one year entered the Christmas Store, the annual effort by Catholic Charities Indianapolis to provide enough presents for economically struggling parents to make Christmas a warm and wonderful celebration for their children.

“We had a lady who kind of had a chip on her shoulder when she came in,” recalled Davis, the director of the Christmas Store and the Crisis Office for Catholic Charities Indianapolis. “You could tell she’s a person who struggles day to day. She thought she would be judged or criticized.

“When she left, she had tears in her eyes, knowing she could provide a great Christmas for her children. It’s nice to see Christmas give the gift of joy to families—and the volunteers who make it happen,” she continued.

Bishops’ excitement about eucharistic revival called ‘work of Holy Spirit’

ST. PAUL, Minn. (CNS)—The excitement the U.S. bishops showed in approving a three-year National Eucharistic Revival is "actually a real work of the Holy Spirit," said Bishop Andrew H. Cozzens.

The U.S. bishops approved plans for the revival during their fall general assembly on Nov. 15-18 in Baltimore. The revival is set to begin next June and will culminate in a National Eucharistic Congress hosted by the Archdiocese of Indianapolis on July 17-21, 2024.

Congress urged to pass Conscience Protection Act for health care workers

WASHINGTON (CNS)—U.S. Rep. Andy Harris, R-Md., has urged Congress to pass the Conscience Protection Act. It would amend the Public Health Service Act to prohibit government discrimination against health care providers who, on serious moral or religious grounds, strongly object to participating in medical procedures, including abortion.

Harris, a Catholic physician, reintroduced the measure on Nov. 19 and is one of 100 Republican lawmakers who support the bill.

Baltimore Archbishop William E. Lori, chairman of the U.S. bishops’ Committee on Pro-Life Activities, endorsed the measure.

According to Harris, the bill is needed because of various actions by the Biden administration, including its dismissal earlier this year of a government suit against a Vermont hospital for violating nurses’ objections, on moral grounds, to participating in abortion.

Harris said in a statement that, earlier this year, Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Xavier Becerra, who also is a Catholic, had made a commitment to him and U.S. Rep. Congressman Tom Cole, R-Okla., as members of the House Appropriations Committee, that “he would ensure the protection of the legal rights of conscience for providers—but sadly this has not occurred.”

To illustrate his point, Harris described how the Department of Justice in July "mysteriously dropped a lawsuit initially filed in 2020 against the University of Vermont Medical Center after they were found to have violated an existing conscience statute on multiple occasions."

Under the Trump administration, the Justice Department filed suit against the medical center in December 2020, after the HHS Office for Civil Rights found that it had forced a nurse to participate in an elective abortion.

See CONGRESS, page 9

See EUCHARIST, page 9

See CHRISTMAS, page 8

See CONGRESS, page 9

See CHRISTMAS, page 8
Pope: Discrimination against people with disabilities must end

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—The Catholic Church must be a home for all, especially for people with disabilities who continue to face discrimination in the world and in the Church, Pope Francis said.

In a message for the Dec. 3 celebration of the U.N.'s International Day of Persons with Disabilities, the pope said that although Church teaching is clear, too many men, women and children with disabilities lack spiritual care, which is the "right of each person to have a church in their own image and likeness." 

"Discrimination continues to be all too present at various levels of society; it feeds on prejudice, ignorance and a culture that finds it hard to appreciate the inestimable value of each person," he wrote in the message, which was published on Nov. 25.

Nevertheless, he said, baptism makes all men and women "full-fledged" members of the Church "so that all of us, without exclusion or discrimination, can say: ‘I am the Church!’" he wrote.

"The Church is truly your home," the pope told people with disabilities. "We, all of us together, are the Church, because Jesus chose to be our friend." 

The U.N. theme for the 2021 celebration of the international day was "Leadership and participation of persons with disabilities toward an inclusive, accessible and sustainable post-COVID19 world.

The International Day of Persons with Disabilities "aims to promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in all spheres of society and development, and to increase awareness of the situation of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, economical and cultural life," according to the U.N. website.

To mark the occasion, the Vatican Dicastery for Laity, the Family and Life announced on Nov. 29 the launch of a video campaign titled #AmChurch.

According to the dicastery, the campaign, which will begin on Dec. 6, will feature the testimonies of Christians with disabilities from around the world.

"We are convinced that if we are able to listen attentively to the voices of our sisters and brothers with disabilities, the ecclesial community will come out truly enriched," said Gabriella Gambino, undersecretary of the dicastery.

In his message, the pope said he wanted to tell people with disabilities that "the Church loves you and needs each of you for the fulfillment of her mission at the service of the Gospel." 

"The synodal process, he said, has made more evident the fact that the Church "is not a community of people who are perfect, but a community of disciples on a journey."

"For this reason, each of you is also called to make his or her own contribution to the synodal journey, I am convinced that, if it truly becomes a participative and inclusive ecclesial process, the Church community will genuinely be enriched," he wrote.

However, the pope said that, still today, many people with disabilities "are treated as foreign bodies in society" and that such discrimination "feeds on prejudices, ignorance and a culture that finds it hard to appreciate the inestimable value of each person.

"The continuing tendency to regard disabilities—which are the result of the interaction between social barriers and each person’s limitations—as if they were a kind of disease, contributes to keeping your lives separate and stigmatizing you," he said.

"When we experience such discrimination, it is precisely our friendship with Jesus, that of all of us have received as an undeserved gift, which reconciles us and enables us to perceive differences as a treasure. For Jesus does not call us servants, women and men of lesser dignity, but friends, confident, worthy of knowing all that he has received from the Father," the pope wrote.

Pope Francis also addressed the difficulty people with disabilities experienced during the pandemic, including being forced to stay home or in residential facilities for long periods and the interruption of social services, and said he was close to them "with love and affection.

"The Church stands beside those of you who are still struggling with the coronavirus. As always, she insists that everyone be provided with treatment, and that disabilities not prevent access to the best care available," he said.

Vigilance needed to rustle ‘sleepy Christians’ from slumber, pope says

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Vigilance is an important aspect of Christian life because it prevents one’s spirituality from becoming mediocre and lazy, Pope Francis said.

During his Sunday Angelus address on Nov. 28, the pope said Jesus “call to his disciples to ‘be vigilant at all times’” is a warning for all men and women in the Church not to become “sleepy Christians” who are “anesthetized by spiritual weariness.”

“This leads to ‘dozing off,’” to moving things along by inertia, to falling into apathy, indifferent to everything except what is comfortable for us,” he said. “This is a sad life going forward this way, since there is no happiness.”

Reflecting on the Gospel reading for the first Sunday of Advent, the pope said despite Jesus foretelling of “bleak and distressing events,” he comforts his followers by encouraging them to “stand erect and raise your heads” because your redemption is at hand.”

While it is possible to be absorbed with life’s difficulties and anxieties, he continued, Jesus “points the way with a strong reminder” to “be vigilant at all times and pray.

“We need to be vigilant so that our daily life does not become routine, and, as Jesus says, so we are not burdened by life’s anxieties,” he said. “So today is a good moment to ask ourselves: What weighs on your heart? What weighs on my spirit? What makes me go to sit in the lazy chair?”

Christians who ask those questions can guard themselves against apathy, which “makes us slide into sadness; it takes away zest for life and the will to do things,” the pope said.

Pope Francis said the “secret to being vigilant is prayer,” which “keeps the lamp of the heart lit.”

During Advent, he said, people should make a habit of praying. “Come, Lord Jesus,” especially when they find their “enthusiasm has cooled down.”

“Prayer reawakens the soul from slumber and focuses it on what matters, on the purpose of existence,” the pope said. “Even during our busiest days, we must not neglect prayer.”

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VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Francis asked visitors in St. Peter’s Square to join him for a moment of silent prayer for migrants, especially those who recently drowned in the English Channel and in the Mediterranean, and those who are frozen on the border of Belarus and Poland.

“How many migrants are exposed these days to serious dangers and how many lose their lives on our borders?” the pope asked on Nov. 28 after reciting the medjugorje angel prayer at the Vatican.

The pope’s appeal came the day after he called the Mediterranean Sea “a great cemetery” in a message to the people of Cyprus and Greece, which he will visit on Dec. 2-6.

A spokesman for the Cypriot government said that after the pope’s visit, a group of asylum-seekers currently in Cyprus will move to Italy under Vatican sponsorship.

“This symbolic gesture demonstrates the solidarity of the primate of the Roman Catholic Church to our fellow human beings in need,” said Marios Pelekanos, the government spokesman. “It also confirms the support of the Vatican for the problem facing the Republic of Cyprus nowadays due to increased migration flows, as well as the need for a fair distribution” of migrants and refugees in the countries of the European Union “to alleviate the problem in the front-line countries.”

The Reuters news agency cited a Vatican source who said the pope offered to help resettle 50 migrants, although they are unlikely to arrive in Italy before Christmas because of the paperwork involved.

In his Angelus address, the pope said it was painful to think about the situation of many migrants and refugees today, including of those sent back to North Africa, where they easily become the prey of traffickers, “who transform them into slaves, selling the women, torturing the men.”

Prayer and action must be the response, he said, thanking various Catholic charities and others dedicated to assisting migrants and refugees.

“I renew my heartfelt appeal to those who can contribute to a resolution of these problems, especially civil and military authorities, so that understanding and dialogue finally prevail over every kind of exploitation” and there is respect for the human dignity of each person, he said.

In a video message to the people of Cyprus and Greece on Nov. 27, Pope Francis spoke of their lands as the “wellsprings” of early Christianity, of fraternity and of Europe with Cyprus as “the outpost of the Holy Land on the continent” and Greece as “the home of classical culture.”

“Even today, Europe cannot ignore the Mediterranean, the sea which has seen the spread of the Gospel and the development of great civilizations,” he said. “Also, which embraces many peoples, with its open ports reminds us that the sources of living together lie in mutual acceptance.”

While looking forward to visiting the Orthodox and Catholic populations in the two countries, Pope Francis said he cannot forget “those who, in recent years and still today, have been fleeing from war and poverty, landing on the shores of the continent and elsewhere, and encountering not hospitality but hostility and even exploitation.”

“They are our brothers and sisters,” he said. “How many have lost their lives at sea! Today our sea, the Mediterranean, is a great cemetery.”

“As a pilgrim to the wellsprings of humanity,” Pope Francis said he would visit migrants on the Greek island of Lesbos as he did in 2016 to emphasize that peaceful coexistence is possible only with “fraternity and integration.”

Meeting on Nov. 27 with the organizers of the Gáviera Festival—showcasing the music, food and cultures of migrants who have settled in the northern Italian Diocese of Treviso—Pope Francis praised them for ensuring “yours is a house with many windows open to the world.”

The program, he said, promotes “a culture of welcome rather than throwaway culture.”

“The reality of migration in our time has taken on characteristics that can sometimes be frightening,” the pope told the group. “So, there is a greater need than ever for places where the faces, stories, songs, prayers and art of migrants are put at the center.”

Welcoming migrants and refugees, listening to them and learning from them is not “to hide or ignore the difficulties and problems” large movements of people can bring, Pope Francis said. But the experience of individuals and communities that have been successful at integrating newcomers should be shared with government policymakers to ensure “a healthy realism is joined to respect for the dignity of persons.”

The lonely can find an ‘ally’ in St. Joseph, pope says at audience

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—As the guardian of Jesus and Mary, St. Joseph’s reassuring presence is an example for Christians who are called to care for the lonely and those who struggle in their difficulties, Pope Francis said during his Angelus address.

Recalling a compilation of Jesus’ talks on St. Joseph, reflecting on his role in the history of salvation. Recalling a compilation of Jesus’ genealogy, he said that although St. Joseph is not Jesus’ biological father, he is still “the father of Jesus” and “a central element in the history of salvation.”

Everyone can find in St. Joseph—the man who goes unnoticed, the man of daily, discreet and hidden presence—an intercessor, a support and a guide in times of difficulty, the pope said. “He reminds us that all those who are seemingly hidden or in the second row have unparalleled agency in the history of salvation.”

While St. Luke described St. Joseph as the “guardian of Jesus and Mary,” the pope said his protection extends to the whole Church and is a reminder for Christians “that our lives are made up of bonds that precede and accompany us.”

Text of pope’s prayer to St. Joseph

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Here is the Vatican’s English translation of the prayer to St. Joseph that Pope Francis recited at his weekly general audience on Nov. 24:

Saint Joseph,
You who guarded the bond with Mary and Jesus, help us to care for the relationships in our lives.
May no one experience that sense of abandonment that comes from loneliness.
Let each of us be reconciled with our own history, with those who have gone before, and recognize even in the mistakes made a way through which Providence has made its way, and evil did not have the last word.
Show yourself to be a friend to those who struggle the most, and as you supported Mary and Jesus in difficult times, support us too on our journey.
Amen.
Our search for God does not take place in isolation

“Gratitude is more contagious than any pandemic. It soothes our bitterness, resentment and fear, and it opens the eyes of our hearts to see how blessed we truly are in spite of our difficulties. Simply by saying “thank you” for whatever blessings—large or small—we have received, we can find relief from whatever pain we feel in our minds, hearts or bodies.” (Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, “Gratitude leads us to hope, joy,” Nov. 26, 2021).

Christian stewardship invites us to be generous givers and grateful receivers—especially during this holy season. There are four characteristics or qualities that define the spirituality of stewardship: gratitude, accountability, generosity and the willingness to give back to the Lord with increase. Especially at Christmastime, these qualities can make the difference between a joyful season and a sad one. Gratitude helps us remember that we have been abundantly blessed by a loving and merciful God. It reminds us to say “thank you” and not take the gifts of Christmas for granted.

Accountability challenges us to be responsible for taking care of the gifts we receive at Christmas and throughout the New Year. When we accept our responsibilities and can be accountable for the gifts of time, talent and treasure that we have received, we can truly experience the peace and joy of Christmas.

Generosity is what Christmas is all about. God gives us everything we have (our material and spiritual gifts). All we ask in return is that we share these gifts generously with all our sisters and brothers everywhere.

Giving back to the Lord with increase is what makes Christmas such a special time of year. As faithful Christian stewards, we don’t simply hold onto God’s gifts; we increase them, making sure they multiply and grow! That’s why the joys of the season spread exponentially whenever we are grateful, accountable and generous in giving and receiving God’s gifts.

God loves us so much that he constantly gives us his gifts of healing and hope, love and mercy, peace and joy, courage and perseverance, and faithfulness even when we turn our backs on him or fail to say “thank you.” As our Holy Father Pope Francis writes in his encyclical “Fratelli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship,” (#140):

“Life without fraternal gratuitousness becomes a form of frenetic commerce, in which we are constantly weighing up what we give and what we get back in return. God, on the other hand, gives freely, to the point of helping even those who are unfaithful, he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good” [Mt 5:45].

There is a reason why Jesus told us: “When you give alms, do not let your right hand know what your left hand is doing, so that your alms may be in secret” [Mt 6:3-5]. We received life freely, we paid nothing for it. Consequently, all of us are able to give without expecting anything in return, to do good to others without demanding that they treat us well in return. As Jesus told his disciples: “what you have received, without cost you are to give” [Mt 10:8].

The synodal journey we have begun as an archdiocese, and as the universal Church, is intended to prepare for the Synod of Bishops which will be held at the Vatican in October 2023. As Pope Francis frequently says, the journey we are making together should prepare us to encounter Jesus Christ, to listen prayerfully to God’s word, and to discover what the Holy Spirit is saying to us as individuals, families, parish communities and dioceses throughout the world. One of the beneficial byproducts of this process is that we are reminded that our search for God does not take place in isolation but in community.

God loves us so much that by the power of the Holy Spirit he gives us his only Son as our Lord and Savior. This is such a magnificent gift that our only possible response is to receive this gift with gratitude and humility as faithful stewards of God’s abundant generosity.

None of us should have to celebrate Christmas alone. Even if by some chance we are separated from those we love most in the world, we are invited to walk together as sisters and brothers who encounter Jesus at this special time of year through the sights, sounds and smells of Christmas.

—Daniel Conway

Letters from readers are published in The Criterion as part of the newspaper’s commitment to “the responsible exchange of ideas.” TheCriterion.org accepts letters on all topics. Both original and previously unpublished letters are welcome. Letters of 280 words or fewer are more likely to be published.

Letters are subject to editing for clarity, grammar and space limitations. pastoral sensitivity and content. Inclusion in The Criterion is not guaranteed. In order to encourage opinions from a variety of readers, frequent writers will ordinarily be limited to one letter every six months. Concise letters (usually less than 300 words) are more likely to be printed.

Letters are subject to editing. For serious reasons, names may be withheld.

Send letters to: “Letters to the Editor,” The Criterion, 1400 N. Meridian Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367. Readers with access to e-mail may send letters to criterion@archindy.org.
We are missionary disciples traveling on the road to heaven

“Tu, Señor, me creaste y me diste el cuerpo y el alma y todo lo que tengo; y tú, mi Dios, has hecho a tu semejanza, y no a los falsos dioses de los gentiles. Oh cristianos, damos gracias a ti, Dios, y alabamos a Dios, tres y uno, que has dado a conocer la fe y la verdadera ley de tu Hijo Jesucristo.”

(San Francisco Javier)

Hoy, viernes 3 de diciembre, recordamos a San Francisco Javier, que junto con Ana Teresa Guérin (la Madre Teodora) son los santos patrones de nuestra arquidiócesis. Ambos fueron misioneros que dejaron la comodidad y la seguridad de sus países de origen para predicar el Evangelio en tierras extranjeras.

Francisco Javier fue uno de los siete hombres, incluido san Ignacio de Loyola, que fundaron la Compañía de Jesús (los jesuitas) el 15 de agosto de 1540. Francisco había conocido la riqueza y el privilegio como hijo de un noble vasco pero también fue testigo de la miseria y el privilegio como hijo de un noble vasco. Se formó en la universidad de Valencia; después de un tiempo en París y una estancia en España, surgió de una experiencia en el castillo de Monmouth en Inglaterra instigada por el duque de Lennox. Cuando regresó a París, se unió a los jesuitas.

Los biógrafos cuentan que Francisco, que era ambicioso y mundano, se resistió al principio a la influencia de Ignacio, pero finalmente se inclinó ante la forma de vida que posteriormente pasó a ser la Compañía de Jesús. El plan inicial era que Francisco llegara a ser teólogo y que dictara clases en las universidades europeas; pero la providencia de Dios dispuso otra cosa. En 1540, Ignacio le pidió a Francisco que fuera en un viaje misionero a la India para ocupar el lugar de un compañero que estaba enfermo. Francisco aceptó el encargo y pasó el resto de su vida como misionero en Asia.

Además de su labor en la India y los territorios circundantes, Francisco Javier es conocido como el primer misionero cristiano que evangelizó al pueblo de Japón. Su intención era ser evangelista en China, pero murió a causa de una fiebre el 3 de diciembre de 1552, mientras aguardaba en una isla cercana a que un barco lo llevara a la China continental.

La Iglesia universal honra a san Francisco Javier, junto con santa Teresa de Lisieux como copatrón de todas las misiones extranjeras. Su valentía y su fidelidad al Evangelio, unidas a su insistencia en comprender la lengua, la cultura y las creencias de los diversos pueblos a los que fue enviado a servir, hacen de san Francisco Javier un modelo para todos los que estamos llamados a ser discípulos misioneros de Jesús en todo tiempo y lugar.

El proceso sinodal que hemos iniciado aquí en nuestra arquidiócesis, y en las diócesis de todo el mundo, tiene un profundo carácter misionero. Se nos pide, en palabras del Papa Francisco, “ir más allá de nosotros mismos” como individuos, familias y comunidades. Se nos desafía a mirarnos unos a otros con nuevos ojos y a escuchar atentamente las voces de los que son diferentes a nosotros. El objetivo, en última instancia, es ayudarnos a todos—cada uno a su manera—con encontrar a la persona de Jesucristo que viene a nosotros en nuestras “dóndequería que estamos” en el camino de la vida.

Como nos dice el Papa Francisco, cuando Jesús se encuentra con la gente en sus viajes, no los acoge como extraños sino como compañeros de viaje: “El Señor no se mantiene al margen; no parece molesto ni perturbado; al contrario, está completamente presente para esta persona. Está abierta al encuentro. Nada le es indiferente a Jesús; todo le preocupa. Encontrarse con rostros, mirar a los ojos, compartir la historia de cada uno: esa es la cercanía que encarna Jesús. ¿Qué quiere que cada uno haga para terminar la reunión. Siempre estaba al servicio de la persona con la que estaba, escuchando lo que decía. ¿Acaso no es esto lo que estamos llamados a hacer como discípulos misioneros: estar siempre al servicio de los demás, y a escucharlos con la mente y el corazón abiertos? Ciertamente, esto es lo que hicieron Francisco Javier, la Madre Teodora Guérin, y lo que hacen todos los misioneros de éxito; no imponen su fe a los demás, sino que se esfuerzan por presentar a la persona de Jesucristo utilizando un lenguaje, unas imágenes y unos símbolos fáciles de comprender, incluso en situaciones radicalmente diferentes.

Hoy, mientras honramos a un querido santo patrón aquí en el centro y sur de Indiana, y en todo el mundo, recordemos por la gracia de ser fieles discípulos misioneros.

San Francisco Javier, ruega por nosotros. Ayúdanos a encontrar a Jesús, y a los demás, mientras caminamos juntos en este proceso sinodal.
December 6, 13, 16
St. Therese of the Child Jesus Retreat Center, 6455 Fishers Hill Rd., Fishers. Information and registration: 317-227-1717, soulcoreindiana.org or soulcoreindiana@yahoo.com.

December 7
Ritz Charles, 12156 N. Meridian St., Carmel. "Life of Indiana Christmas Gala. 6:30 p.m., former Vice President Mike Pence will present the Spirit Award recipient, emcee Emmi-winning anchor and reporter Tracy Walton, keynote by pro football champion Matt Bark, Christian music artist Colon Dixon performing, individual reserved $100, table for 10 $1,000, table sponsorships available. Information and reservations: www.irrt.org/arts or 317-413-9723.

December 8
Group Leaf via Zoom, 7 p.m., second and fourth Wednesdays of each month, Benedictine Sister Marie Reuber, facilitator, sponsored by Sisters of St. Benedict, Ferdinand, Ind. (Diocese of Evansville). Information: vocation@thebdom.org.

December 9-12

December 10-11

December 11
St. Mary Parish, 6131 N. Michigan Rd., Indianapolis. "Our Lady of Guadalupe Celebration. 8 a.m.—Mass, 8:30 a.m.—reception, 9:15 a.m.—novena; Dec. 12—bilingual midnight Mass with Aztec dancers; 12:30 p.m.—Mass in Spanish, followed by a procession with Aztec dancers and reception in gym with music and Chileno dancers. Information: 317-253-2193.

December 12

December 14
St. Monica Church, 6131 Michigan Rd., Indianapolis. "Our Lady of Guadalupe Retreat." Information: votacion@thedome.org.

December 15

December 16
St. Jude Church, 9001 S. Mickley Ave., Indianapolis. "Third Thursday Adoration." For more information, contact the Parish Office at 317-236-1474 or parroquiamadrid.org or by calling 800-987-7380. Parking is available in the Guest House parking lot. 

December 17
Parishes to host Our Lady of Guadalupe celebrations

The following Masses and special events for the feast day Our Lady of Guadalupe throughout central and southern Indiana were reported to The Criterion.

**Holy Spirit Church, 7243 E. 10th St., Indianapolis.**
Dec. 9—7 p.m. Mass of St. Juan Diego, 7:30 p.m. novena, 8:30 p.m. apparition reenactment
Dec. 10—7 p.m. Mass, 7:30 p.m. rosary, 9 p.m. adoration
Dec. 11—7 p.m. rosary and novena, 7:30 p.m. apparition reenactment, 9 p.m. dances/serenade, 10 p.m. holy hour, 11 p.m. Mass.
Dec. 12—midnight Las Mañanitas.

**Prince of Peace Parish, St. Patrick Chapel, 305 W. State St., Madison.**
Dec. 12—noon, Our Lady of Guadalupe Mass and dinner.

St. Bartholomew Church, 1306 27th St., Columbus.
Dec. 11—9 p.m. midnight, rosary, mactachines dance, apparition narrative, singing of mañanitas.

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church, 720 N. “A” St., Richmond.
Dec. 11—11 a.m., Misa de nuestra Virgen de Guadalupe (Masses for Our Virgin of Guadalupe)

St. Gabriel the Archangel Church, 6000 W. 34th St., Indianapolis.
Dec. 11—7 p.m. rosary, 8 p.m. bicultural Mass, 9 p.m. children’s apparitions play, 10 p.m. dances, 11 p.m. Mass in Spanish
Dec. 12—12:30 a.m. mariachi band, 8 p.m. Mass.

St. Joseph Church, 1125 E. Broadway St., Shelbyville.
Dec. 11—11 p.m. rosary, 11:30 p.m. Aztec dance and apparition re-enactment
Dec. 12—midnight Mass, 1 a.m. serenade.

St. Lawrence Church, 6944 E. 46th St., Indianapolis.
Dec. 10—7 p.m. novena, Dec. 11—8 p.m. Mass, 9:30 p.m. dancing, 9:30-11 p.m. mañanitas

St. Mary Church, 317 N. New Jersey St., Indianapolis.
Dec. 11—9 p.m. pilgrimage to Monument Circle, brief dance and apparitions play
Dec. 12—midnight Mass followed by coffee and bread

St. Mary Church, 415 E. Eighth St.
New Albany.
Dec. 11—10 p.m. apparitions play, 11 p.m. midnight, Marian songs
Dec. 12—11:30 a.m. rosary, noon Mass followed by luncheon in Pastoral Center

St. Monica Church, 6131 N. Michigan Road, Indianapolis.
Dec. 11—8 p.m. rosary, apparitions re-enactment, mariachi Dec. 12—midnight Mass in Spanish and English with Aztec dancers.
Dec. 12:30 p.m. Mass in Spanish, followed by procession with Aztec dancers, reception in gym with music and Chaiclos dancers.

St. Paul Catholic Center, 1413 E. 17th St., Bloomington.
Dec. 10—10 p.m. music and presentation
Dec. 11—midnight Mass followed by festive meal.

**VATICAN CITY (CNS)—**Despite the disappointing outcome of the COP26 summit on climate change, Pope Francis said he knows it is not too late for humanity to change bad habits in order to be able to dream, co-create, and act together to realize just and equitable futures,” the pope wrote in the preface to the Laudato Si’ Reader.

The book, available in print and as a free e-book from the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, includes the preface from Pope Francis, a message from Antonio Gutierrez, secretary-general of the United Nations, and reflections by dozens of people involved in Catholic environmental, peace or charitable agencies, ambassadors, scientists, academicians, young people, farmers and Indigenous people.

The reader, published on Nov. 23, comes six years after the publication of Pope Francis’ encyclical, “Laudato Si’, on Care for Our Common Home.”

In his preface, Pope Francis wrote that the pandemic makes it clearer than ever that “it is time to develop a new form of universal solidarity that is grounded in fraternity, love and mutual understanding: one that values people over profit, one that seeks new ways to understand development and progress. And so, it is my hope and prayer that we do not come out of this crisis the same way we entered it!”

With so many young people so committed to fighting climate change and advocating for a more human way of organizing social and economic life, he said, “we must listen to them with open hearts. We must follow their lead, for they are wise beyond their years.”

“This is a moment to dream big, to rethink our priorities—what we value, what we want, what we seek—and re-plan our future, committing to act in our daily life on what we have dreamed of,” the pope wrote. “The time to act, and to act together, is now.”

In his message, Gutierrez wrote that people tend to overlook “the spiritual dimensions of the work of the United Nations,” but the values that it promotes—”peace, justice, equality, the dignity and worth of the human person—echo the teachings of the world’s religious traditions and summon us all to reduce human suffering.”

(The e-book in English can be downloaded free at cistheloPrefaceBook.)

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**THE CRITERION**
Friday, December 3, 2021  Page 7
CHRISTMAS
continued from page 1
see them find that warm spirit within.”

As Davis shares that story, it’s clear that a similar warm spirit guides her in her 13th year of directing the Christmas Store—an archdiocesan outreach that has been touching lives at Christmas for 31 years.

For most of that time, the Christmas Store has been a setting where parents could shop for the gifts that they thought their children would like. Yet because of concerns related to COVID-19 last year and this year, the Christmas Store has become a drive-through operation with volunteers choosing the gifts based upon the parents’ recommendations.

This year, about 900 families will benefit from the Christmas Store, which opened on Nov. 11 and continues to Dec. 18.

“The favorite part for me is just knowing that families that are struggling day to day can have one special day together, and a child can get a special toy they would like to have,” Davis said.

“On the paperwork we give them, we ask them about the children’s hobbies and interests—and their favorite colors—so they can get something they like.”

“They make Christmas special for us”

Tanisha Coe says she and her children have been blessed by the Christmas Store for more than 15 years.

“I’m blind and disabled,” said the mother of two as she waited to receive her gifts. “This place is good for people who can’t afford things for Christmas. It’s been good for my family. I’ve been coming here for years, since my kids were babies.”

She returned to the Christmas Store this year for gifts for her 16-year-old daughter.

“I didn’t know what I was going to do for her,” said Coe, who also has a son who’s 20. “They make Christmas special for us. And they do it every year. I appreciate them so much.”

Drawing from the input of 85 social service agencies, the Christmas Store receives referrals of families from every kind of religious background.

“Only 12% are Catholic,” Davis said.

“It really represents Catholic Charities—especially the giving and the support of the community.”

“I get to be involved in the joy of 3,700 kids”

The support includes the brand-new gifts that many Catholics donate and the financial contributions that others make so the Christmas Store volunteers can buy presents. The volunteers are the heart of the program, including the 25 or so who work year-round on the effort—a group called the Red Aprons because of the signature aprons they wear.

Patti Jensen is one of that core group. A member of St. Susanna Parish in Plainfield, she describes the Christmas Store as her “passion.”

“I like to be around the people, to hear their stories,” she said. “They hug you. They cry. You never forget that.”

Jensen has her own unforgettable story of how she came to volunteer at the Christmas Store.

For 20 years, she was the caregiver for her husband Jay as multiple sclerosis kept taking its toll on him. While she considers that time together as a blessing in her life and their marriage of 51 years, she also needed time to regenerate her energy.

That’s when her sister-in-law suggested she join the Red Aprons. And it continues to fill her life two years after her husband died.

“To do something like this, where you’re helping other people, really makes you feel good,” she said. “And just being around the other volunteers is a blessing. Everybody here has such a huge heart and a compassion for other people. That’s what brings me back. We make a difference, and this enriches my life. It’s a win-win situation.”

While the Red Aprons volunteer year-round, another 175 or so volunteers—many of them wearing Santa hats and ugly Christmas sweaters—help with the distribution of gifts to families during November and December, Davis said.

The scenes during those times always leave their impact on Davis, the mother of three grown children and the grandmother of three.

“It’s nice to see the volunteers come in, help people and almost feel like Santa Claus in a way,” she said. “And I get to be involved in the joy of 3,700 kids. It definitely puts a great spin on Christmas.”

A Nativity scene inside the Christmas Store reminds volunteers of the true meaning of Christmas. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)
Specifically, the investigation by HHS revealed that the Vermont hospital had scheduled approximately 10 nurses with registered conscience objections to assist with nearly 20 abortion procedures, “in clear violation of existing law.”

Lawyers for the U.S. as the plaintiff cited the Church Amendment to 1973’s Public Health Service Act, which declared that hospitals or individuals’ receipt of federal funds in various health programs did not require them to participate in abortion and sterilization procedures, and forbade hospitals to make willingness or unwillingness to perform these procedures a condition of employment.

“Plaintiff United States notices dismissal of this action,” stated a filing submitted on July 30 by Jonathan Ophardt, the acting U.S. attorney for Vermont, and Matthew Donnelly, an attorney with the Justice Department’s Washington-based Civil Rights Division.

In an August letter to U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland and Becerra, 84 House members—led by Harris Department’s Washington-based Civil Rights Division.

Legal authorities, including statutes which protect the exercise of conscience and religious freedom,” he said.

In reintroducing the conscience bill, Harris said, “Defending the conscience rights of health care providers should be of great interest to all Americans and is of grave importance to me as a physician, especially in light of recent failures to do so by the Biden administration.”

Archbishop Lori said that “it is hard to imagine a more blatant civil rights violation than being forced to abandon your beliefs and take part in ending an innocent human life.”

“The USCCB found that the University of Vermont Medical Center [UVMC] forced a nurse, against her known religious beliefs, to do just that. This is not only fundamentally wrong, but a direct violation of federal law. Yet the Department of Justice voluntarily dismissed the case against UVMC,” he said in a statement in response to Harris’ bill.

“We have said before that the need for the Conscience Protection Act cannot be questioned. The need is more vital now than ever,” Archbishop Lori said. “The Department of Justice is clearly signaling that conscience rights violations in health care can be violated with impunity.”

The U.S. bishops “call on Congress to stand up for the basic dignity of our nation’s health care workers and pass the Conscience Protection Act so that doctors and nurses can defend their own rights in court,” the prelate added.†

Archbishop E. Lori

Eucharist—continued from page 1

Bishop Cozzens is leading the revival effort as chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ (USCCB) Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis. Currently an auxiliary bishop of St. Paul and Minneapolis, he was named by Pope Francis on Oct. 18 to lead the Diocese of Crookston, Minn., where he will be installed on Dec. 6.

Asked how the Catholic Church can deepen the understanding of the Eucharist with the revival and congress, Bishop Cozzens referred to Jesus, saying a lighted lamp does not belong under a bushel basket.

“Set it up on a hill so that people can see it and be attracted to it,” the bishop said. “And I think that’s what we want to do with our teaching on the Eucharist.”

Bishop Cozzens described the eucharistic revival and congress on Nov. 17 during the bishops’ assembly and also in a Nov. 18 interview from Baltimore with The Catholic Spirit, newspaper of the St. Paul and Minneapolis archdiocese.

The half-hour interview was broadcast live on the archdiocese’s Facebook page.

Archbishop Bernard A. Hebda of St. Paul and Minneapolis joined Bishop Cozzens for the interview.

Bishop Cozzens said he could sense the bishops’ unity and excitement over the revival “throughout the week and in the conversations … and the gratitude and the excitement of the bishops who feel like there’s a pastoral need that we’re fulfilling.”

During the assembly, the bishops also approved a 26-page statement titled “The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church,” which explains the centrality of the Eucharist and addresses the fundamental doctrine about the sacrament.

Archbishop Hebda said it represents the common understanding of the bishops as they restate long-held Church teaching.

The document provides a blueprint that will help throughout the eucharistic revival, and specifically for programs such as the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults and small groups in parishes, the archbishop told The Catholic Spirit.

“I think it’s going to be really helpful for people who want to go deeper in their faith and to be reminded of why the Eucharist and the eucharistic sacrifice is the source and summit of all Christian life,” he said. “I just love the way that it reflects that excitement that the bishops have about being able once again to promote, in some new ways, our love for the Eucharist.”

Archbishop Hebda said that as the faithful participate in the revival and the eucharistic congress, the Holy Spirit will draw people who need to have that experience.

He hopes it brings unity “with that effort throughout the world” in a way “in which we’re able to really energize the faithful … and points to further deepening of our love for the Eucharist and our love for the Church.”

The first year of the three-year revival will have a diocesan focus that could include eucharistic processions, adoration and prayer, Bishop Cozzens said. The second year will focus on parishes, with catechetical resources being prepared that will help train leaders in parishes to share the meaning and depth of the Eucharist, he added.

“These leaders will help us really reach out to the people who are … minimally connected to the Church,” Bishop Cozzens said.

They may call themselves Catholic, and they may sometimes attend Mass, he said, but they don’t yet understand the gift of the Eucharist. Talking with people who are not Catholic or not even Christian could be part of the outreach as well, he said.

Parishes might set up small group opportunities, parish eucharistic days and days of eucharistic service, with parishioners bringing the Eucharist to the homebound and inviting young people to that kind of service, Bishop Cozzens said.

For the National Eucharistic Congress, he envisioned a pilgrimage of sorts to Indianapolis that could involve processing to various regions and provinces in the U.S., with Catholics gathered at events with their bishops.

He gave the example of a potential prayer event for racial healing in the Twin Cities, an event in a southern state focused on migrants, or an event at a prison where people could pray for healing and forgiveness.

The last National Eucharistic Congress in the U.S. occurred in 1976, drawing more than 1 million people, Bishop Cozzens noted.

“I do think these big events, the Holy Spirit works through them, and I think it will have a big impact on our country,” Bishop Cozzens said. He said several bishops at the USCCB told him, “We’re coming.”

“I think it’s going to be an exciting thing,” Bishop Cozzens said. He expects 80,000 to 100,000 people to attend, although some people suggested it could draw 500,000.

“You wonder if there could be a future pope and future saints there as well,” said Archbishop Hebda, “that it would be something that would nurture that love for the Church and the love for her Eucharist.”

It is exciting.

Bishop Cozzens sees a World Youth Day-style event with an opening Mass in a stadium and events throughout the week—something for high school students, young adults, people from various cultures—in a festive atmosphere “that happens with people using the arts and talents to honor the Eucharist,” he said, with catechetical talks, keynote addresses, time of prayer and adoration, and a large closing Mass.

Plans are tentative and open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, said Archbishop Hebda.

Bishops he spoke with about the National Eucharistic Congress mentioned how the revival is being driven by the Holy Spirit, “and we shouldn’t be surprised if there were some surprises in the way in which the Holy Spirit leads us,” he said.

The archbishop said he has thought a bit about the symbolism of the Mississippi River’s headwaters in Minnesota—how something that starts small becomes something so mighty.

“This could be a real moment for us to come together and build something that’s going to be mighty in our response to Christ’s call,” he said.†
VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Francis signed a decree recognizing a miracle attributed to the intercession of Blessed Titus Brandsma, clearing the way for the canonization of the Dutch Carmelite nun who was executed by members of the Paris Commune as its intercession of Blessed Carolina Santocanale, also her Catholic faith after the war, Traflet said.

—The heroic virtues of Italian Bishop Antonio Bello of Molfetta-Ruvo-Giovinazzo-Terlizzi, who was born in 1871 and died in 1978. He was known as the “bloody week.”

Pope Francis has signed a decree recognizing a miracle attributed to the intercession of Blessed Titus Brandsma, clearing the way for the canonization of the Dutch Carmelite nun at the Dachau concentration camp. Blessed Titus was sent there after urging editors of the Dutch Catholic press to violate a new law of the Third Reich of not print any Nazi propaganda. He also denounced Nazism as “a sewer of falsehood that must not be tolerated,” said Dianne Traflet, an assistant professor of historical theology and the dean of graduate studies at Seton Hall University in South Orange, N.J., during a talk at the national World War II Museum in New Orleans in 2018.

Speaking to the nurse charged with giving him the lethal injection in July 1942, Father Titus assured her of his purity and asked her to pray. The priest’s example of love, forgiveness and human dignity led the nurse to return to her Catholic faith and encouraged her to pray. The priest’s example of love, forgiveness and human dignity led the nurse to return to her Catholic faith and encouraged her to pray. The priest’s example of love, forgiveness and human dignity led the nurse to return to her Catholic faith and encouraged her to pray.

—The heroic virtues of Discalced Carmelite Father Juan de San Pedro Ustarroz, who was born in Spain in 1564 and died in Italy in 1615. He was active in founding the Italian congregation of the order, promoted St. Teresa of Avila’s beatification in 1614 and wrote numerous volumes on theology, sacred Scripture, religious life and mysticism.

IN MEMORY
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Harold and Lucille Bocher — Norma Heeke
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Kings of Columbus Council #599
Advent can instill a spirituality of patient waiting in all of us

By Jonathan Lewis

What are you waiting for this Christmas? We have spent so much time in the last two years waiting. Waiting fearfully to see if we or a family member will get sick. Waiting for a vaccine shot or a test result.

Waiting to visit family members after months or years apart. Waiting to celebrate a wedding. Waiting to gather after months or years apart. Waiting to receive a test result.

Waiting can be painful, especially when it feels forced upon us due to COVID-19.

The Dutch spiritual writer Father Henri Nouwen, who died in 1996, speaks into this pandemic moment, pointing out that “increasingly in our society, we feel we have less and less influence on the decisions that affect our own existence.

“Therefore, it becomes increasingly important to recognize that the largest part of our existence involves waiting in the sense of being acted upon. The life of Jesus tells us that not being in control is part of the human condition. His vocation and ours are fulfilled not just in action, but also in passion, waiting.”

Father Nouwen observes that the spiritual practice of patient waiting is a prerequisite to recognizing and receiving God’s presence.

In the beginning of the Gospel of St. Luke, God reveals his great plan of salvation, not with a big bang or parade, but in the quiet, patient waiting of two vulnerable women.

The first characters that Luke introduces us to are an old man and woman who were unable to conceive. Elizabeth and Zechariah waited decades for a child, month after month, year after year, disappointment after disappointment. Yet they waited with patient expectation.

Luke tells us that the angel Gabriel appeared to Zechariah to announce the news that his wife would finally bear a child “when he was serving as priest ... before God” in the Temple (Lk 1:8). Cultivating a spirituality of waiting, like Zechariah, begins by spiritually showing up, no matter how imperfect our prayer or trust in God.

Elizabeth too is spiritually active. She avoids the noise, distraction and attention that such a miraculous pregnancy announcement might have drawn, choosing instead to seclude herself for five months, spending time in silence and prayerful gratitude (Lk 1:24).

A spirituality of waiting is not passive; it is active spiritual work to become more attentive to the quiet voice of God.

In what must have been a surprise to his gentle readers, the next character Luke introduces is an unassuming teenage girl, a young Mary, engaged and preparing to marry Joseph. Unlike Elizabeth, she was not waiting to conceive when Gabriel appeared to her announcing her unplanned pregnancy—unplanned by Mary anyway.

Yet Mary’s fiat (“let it be done to me according to your word”) in the face of shame and difficulty reveals her radical vulnerability and openness to God. She did not hope in herself or her own predetermined plans and dreams, but trusted in God’s plan that was beyond her vision.

Mary teaches us that a spirituality of waiting is hopeful, daring to see beyond our own imagination.

In his complete trust and hope in God, Mary stood in contrast with the more controlling (and relatable) response of Zechariah, who initially doubted the angel Gabriel with an unimaginative pragmatism: “I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years” (Lk 1:18).

Many of us are like Zechariah, striving to be faithful to God but unwilling to be vulnerable enough to embrace a hope beyond our dreams, a hope, too, that can also bring unimagined hardships.

Mary’s witness in the Gospels reminds us that living with patient hope requires embracing suffering.

Father Nouwen notes that “patience comes from the [Latin] word ‘patior,’ which means ‘to suffer.’ The first thing that Jesus promises is suffering. ... But he calls these birth pains. And so, what seems a hindrance becomes a way; what seems an obstacle becomes a door; what seems a misfit becomes a cornerstone. “ ... To wait patiently, therefore, means to allow our weeping and waiting to become the purifying preparation by which we are made ready to receive the joy that is promised to us.”

This Advent, in the midst of suffering in our daily lives, the distractions of Christmas preparations or the mourning of loved ones not gathered around our table, we are called to be people of hope, “living with the conviction that God molds us in love, holds us in tenderness and moves us away from the sources of our fear. Our spiritual life is a life in which we wait, actively present to the moment, expecting that new things will happen to us, new things that are far beyond our own imagination or prediction.”

When we lack the imagination of Christian hope, we can return to the witness of Elizabeth and Mary, remembering that with “God all things are possible” (Mt 19:26).

We can also take solace in the fact that spiritual waiting does not mean waiting alone. We wait with Mary, pregnant with hope.

We wait with Mary, adoring the child Jesus who is always patiently waiting for us in prayer.

We wait with Mary at the foot of the cross where Jesus suffers to save us, not quickly, but patiently; a patience he learned from his mother.

(Father Nouwen observes that "patience is the most important virtue people lack today. They want everything to be possible today. Not tomorrow, but today; not in the near future, but now. They want their dreams and aspirations to be realized right away. They are too impatient to wait."

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We wait with Mary at the foot of the cross where Jesus suffers to save us, not quickly, but patiently; a patience he learned from his mother.
Evangelization has always been at the heart of the Church's identity and mission.

The kingdom of God, about which Jesus has no boundaries in place or time. It started You don't have to wait until you have to evangelize. You share in the Church's proper to every baptized Christian. is not a "gift" given only to some, but important to note here that evangelization in fact the grace and vocation proper to the mission.

Let's join in the movement to build the kingdom of God

Each year when Christmas shopping for the kids, I have to be careful to ensure the quantity, quality and price point of the gifts are equally distributed between Henry and Margaret. They are two things that cannot be exchanged and the only way to have a kid quickly comparing their gift have a knack for quickly comparing their gift points on Christmas morning, ensuring that everything is fair and neither child got the better end of the holiday.

Keeping that in mind, I wrap gifts accordingly facilitate my gifts morning with careful instruction regarding which child should open which package next. (Sig.) I used to thinking Thanksgiving break to wrap some gifts ahead of time and found myself reflecting on truly meaningful gifts—necessarily the kind we unwrap on Christmas morning. It's All Good/Patti Lamb

Look to God's gifts, and your hearts will be full

I gave it to my Aunt Dolores in an Easter basket years ago, and hospice workers used it to support her neck during her final days. My cousin Joe kindly let me keep it after she passed. Knowing it was a gift from my grandmother's hugs, forgiveness, the gift of our next step is God calling you to take? Of the kingdom of God in your life? What moment. Each time we tell our story, we strive to understand what the kingdom of God already is.
The Sunday Readings

Sunday, December 5, 2021

- Baruch 5:1-9
- Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11

The Book of Baruch provides the first reading for Mass for the Second Sunday of Advent. Baruch, not one of the major prophets, is relatively brief, certainly when the longer books of Ezekiel, Isaiah and Jeremiah are considered. It also is among the books that almost all Protestant traditions do not consider as part of the inspired word of God. Baruch does not appear in the King James version or other Protestant translations of the Bible.

Certain issues led to its omission from the renowned King James Bible. At one time, Baruch was presumed to have been written originally in Greek. The thinking was that no authentic Old Testament Scripture could have been composed in any language other than Hebrew. Scholars now believe that Baruch first was written in Hebrew, but that only Greek translations survive.

For Catholics, historically and now, most important is the fact that Christians from early times venerated Baruch as part of the Bible. The Church has long recognized it as such.

In any case, when Baruch was written great problems beset God’s people. A most severe trial was that many of the people were living outside the Holy Land. No happy choice caused this displacement. Political oppression or poverty forced the people to go elsewhere.

This book encouraged these suffering, exiled people, reassuring them that God would not forsake them, and that God’s justice and mercy would prevail over all.

St. Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians furnishes the next reading. Written to the Christians of Philippi, an important city in the ancient Roman Empire, the Apostle in the epistle urges the Philippians loyal to the Lord to be steadfast in their faith, come what may, until the second coming of Jesus.

As so often found elsewhere in the New Testament, this reading strongly states that one day, but at a time unknown, Jesus will come again in triumph and judgment.

St. Luke’s Gospel is the source of the last reading. This reading centers upon Jesus, although John the Baptist is also evident in the reading. Carefully constructed, the Gospel presents the coming of Jesus as extraordinarily, indeed uniquely, important in the unfolding of human affairs.

John the Baptist recognized Jesus, seeing in the Lord’s coming the momentous entry of God and the fullness of his mercy into human existence. Thus, John urged the people to prepare themselves to receive the Lord. Essential in this preparation was the personal rejection of sin.

John was a prophet and a holy man. In the Jewish mind, holiness, more than anything, gave persons special wisdom. John could be trusted. He spoke the truth.

To emphasize the importance of what was occurring, this Gospel takes pains in setting the presence of John and the future coming of Christ at an exact point in history, namely when Tiberius was emperor of Rome, Pilate was governor in Palestine, and so on.

Finally, Jesus came as God’s promised redeemer. Their prophet, John, had yearned for the Redeemer and had predicted the coming of the Savior. When this Messiah would come, all would be made right. The rough ways for people would be made smooth.

Reflection

When Baruch was written, times were very bad for the Jews. When Philippians and the Gospel of Luke were written, times were hard for Christians. Circumstances differed, but the condition of misery and hopelessness was the same.

On this Second Sunday of Advent, times are hard for many COVID-19 still takes its toll. Many suffer the effects of a wide variety of challenging circumstances, from economic hardship to natural disasters. Bitterness and doubt stalk the land. The results of sin still torment everyone.

All will be right if we admit Jesus into our lives. We must invite the Lord into our lives sincerely, by renouncing our sins and by giving ourselves totally to God. The Baptist calls us as he called people in his generation to be honest and to face facts. †

My Journey to God

The Holy Spirit Moved

By C.S. Likins

Would I have said yes or said anything at all if an angel appeared to me? Would I have trembled and fallen? I felt so great a love that I could not relate to what was being offered to me—a baby, the Son of God.

(C.S. Likins is a member of St. Malachy Parish in Brownsburg. Photo: This icon depicting the Annunciation is from St. Josaphat Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada) (CNS photo/ Western Catholic Reporter)

Question Corner

Fr. Kenneth Doyle

Bishops in U.S. offer guidance on attending same-sex weddings

Q: My fiancé and I are facing a dilemma. He is from a Catholic but extremely abusive household with controlling parents. His sister, who has not practiced the faith for nearly a decade and has no longer identifies as Catholic, has recently come out as a lesbian and has invited us to her wedding ceremony.

His parents have said many hateful and cruel things about her and have all but threatened to cut off any siblings who attend. My fiancé and I would like to attend at least the reception—in order to demonstrate that there is more to Catholicism than the cruelty she has received from her parents.

We want to communicate that we don’t believe this is a valid marriage, but that does not change our love for her. Would that be immoral under Church teaching?

A: The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has a webpage called “FAQs on the Meaning of Marriage and Sexual Difference,” and that webpage responds directly to the question you raise.

It says: “For a Catholic who is invited to a same-sex ‘wedding,’ it is important to consider what marriage is and what his or her attendance at such an event would mean. Since marriage is the union of a husband and a wife—that is, as a man and a woman—attending a same-sex ‘wedding’ may be considered support for something that is incompatible with this truth.

Especially when it involves close family or friends, it can be a difficult decision. In such circumstances, it is good to seek the advice of your pastor or spiritual director. It is also good to remember that there are many ways of showing love to a person with same-sex attraction without attending such a ceremony.

So, although there is not an absolute canonical prohibition against attendance at such a ceremony, I am sure that most Church leaders would discourage your presence.

It strikes me, though, that you may have a reasonable and acceptable compromise by deciding to show up at the reception but not the wedding—so long as the couple understands by this that you don’t believe theirs is a valid marriage.

Questions may be sent to Fr. Kenneth Doyle at askfatherdoyle@gmail.com and 30 Columbus Circle Dr, Albany, New York 12203.”


BAKER, David, 71, St. Mark, Penny Creek, Nov. 4. Sister of Brenda Elder, Eva Rothgerber, Mary, Albert, Andrew and Randall Hagedorn. Aunt and great-aunt of several.


BEECH, James, 67, Christ the King, Indianapolis, Nov. 8. Saint of Mary, Greensburg, Sept. 8, 1951, and professed final vows on Aug. 12, 1957. Sister Rose Marie earned a bachelor’s degree in education at Marian University in Indianapolis and a master’s degree in education at Xavier University in Cincinnati. During 70 years as a member of the Sisters of St. Francis, Sister Rose Marie ministered in Catholic education for 34 years in Indiana and Ohio and for 18 years in health care before serving sisters from her community at Marian for two years and then returning to the motherhouse in 2011.


BECK, R. Eugene, 67, Christ the King, Indianapolis, Nov. 7. Father of Elizabeth Bagnoche, David, Joseph, Jennifer, Matthew and John. Brother of Bernadette, Victoria, Mathew and Angela Lewis, Mary Maher, Notre Dame, Sept. 13, 1941. Indianapolis, IN 46220-4981. 317-236-1548 or 800-382-9836, ext. 1548 carlahill@archindy.org

On-line collection
The archdiocese of Indianapolis has partnered with the University of Notre Dame and Catholic Distance University to offer online lay ministry formation. For more information, please log on to www.archindy.org/layministry

In the archdiocese, the serving in Indianapolis at the former Holy Trinity School from 1953-54, the former St. Bernardette School from 1969-70, the former St. Rita School from 1971-80 and at St. Monica School from 1984-87. She also ministered at St. Andrew School (now St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School) in Richmond from 1959-63. St. Lawrence School in Lawrenceburg from 1963-67 and at St. Joseph School in Shelbyville from 1970-71. Beginning in 1987, Sister Rose Marie began serving as a qualified medical assistant at Marquette Manor in Indianapolis. She ministered there from 1987-94, 1997-2002 and 2003-09. Sister Joan is survived by her sisters Linda Auel of Sunman, Anne Riesman of Sunman and Patricia Schuman of Brookville, and her brothers, Russell and Thomas McCann of Guilford. Memorial gifts may be sent to the Sisters of St. Francis, PO Box 100, Oldenburg, IN 47036-0100.

Franciscan Sister Rose Marie McCann died on Nov. 5 at the motherhouse of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis in Oldenburg, Ind. She was 87. The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Nov. 12 at the Motherhouse Chapel in Oldenburg. Burial followed at the sisters’ cemetery.

Sister Rose Marie was born on Jan. 26, 1934, in Dover, where she grew up as a member of the former St. John the Baptist Parish. She joined the Sisters of St. Francis on Sept. 8, 1951, and professed final vows on Aug. 12, 1957. Sister Rose Marie earned a bachelor’s degree in education at Marian University in Indianapolis and a master’s degree in education at Xavier University in Cincinnati. During 70 years as a member of the Sisters of St. Francis, Sister Rose Marie ministered in Catholic education for 34 years in Indiana and Ohio and for 18 years in health care before serving sisters from her community at Marian for two years and then returning to the motherhouse in 2011.

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### Special Care

**Director of Operations**

Our Lady of Mt Carmel is currently seeking a candidate to fill the position of Director of Operations ("ODO"). The ODO supports the Pastor with the stewardship of the human, financial, informational and physical resources of the Parish and serves as the professional administrator and strategic leader of the Parish. Applicant must have a Bachelor’s degree in Business (preferably accounting) and a minimum of 5 years of experience in accounting or business management, possess advanced proficiency in computer use in general and Microsoft Excel specifically, be very organized and confidential, and possess strong interpersonal skills. Pay is commensurate with experience and benefits are included.

To apply, please send your resume to Glen Ritchey at ritcheyg@olmc1.org by Dec 10, 2021.

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### Director of Liturgical Music Ministries

St. Louis de Montfort Church in Fishers, Indiana has an immediate opening for a Director of Liturgical Music Ministries.

The director is responsible for the effective preparation, coordination, performance and leadership of music with the liturgical celebrations of the parish including the school liturgies. Recruiting, forming and supervising music ministers will be important in this role.

This person of faith is both a pastoral minister who possesses a vision of how SLDM can develop its potential and a professional who holds specialized credentials in music and has a thorough understanding of Roman Catholic liturgy. A Bachelors Degree in Music and at least 3 years experience as a pastoral musician is required.

To apply for the position, please send your resume to BFreyberger@sldmfishers.org.

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### Parish Business Manager

St. Mary of the Annunciation Parish in New Albany, Ind. is seeking a full-time Business Manager. This person will serve as a staff resource in support of the Pastor and Parish Finance Council and human resources administration. The Business Manager will serve within the framework of shared ministry in Christian and Catholic values. This position requires a bachelor’s degree in a related field and some supervisory experience.

To apply, send resume, a letter of recommendation, two additional contacts for reference, and salary requirements to ummapastor@gmail.com by December 10.

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### Director of Pastoral Care

**St. Elizabeth Seton Catholic Church**

St. Elizabeth Seton Catholic Church, which serves a Roman Catholic community of more than 9,700 in Carmel, IN, seeks candidates for our position of Director of Pastoral Care to serve seniors in our area with compassionate, supportive care.

The successful candidate will be responsible for providing pastoral care, support, programs and resources to meet the needs of the members of the community with the love of Christ and extending the resources of the parish to meet each person in their specific circumstances -- whether one is middle-aged or senior, or struggling with physical or mental-emotional health, grieving, or otherwise in need of support. By providing practical assistance and spiritual guidance for life’s transitions and crises, the Director of Pastoral Care will serve as a leader in the community and resource to the parish in implementing an integrated and Comprehensive vision of Pastoral Ministry.

The responsibilities of the Director will cover many functions relating to spiritual health, counseling and education; providing spiritual support services and outreach programs; collaborating with parish staff to educate parishioners on mental health issues; coordinating “needs specific” support groups; palliative and bereavement care; Responsibilities also include creating and building a network of institutional/community contacts, organizations, and volunteers to ensure that each person has access to appropriate, helpful resources; Home visits and hospital visits/One-on-one visits with parishioners dealing with transitions; Follow-up with the bereaved/One-on-one bereavement sessions as needed.

The successful candidate will be a Catholic in good standing, a Bachelor’s degree is required (master’s preferred) Pastoral Ministry, Catholic Studies, Theology, Divinity Studies, Clinical Pastoral Education preferred, but not required. Additionally, prefer five years’ experience in pastoral care in a church setting or in a counseling setting. Working with the aging population also preferred.

Qualified and Interested candidates are invited to send letter (email preferred) of interest and resume to:

Kevin Sweaney

Director of Operations and Finance

St. Elizabeth Seton Catholic Church

10655 Hawthorne Park Road

Carmel, IN 46033

kevin.sweaney@setoncarmel.org

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### For advertising rates call

(317) 236-1585.

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### Call

317-236-1585

**TO ADVERTISE IN THE CRITERION**

St. Mary of the Annunciation Parish sometimes occurs outside the local Church’s boundaries. Sister Loretto in October took part in the annual Walkathon hosted by St. Louis de Montfort School in Fishers, Ind., in the Lafayette Diocese. She led each class of the grade-school students in praying a Hail Mary before they began their walk around the campus grounds. A portion of the walkathon’s proceeds are being donated to the Missionary Childhood Association, an initiative of the Pontifical Mission Societies which Sister Loretto promotes to help poor children around the world. Sister Loretto also enjoyed taking time to autograph many of the students’ T-shirts. (Photos by Mike Krokos)
Worst poverty is lack of faith, no meaning in life, pope says

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—There is no greater poverty than a life without faith in God, Pope Francis said in a recent message.

The world needs hope, people’s talents and Gospel values, he said in a series of messages to Catholic organizations in late November.

In a letter sent on Nov. 26 to mark the 30th anniversary of the international forum Catholic Action, the pope encouraged members to continue to seek out and discover where people and their lives are heading, “without prejudice, without fear, without categorizing and without feeling that we are the regulators of anyone’s faith.”

“I invite you to be there, where your interests, your concerns, your deepest wounds and your greatest anxieties go,” he said in the written message.

“We know that there is no greater poverty than not having God, that is, living without faith that gives meaning to life, without hope that gives us strength to work, without feeling loved by someone who does not disappoint,” the pope wrote. “This is the place where and the people with whom Catholic Action must fulfill its mission.”

The group held an event online on Nov. 26-27 celebrating the 30th anniversary of the forums, which were established to allow for greater openness and encounter of Catholic Action groups at a universal level.

He asked the members to be deeply aware of the urgency of working to foster fraternity and friendship “as means of rebuilding a wounded world,” and to help people understand that “authentic Christian spirituality is that which is founded in the desire for holiness,” which is a path that begins with the beatitudes and is realized “by loving and working for brothers and sisters who are suffering the most.”

For Catholic Action, and the Church itself, “there have been, there are and there will be lights and shadows, moments of profound disorientation, of fatigue, of indifference, of fear of having been surpassed by the demands of the new times,” he wrote.

They must avoid the “great temptation in moments of crisis or difficulty” of shutting oneself away from the world to treasure the little that one has, “waiting, hidden and cherishing memories, for better times to come,” as reflected in the parable of the talents, he wrote.

The pope reiterated the importance of this parable in a video message he sent on Nov. 25 to people taking part in the Festival of the Social Doctrine of the Church, being held in Verona on Nov. 25-28.

This parable told in the Gospel of Matthew (Mt 25:14-30), he said, seems to be about “the boldness that is necessary to be a Christian.”

“Against all do-goodism and fatalism, Jesus invites the crowds to use their talents with courage” and “to take risks and invest them in order to multiply them,” he said. “When we remain closed in on ourselves with the sole objective of preserving what exists, we are losers in the eyes of the Gospel, in fact, even what is left will be taken away.”

Volunteers for a food pantry operated by Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish in Greenwood pose on Oct. 28 at the parish with a plaque given to them by the Monsignor Sheridan Council #6138 of the Knights of Columbus. The plaque honors them for their extraordinary service to the pantry’s clients during the height of the coronavirus pandemic. The volunteers, led by pantry manager Nancy Killary, are described on the plaque as “beacons of light who shined through the darkness of 2020.” The Monsignor Sheridan Council is located in Greenwood. Father Todd Goodson, pastor of Our Lady of the Greenwood, is at center in the back row. (Submitted photo)