



The

Criterion

Serving the Church in Central and Southern Indiana Since 1960



Saying 'yes' to God

SEEK conference changes the lives of young adults, page 3.

CriterionOnline.com

December 14, 2018

Vol. LIX, No. 11 75¢



Lasting gifts of Christmas

A small boy sits on the lap of Santa Claus during a Christmas party at Holy Family Shelter in Indianapolis, where the staff and volunteers work hard to make Christmas special for homeless families. (Submitted photo)

A sense of hope shines through for residents of Holy Family Shelter during season of giving

By John Shaughnessy

Brittany Nickerson knows that our most special Christmas gifts become etched in our memories.

The mother of two also knows there's an added emotional power to these gifts when we share them with the people we love—and maybe even more so during a painful time in our lives.

As Christmas approached a year ago, Nickerson was enduring a “very humbling” and unsettling time in her life. She had lost her home to foreclosure, and she had nowhere to live with her son and her daughter. The reality of being homeless overwhelmed her.

“It was mostly a feeling of anxiety,” she says. “I didn’t want my kids to feel

ashamed. My son was upset. I had more anxiety for my kids than for myself.”

In the midst of that turmoil, Nickerson made a desperate phone call to a place she had never heard of previously—the archdiocese’s Holy Family Shelter in Indianapolis. Even when she was told there was a room for her family to stay, she didn’t know what to expect.

See HOLY FAMILY, page 10

Transparency and accountability: Before, during and after Baltimore

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

The last several months have been very difficult for many in the Church, both clergy and laity.

Some have expressed their disappointment with the lack of action



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

taken at the recent fall meeting of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). Others have admitted to feeling a bit embarrassed to identify themselves as Catholics to persons of other faith traditions.

To be clear, while sexual abuse has been a problem in the Catholic Church, it is not merely a Catholic Church problem.

Although much of the frustration and anger is understandable, it is also evident that many are simply not aware of what has already been done to address the issue of sexual abuse in the Church.

While we were not able to vote on the various proposed action steps at our meeting in Baltimore, as I have written to many, I do believe that these action steps will prove to be most beneficial not only in the United States, but throughout the world.

The proposed action steps include an independent third-party compliance hotline, Standards of Accountability for Bishops, Protocol for Removed Bishops and the establishment

of some type of national or metropolitan lay commission. These will be shared by Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo, the current USCCB president, at the world meeting of conference presidents with Pope Francis, to be held in Rome in February 2019.

I serve on a committee that prepared one of the proposed action steps, namely, the Standards of Accountability for Bishops. Our time and effort on this

See BISHOHP, page 2

See letter in Spanish, page 2.

A journey of dignity: Combined effort promotes palliative and hospice care as ‘embodying Catholic teaching’

(Editor’s note: The Criterion is running a series of articles on senior-related issues through the lens of the Catholic faith. This final installment will focus on the new Hospice and Palliative Care Initiative, a collaborative effort of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, Ascension St. Vincent and Franciscan Health to support, raise awareness of and educate on palliative care and hospice care. To read the three previous installments of this four-part series, go to www.CriterionOnline.com.)

By Natalie Hofer

On Jan. 6, 2016, archdiocesan chancellor Annette “Mickey” Lentz was present in an official capacity for the blessing of a new building conducted by then-Indianapolis Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin. She’d been to many such events before.

But this one was different.



Comfortable rooms decorated with family photos and meaningful mementos—such as this room of a war veteran at Franciscan Hospice House in Indianapolis—are typical of hospice care homes. Hospice care, which falls under the umbrella of palliative care, seeks to help terminally ill patients live out their final days in comfort and peace.

(Photo by Natalie Hofer)

“I was so impressed,” she says emphatically. “It felt like a sacred place.”

The building being blessed was not a church, chapel or shrine. It was Franciscan Hospice House, a 12- (soon to be 16-) bed medical facility of Franciscan

Health on the south side of Indianapolis. There, the terminally ill can receive around-the-clock care with the primary goal being the comfort and dignity of the person and their family.

See INITIATIVE, page 8



Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles, vice president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, left, Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and Msgr. J. Brian Bransfield, general secretary, take part in morning prayer on Nov. 13 on the second day of the fall meeting in Baltimore. (CNS photo/Rick Musacchio, Tennessee Register)

BISHOPS

continued from page 1

document began well before traveling to Baltimore, and included rather lengthy meetings before and during the General Assembly of the bishops' gathering. I do not believe that our work has been in vain. In fact, I suspect that the work of the U.S. bishops will ultimately have an impact on the universal Church.

While the proposed action steps listed above involve oversight of bishops, many strides have already been made since the policies and procedures of the 2002 "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People" went into effect in dioceses throughout the United States.

Here in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, like most dioceses throughout the U.S., we have relied on lay professionals who serve as Victim Assistance Coordinator and members of a Review Board for all reported cases of sexual abuse in accordance with the 2002 charter.

Any complaints or allegations are received directly by the Victim Assistance Coordinator, who then reports to the civil authorities and gathers information for the Review Board for consideration of credibility. It has been a most effective

process, as reflected in our October publication that listed the names of priests who were deemed to have been credibly accused. The last date of alleged abuse taking place, as noted in the published list, was in 1997.

In addition to the efforts noted here, great care has been taken to assure that the archdiocese benefits from two of the finest seminaries in the country. We are blessed to have very sound formation programs at both the Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary, in Indianapolis, and Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in southern Indiana.

Of course, we must remain ever vigilant in seeking ways to improve protection of all persons, formation of future priests and proper oversight of those who serve in the Church. Our primary concerns must always be protecting the innocent, caring for victims and removing those who are harmful to others. As has been made very clear, transparency and accountability are essential.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ *Charles C. Thompson*

Most Reverend Charles C. Thompson
Archbishop of Indianapolis

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, 200 Hill Dr., in St. Meinrad, are as follows:

SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

Dec. 24—5 p.m. Mass, then 10 p.m. Mass with Archbishop Charles C. Thompson as the principal celebrant. Please note the Mass at 10 p.m. is a change from the Midnight Mass celebrated at the Cathedral in years past. Parking will be available for both Masses from 4 p.m. to midnight behind the

cathedral and at the Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center, 1400 N. Meridian St.

Dec. 25—10:30 a.m. Mass.


Saint Meinrad Archabbey Church

Dec. 24—7 p.m. Vigils (Liturgy of the Hours) and 10 p.m. Mass.

Dec. 25—9:30 a.m. Mass.

All times for liturgies at Saint Meinrad Archabbey Church are Central Standard Time.

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



Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

December 16 – 25, 2018

<p>Dec. 16 – 9:30 a.m. Mass at Holy Name of Jesus Church, Beech Grove</p> <p>Dec. 17 – 5:15 p.m. Serra Club Christmas Dinner at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, Indianapolis</p>	<p>Dec. 24 – 10 p.m. Christmas Eve Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(Schedule subject to change.)</i></p>
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Transparencia y responsabilidad: Antes, durante y después de Baltimore

Queridos hermanos y hermanas en Cristo:

Los últimos meses han sido muy difíciles para muchos en la Iglesia, tanto integrantes del clero como seglares.

Algunos han expresado su descontento con la falta de acción tras la reunión de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Estados Unidos (USCCB), celebrada en otoño. Otros han reconocido que se sienten un tanto avergonzados de identificarse como católicos ante personas de otras tradiciones de fe.

Para aclarar, si bien el abuso sexual ha sido un problema para la Iglesia católica, no es exclusivo de esta.

Aunque buena parte de la frustración y la rabia resultan comprensibles, también es evidente que muchos sencillamente no están conscientes de lo que ya se ha hecho para abordar el problema del abuso sexual en la Iglesia.

Si bien no pudimos votar en las diversas medidas de acción propuestas durante la reunión en Baltimore, tal como les he escrito a muchos, considero que estas medidas demostrarán ser beneficiosas no solamente en los Estados Unidos, sino en todo el mundo.

Las medidas de acción propuestas incluyen una línea telefónica independiente para velar por el cumplimiento, Normas de Responsabilidad para Obispos, un Protocolo para los Obispos Separados y la creación de algún tipo de comisión laica nacional o metropolitana. El cardenal Daniel N. DiNardo, actual presidente de la USCCB, compartirá estas medidas en la reunión mundial de presidentes de conferencias con el papa Francisco, que se celebrará en Roma en febrero de 2019.

Colaboro en uno de los comités que preparó una de las medidas de acción propuestas, a saber, el de las Normas de Responsabilidad para Obispos. El tiempo y el esfuerzo que le dedicamos a este documento comenzó mucho antes de viajar a Baltimore e incluyó extensas reuniones antes y durante la Asamblea General de la reunión de obispos. No creo que nuestra labor haya sido en vano. De hecho, sospecho que el trabajo de los obispos estadounidenses en definitiva tendrá un impacto sobre la Iglesia universal.

Aunque las medidas de acción propuestas enumeradas anteriormente implican supervisión por parte de obispos,

se han realizado numerosos avances desde que entraron en vigencia en las diócesis de todos los Estados Unidos las políticas y los procedimientos de los "Estatutos para la protección de niños, adolescentes y jóvenes" de 2002.

Al igual que en la mayoría de las diócesis de todos los Estados Unidos, en la Arquidiócesis de Indianápolis confiamos en la labor de profesional laicos que se desempeña como coordinador de asistencia para víctima y en miembros de la Junta Examinadora para todas las denuncias de abuso sexual, de conformidad con los estatutos de 2002.

El coordinador de asistencia para víctima recibe todas las quejas o alegatos; este, a su vez, los transmite a las autoridades civiles y reúne información para que la Junta Examinadora analice la credibilidad del caso. Ha resultado ser un proceso bastante eficaz, según consta en nuestra publicación de octubre en la que figuran los nombres de los sacerdotes contra los cuales pesaban acusaciones consideradas fundamentadas. La fecha más reciente de un presunto abuso, según se indica en la lista publicada, es 1997.

Además de los esfuerzos detallados aquí, se ha puesto gran empeño en garantizar que la arquidiócesis se beneficie de dos de los mejores seminarios del país. Tenemos la bendición de contar con programas de formación bien establecidos, tanto en el seminario universitario Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary, en Indianápolis, como en la escuela de teología Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology en el sur de Indiana.

Por supuesto que debemos seguir vigilantes y procurar formas para mejorar la protección de todos, la formación de futuros sacerdotes y la supervisión adecuada de aquellos que prestan servicio a nuestra Iglesia. Nuestra principal preocupación siempre deberá ser proteger a los inocentes, cuidar a las víctimas y separar a aquellos que resultan perniciosos para los demás. Tal como se ha dejado muy en claro: la transparencia y la responsabilidad son aspectos esenciales.

Sinceramente suyo en Cristo,

+ *Charles C. Thompson*

Reverendísimo Charles C. Thompson
Arzobispo de Indianápolis



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E-mail us: criterion@archindy.org

Staff:
Editor: Mike Krokos
Assistant Editor: John Shaughnessy
Reporter: Sean Gallagher
Reporter: Natalie Hofer
Online Editor/Graphic Designer: Brandon A. Evans
Executive Assistant: Cindy Clark
Graphic Designer: Jane Lee
Print Service Assistant: Annette Danielson



Phone Numbers:
Main office: 317-236-1570
Advertising: 317-236-1454
Toll free: 1-800-382-9836, ext. 1570
Circulation: 317-236-1454
Toll free: 1-800-382-9836, ext. 1454

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 © 2018 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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SEEK conference changes the lives of young adults

By Sean Gallagher

A “turning point.”

That’s how Bobby Vogel described his experience of a national conference of the Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS) in 2016.



Bobby Vogel

“It was like, ‘Oh my God, this is so real. ... I want to give my life to the Lord. This is the most important thing,’” Vogel recalled. “That was the turning point where I said, ‘I’ll consider it, Lord.’

And then everything happened really quickly. That was a crazy journey.”

Vogel is now looking forward to the archdiocese hosting FOCUS’ biennial SEEK conference on Jan. 3-7, 2019, at the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis. It is expected to draw more than 16,000 college students, young adults and Catholics of other ages from across the nation.

Founded in 1998, FOCUS invites college students into a growing

relationship with Christ and the Church, inspiring and equipping them for a lifetime

of Christ-centered evangelization, discipleship and friendships in which they lead others to do the same.

In the current academic year, FOCUS has nearly 700 missionaries serving full time on 153 college campuses in 42 states and five international locations. In the archdiocese, FOCUS has missionaries at DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana University in Bloomington and Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis in Indianapolis.

Five young adults who have previously served as FOCUS missionaries and are now living in the archdiocese spoke recently with *The Criterion* about the effect that FOCUS and its conferences has had on their lives and the excitement they share for the conference coming to Indianapolis.

‘It was there that I encountered Christ’

Vogel, 25, grew up as a member of St. Joseph Parish in Jennings County. But by the time he was an undergraduate student four years ago at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), he wasn’t practicing his faith.

Then he befriended a FOCUS missionary serving on the campus and later accepted an invitation to attend a FOCUS conference in 2016 in Dallas.

“It was there that I encountered Christ,” Vogel said. “Everything changed right after that.”

That would be an understatement.

In a period of months, Vogel dove headfirst back into his faith, applied to become and was accepted as a FOCUS missionary and began serving on the campus of Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti, Mich.

Now he is an archdiocesan seminarian in his first year of priestly formation at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad.

All of that was the “crazy journey” that began for him at the FOCUS conference in 2016.

A ‘crazy’ little ‘yes’ to God

“Crazy” is also the word that Matt Faley, director of the archdiocesan Office of Young Adult and College Campus Ministry, uses to describe the journey he’s been on since attending a FOCUS



Matt Faley

conference in 2007.

At the time, he was just beginning to practice his faith again after being away from the Church as a young adult.

“It’s just crazy when I step back and think about what God has done in my life through that little ‘yes’ back then 10 years ago, to think then that I was called to ministry and this is my avenue to get started,” said Faley.

He has served young adults and Catholic college students in the archdiocese since 2010 after serving as a FOCUS missionary at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Faley serves in the Young Adult and College Campus Ministry Office with two other former FOCUS missionaries: Madison Kinast and Rebecca Kovert.

Kinast was not practicing the Catholic faith when she was a freshman at Ball State University in Muncie in 2009.



Madison Kinast

But, like Vogel, she met a FOCUS missionary, had her faith re-enlivened and attended a FOCUS conference in 2010.

“I would literally not be sitting here without that conference,” said Kinast, associate director of the office. “I hadn’t had any catechesis, and didn’t really know any of the teachings of the Church.



Young adults raise their hands in prayer during the Fellowship of Catholic University Students’ SEEK conference held on Jan. 3-7, 2017, in San Antonio, Texas. (Photo courtesy of Fellowship of Catholic University Students)

“Going to a Mass in a giant ballroom with 4,000 people and everyone is singing and responding—it was very powerful. Then everyone would get down on their knees and were silent and reverent.”

But it wasn’t just her education that drew her back to the city. It was also the strong young adult Catholic community that she had found here earlier.

“There are so many awesome Catholic resources here,” said Padilla, who works as a mental health clinician at St. Vincent Stress Center in Indianapolis. “The young adult ministry has really taken off. And there are so many good Catholic parishes to get involved in. It’s a great Catholic city, in a way. It has a very vibrant faith.”

That’s why she thinks FOCUS hosting its SEEK conference here is such a good match.

Faley is excited about the opportunity, seeing the conference as a way to deepen the faith of the growing Catholic young adult and college campus

See SEEK, page 14

‘It’s a great Catholic city’

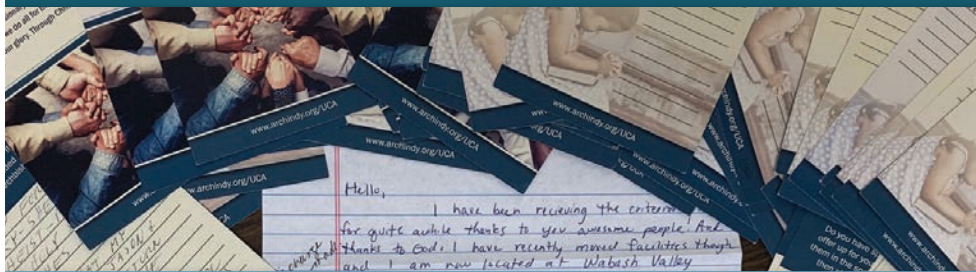
A native of suburban Chicago, Dana Padilla served for a year as a FOCUS missionary at IUPUI. After serving another year at Columbia University in New York and working in the New York



Dana Padilla

Archdiocese, she returned to Indianapolis for graduate studies in psychology at the University of Indianapolis.

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Editorial



Pope Francis poses with a group of migrants during his general audience on Nov. 28 in the Paul VI Hall at the Vatican. (CNS photo/Max Rossi, Reuters)

The work—and struggle—of respecting human rights continues

It's been 70 years since the document came to fruition, and sadly, many are still waiting for its words to envelop human hearts and become the norm in our world.

On Dec. 10, 1948, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. It detailed core principles that guaranteed the fundamentals rights of every person.

Decades later, Pope Francis and many others are still striving to have the fundamental rights of all people—especially the most vulnerable—to be respected and protected in every situation.

“While a part of humanity lives in opulence, another part sees their dignity denied, ignored or infringed upon and their fundamental rights ignored or violated,” the pope wrote on Dec. 10 in marking Human Rights Day.

The pope's message, according to a Catholic News Service story, was read aloud by Cardinal Peter Turkson, prefect of the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, at a Dec. 10-11 conference at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome discussing the “achievements, omissions and negations” in the world of human rights today.

Such a contradiction, the Holy Father wrote, leads one to ask “whether the equal dignity of all human beings—solemnly proclaimed 70 years ago—is truly recognized, respected, protected and promoted in every circumstance.”

One only needs to look at the unborn, those forced to live in poverty, and those being persecuted for their religious beliefs, among other things, to witness firsthand how “numerous forms of injustice,” as Pope Francis noted, still exist in the world today. With that mindset, many seem to

have no qualms about exploiting, rejecting, and even killing human beings.

Those whose basic human rights continue to be violated, the pope said, include: the unborn, who are “denied the right to come into the world”; those who lack the necessary means to live a decent life; those who are denied an adequate education; those who lack work or are forced to work in slave-like conditions; those who are detained in inhumane conditions, who are tortured or are denied the possibility of redeeming their lives; and victims of “forced disappearances” and their families.

But the human rights violations don't end there.

In addition, Pope Francis said, there are those who live “in an atmosphere dominated by suspicion and disdain, who are the targets of acts of intolerance, discrimination and violence because of their race, ethnicity, nationality or religion.”

As disciples of Christ, the Holy Father said, we are each called to play our part “with courage and determination” to stop those ongoing violations of basic human rights and promote respect for the fundamental rights of every person, “especially those who are ‘invisible,’ those who are hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, foreign or detained, those who live on the margins of society or are rejected.”

Seventy years later, it appears many in our fractured world still have plenty of work to do in seeing Christ in others and being Christ for others.

In our vocations as missionary disciples, may each of us always have the courage to set an example and do just that.

—Mike Krokos

Young adults, focus on your faith at SEEK2019 conference on Jan. 3-7

We've heard Pope Francis share the message on numerous occasions, and our shepherd, Archbishop Charles C. Thompson of Indianapolis, has echoed it consistently as well: Young people are the key to the life and mission of our Church.

And while in years past, some have stated young people are the “future” of our faith, we, like our Holy Father and Archbishop Thompson, know the time is now to get teenagers, college students and young adults fully involved in participating in our Church as disciples of Christ.

Such an opportunity is presenting itself here in central and southern Indiana on Jan. 3-7, 2019, when the Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS) is holding its SEEK2019 conference at the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis. The gathering is geared primarily for Catholic college students

and young adults.

Although the deadline for registration has passed, passes for commuters and one-day or weekend-only participants are still available. For more information about the conference, visit www.seek2019.com.

On page 3 of this week's issue of *The Criterion*, you can read about how this biennial conference has changed the lives of several young Catholics.

If you're a young Catholic who has fallen away from the faith, consider yourself a lukewarm Catholic, or feel you need a spiritual recharge, we encourage you to consider signing up for a commuter, weekend, or day pass.

As you flip the calendar into a new year, wouldn't this gathering of faith be a great way to jump-start your 2019?

—Mike Krokos

Be Our Guest/Stephen Martin

Abortion trumps any other ‘signal’ issue, *Criterion* reader says

In a recent *Criterion* editorial, editor emeritus John F. Fink mentioned that some people are still single-issue voters. I am one of those people. I'd like to explain my reasoning.

I guess it's obvious that a single-issue person (voter) thinks that his issue is more important than any other issue, and further, that it is more important than any combination of other issues. That's exactly the way I feel.

Abortion is my single issue, and the single issue of many others. For the last 40 years, I've never pulled the lever on a pro-choice candidate. Do I care about other issues? Of course I do.

In my life, I have worked with the inner-city poor, with immigrants and with the handicapped, and when I'm not giving my time, I'm giving my money.

But abortion is different. Recently published statistics from 2015 tell us there are 1,748 abortions every day in the U.S. That number used to be more than 3,200. Praise God we are going in the right direction!

The Monday after you read this letter, 1,748 human beings are going to be killed, and the next day 1,748 more, and the next day 1,748 more. Why is this phenomenon not equivalent to the people cremated every day during the Holocaust? Because we can't see them? Because they're small? Because they don't affect me and my family? Would you not have become a single-issue voter to end the crematoriums?

In 2016, I had a chance to go to the polls and vote for a person who was one

of the most pro-abortion candidates ever to run for president, Hillary Clinton. I could not do that because in my mind I have a clear image of those aborted babies. I cannot turn my head.

But millions of Catholics voted for her. Did they find climate change more important than human life, or possibly immigration reform? President Donald J. Trump is arrogant and bombastic and not my favorite person, but he promised us an anti-abortion administration and that is what he has given us.

The day that the next 1,748 children are killed via an abortion, there will be 1,748 mothers who have killed their children and 1,748 fathers who lost their child—whether they agreed with the abortion or not—and thousands of doctors and nurses and administrators who made the abortions happen. Will these people eventually repent and ask for forgiveness? It's not only lives that are being lost, it is souls. We are becoming a nation of killers.

I care about many social justice issues. I do. But only one issue makes me cry.

When I picture that small innocent human being losing its life, I vow again to remain a single-issue voter until the day I die or until abortion becomes illegal.

Take note: Every Saturday a group of Catholics prays the rosary outside the Planned Parenthood clinic on Georgetown Road in Indianapolis at 9:30 a.m.

Come join us single-issue prayers!

(Stephen Martin is a member of St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis.) †

Letter to the Editor

‘Quirky’ Advent reflection appreciated by reader

This letter is in reference to John F. Fink, editor emeritus of *The Criterion*, and his Advent reflection in the Dec. 7 issue of *The Criterion*.

“There are an estimated 100 billion galaxies in the universe and about 200 billion stars in the Milky Way galaxy alone, each star perhaps with planets,” Fink wrote.

That is not a “quirky” idea, it is science. Science is “to know,” a “way” of knowing, though I do wonder how long it takes to count to a billion!

I am a great fan of “YouTube” videos on the universe. I can watch about an hour, then get up to relax my brain. It is mind-expansive to “enter into” that amount of “space.” And just what is on the other side of “black holes”? A whirlpool of infinity.

Are there other folk out there, perhaps without an Adam and Eve “fallenness

story”; other planets that have been tested and some not? How can we know? But then the “souls of the just” ... just where do they go? There's got to be room somewhere because a lot of folk, civilizations, people, have come and gone and have “travelled on,” as Native Americans say.

So thank you, Mr. Fink, for your quirks. And for all your stories and ideas and quirky imagination. “Keep thinking on these things.”

“... Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things” (Phil 4:8).

Norb Schott
Roachdale

Letters Policy

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

Letters from readers are welcome and every effort will be made to include letters from as many people and representing as many viewpoints as possible. Letters should be informed, relevant, well-expressed and temperate in tone. They must reflect a basic sense of courtesy and respect.

The editors reserve the right to select the letters that will be published and to edit letters from readers as

necessary based on space limitations, pastoral sensitivity and content (including spelling and grammar). In order to encourage opinions from a variety of readers, frequent writers will ordinarily be limited to one letter every three months. Concise letters (usually less than 300 words) are more likely to be printed.

Letters must be signed, but, 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. †



Christ the Cornerstone

Gaudete Sunday reminds us Advent is a season of joy

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near” (Phil 4:4-5).

Advent has an element of penitence to it in that it is a time for watchful waiting and preparation for the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But on the Third Sunday of Advent (*Gaudete* Sunday), we are reminded that we are called to “rejoice heartily in the Lord,” and to proclaim his greatness by our actions as well as our words.

Gaudete Sunday takes its name from the Latin word for “rejoice.” In his letter to the Philippians, St. Paul admonishes us to “rejoice always” (Phil 4:4) and to “pray without ceasing.” If we take St. Paul seriously, we’ll recognize that these two instructions have a lot in common—and that both are more easily said than done.

Life is hard, filled with sorrow and bitter disappointments. We know this especially during this time of hurt and scandal in the Church we love. How can we realistically maintain an attitude of constant rejoicing? Similarly, how can we “pray without ceasing” when our busy lives require so much of

our time, effort and attention? Even cloistered monks and nuns find it challenging to pray always.

Joy is a basic element in Christianity, Pope Francis reminds us in his apostolic exhortation, “The Joy of the Gospel.” By its very nature, Christianity is and ought to be Gospel, good news. And, the Holy Father says, “the world is mistaken about the Gospel and Christ; people leave the Church in the name of the joy which [they say] Christianity with all its countless demands and prohibitions deprive men!”

Like his predecessor, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, Pope Francis reminds us forcefully that our primary responsibility is to proclaim the Gospel, the good news that brings us joy, not to scold people for their sins and human weaknesses.

The season of Advent is a powerful reminder that the reign of God, which is present now but still incomplete, is a reign of joy, a time of mercy and forgiveness, an experience of true peace and harmony among all members of God’s family.

When the Lord comes again in the fullness of time, ancient hatreds will be forgotten. Cruelty and the exploitation of our most vulnerable sisters and

brothers will be totally eliminated. Every tear will be wiped away. No more bitterness or fear. No more hunger or homelessness. No more sickness or death. No more emotional wounds or scandals.

Unfortunately, cynicism is deeply embedded in our culture and in our own attitudes about life. Our expectations are no longer great. We tend to settle for the least common denominator. Advent stirs us to break out of apathy—to be converted, change our thinking and become people of hope and joy. The Lord is coming! We should rejoice and be glad.

During this time of year, we Christians look not only to the past and what has been but also to what is coming. We are joyful people because we know that the Lord is near at hand. We give thanks to God the Father for sending us his only begotten Son. And we implore the Holy Spirit to help us be ready for the Lord’s coming again—this Christmas time and at the end of the world.

“The world is not a futile commotion of drudgery and pain,” Pope Benedict says. And in words that are now frequently repeated by Pope Francis, the retired pope goes on

to say, “for all the world’s distress is supported in the arms of merciful love; it is caught up and surpassed by the forgiving and saving graciousness of our God.”

Mercy, forgiveness and the resulting experience of joy are what Christianity is all about. We celebrate our salvation in Christ, not our enslavement by sin, and so we rejoice! “The person who celebrates Advent in this spirit will legitimately be able to speak of the joyous, blessed and grace-filled season of Christmas,” Pope Benedict says. “He will know that there is much more truth to these words than is believable or imaginable to those people for whom Christmas is just a time for picturesque sentimentality or merely a sort of simplified carnival.”

Are we celebrating Advent in this spirit? Or have we allowed the many distractions of this secular holiday season to turn our attention away from the Lord who alone brings lasting joy?

Let’s celebrate this *Gaudete* Sunday, and the rest of this Advent season, with renewed joy and hope. Let’s set aside whatever “drudgery and pain” we experience on a daily basis, and look to the Lord’s coming again with a genuine sense of rejoicing. †



Cristo, la piedra angular

El domingo de Gaudete nos recuerda que el Adviento es una temporada de alegría

“Alégrense siempre en el Señor. Vuelvo a insistir, alégrense. Que la bondad de ustedes sea conocida por todos los hombres. El Señor está cerca” (Fil 4:4-5).

El tiempo de Adviento tiene un componente penitencial puesto que es una época de espera vigilante y preparación para la venida de nuestro Señor Jesucristo.

Pero en el tercer domingo de Adviento (*Gaudete*) se nos recuerda que estamos llamados a “desbordar de alegría en el Señor” y a proclamar su grandeza a través de nuestras acciones y nuestras palabras.

El domingo de *gaudete* debe su nombre a la palabra latina “regocijo.” En su carta a los filipenses, san Pablo nos aconseja que debemos estar “alegres siempre” (Fil 4:4) y “orar sin cesar.” Si tomamos en serio a san Pablo, reconoceremos que estas dos instrucciones tienen mucho en común: que es más fácil decir las que cumplirlas.

La vida es difícil, llena de dolor y de amargas decepciones; esto se hace palpable especialmente durante esta época de tribulaciones y escándalos en los que se ha visto envuelta la Iglesia que amamos. Entonces, ¿cómo podemos mantener una verdadera actitud de alegría constante? De igual forma, ¿cómo podemos «orar sin cesar» cuando nuestras vidas tan ajetreadas

nos devoran tanto tiempo, esfuerzo y atención? Inclusive para los monjes y las monjas de claustro a veces es un desafío rezar constantemente.

La alegría es un elemento básico del cristianismo, tal como nos lo recuerda el papa Francisco en su exhortación apostólica titulada “La alegría del Evangelio.” Por su propia naturaleza, el cristianismo debe ser evangelio, buenas noticias. Y, tal como lo expresa el Santo Padre: “el mundo está equivocado con respecto al Evangelio y a Cristo; la gente deja la Iglesia en nombre de la alegría de la cual [según dicen] los priva el cristianismo con sus numerosas exigencias y prohibiciones.”

Al igual que su predecesor, el papa emérito Benedicto XVI, el papa Francisco nos recuerda con vehemencia que nuestra principal responsabilidad es proclamar el Evangelio, la buena nueva que nos trae alegría, no regañar a los demás por sus pecados y por sus debilidades humanas.

La temporada del Adviento es un recordatorio poderoso de que el reino de Dios que está presente ahora, pero todavía incompleto, es un reino de alegría, una época de misericordia y perdón, una experiencia de verdadera paz y armonía entre todos los miembros de la familia de Dios.

Cuando el Señor venga nuevamente en la plenitud del tiempo, todos los odios ancestrales quedarán olvidados.

La crueldad y la explotación de los más vulnerables de nuestros hermanos quedará completamente eliminada. Cada lágrima será enjugada; no habrá más amarguras ni temores; no habrá más hambre ni indignancia; no habrá más enfermedades ni muerte; no habrá más heridas emocionales ni escándalos.

Desafortunadamente, el cinismo está profundamente arraigado en nuestra cultura y en nuestra percepción de la vida. Nuestras expectativas ya no son de gran alcance; solemos conformarnos con el denominador común más bajo. El Adviento nos impulsa a romper con la apatía, a convertirnos, a cambiar nuestra forma de pensar y a convertirnos en un pueblo de esperanza y alegría. ¡El Señor viene! Debemos alegrarnos y contentarnos.

Durante esta época del año los cristianos no solamente volvemos la vista al pasado y a todo lo que ha sucedido, sino también a lo que está por venir. Somos un pueblo alegre porque sabemos que el Señor está cerca de nosotros. Le damos gracias a Dios el Padre por enviarnos a su único Hijo. Y le imploramos al Espíritu Santo que nos ayude a estar listos para el regreso del Señor, en esta Navidad y al final de los tiempos.

“El mundo no es una conmoción vana de penas y dolor,” afirma el papa Benedicto. Y en palabras que a menudo

repite ahora el papa Francisco, el papa emérito asevera que “toda la aflicción del mundo descansa en los brazos del amor misericordioso; la gracia indulgente y salvadora de nuestro Dios la contiene y la supera.”

La misericordia, el perdón y la experiencia de alegría que resulta de todo esto es la esencia del cristianismo. Celebramos nuestra salvación en Cristo, no nuestra esclavitud a causa del pecado y por ello nos regocijamos. “Quien celebra el Adviento con este espíritu podrá hablar auténticamente de una época de Navidad alegre, sagrada y llena de gracia,” dice el papa Benedicto. “Sabrá que estas palabras entrañan una verdad mucho más grande de lo que pueden creer o imaginar aquellas personas para quienes la Navidad es meramente una época de sentimentalismos pintorescos o una suerte de carnaval simplificado.”

¿Celebramos el Adviento con este espíritu? ¿O acaso hemos permitido que las numerosas distracciones de esta época festiva seglar desvíen nuestra atención del Señor, el único que puede darnos la alegría duradera?

Celebremos este domingo de *Gaudete* y el resto de esta época de Adviento con renovada alegría y esperanza. Apartemos todo “penar y dolor” que experimentemos a diario y esperemos la venida del Señor con una genuina sensación de gozo. †

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

Mount St. Francis Center for Spirituality, 101 St. Anthony Dr., Mt. St. Francis. **"Abide" Adoration Service**, sponsored by New Albany Deanery Catholic Youth Ministries, 7-8 p.m., every third Thurs. of the month, featuring guest speaker, praise band, silence and confessions, child care available. Information and child care reservations: Chris Rogers, chris@nadyouth.org, 812-923-8355.

December 19

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

December 20

St. Joseph Parish, 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. Information: 317-244-9002.

Our Lady of Peace Cemetery and Mausoleum,

9001 Haverstick Road, Indianapolis. **Christmas Mass**, 2 p.m. Information: 317-574-8898 or www.catholiccemeteries.cc.

December 21

Knights of Columbus Hall, 2100 E. 71st St., Indianapolis. **Catholic Business Exchange**, Lafayette Bishop Timothy Doherty presenting, Mass 7 a.m., buffet breakfast and program following, \$15 members, \$21 non-members. Register by noon on Dec. 20. Information and registration: www.catholicbusinessexchange.org.

December 22

St. Bartholomew Church, 1306 27th St., Columbus. **13th Annual Concert Series: Christmas Passion**, featuring Hot Horns, 7 p.m., freewill offering. Complete list of all concerts: www.saintbartholomew.org (click on Music Ministry) or bminut@stbparish.net.

January 2

Archbishop O'Meara Catholic Center, 1400 N. Meridian St.,

Indianapolis. **Solo Seniors**, Catholic, educational, charitable and social singles, 50 and over, single, separated, widowed or divorced. New members welcome. 6 p.m. Information: 317-243-0777.

January 4

Women's Care Center, 4901 W. 86th St., Indianapolis. **First Friday Mass**, 5 p.m., Father Andrew Dudzinski presiding, 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** 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: 317-888-2861 or info@olgreenwood.org.

St. Lawrence Church, 6944 E. 46th St., Indianapolis. **First Friday Charismatic Renewal Praise and Mass**, praise and worship 7 p.m.,

Mass 7:30 p.m. Information: 317-546-7328, mkeyes@indy.rr.com.

January 5

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.

January 8

Church of the Immaculate Conception, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Monthly Taizé Prayer Service**, 7-8 p.m., silent and spoken prayers, simple music, silence. Information: 812-535-2952, provctr@spsmw.org.

Mission 27 Resale, 132 Leota St., Indianapolis. **Senior Discount Day**, every Tuesday, 30 percent off clothing, 9 a.m.-6 p.m., ministry supports Indianapolis St. Vincent de Paul Society Food Pantry and Changing Lives Forever program. Information: 317-687-8260.

January 13

St. Thomas Aquinas, 4625 N. Kenwood Ave., Indianapolis. **Mass in French**, 12:30 p.m. Information: 317-627-7729 or acfadi2014@gmail.com.

St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) Church, 4720 E. 13th St., Indianapolis. **Class of '63 monthly gathering**, 6 p.m. Mass, optional dinner afterward. Information: 317-408-6396.

January 15

St. Christopher Parish, Damascus Room, 5301 W. 16th St., Indianapolis. **Scripture Study: Psalms and Gospels**, 10 consecutive Tuesdays through March 19, 7 p.m., \$50 payable in installments, all are welcome. Information: Lois Jansen, mlj986@gmail.com, 317-241-9169.

Mount St. Francis Center for Spirituality, 101 St. Anthony Dr., Mt. St. Francis. **"Abide" Adoration Service**, sponsored by New Albany Deanery Catholic Youth Ministries, 7-8 p.m., every

third Thurs. of the month, featuring guest speaker, praise band, silence and confessions, child care available. Information and child care reservations: Chris Rogers, chris@nadyouth.org, 812-923-8355.

January 17

St. Joseph Parish, 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.

January 20

White Violet Center for Eco-Justice, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Sundays at the Woods: A Low Carbon Footprint**. Providence Sister Jeanne Hagelskamp and Lorrie Heber presenting, 2-4 p.m., freewill offering, registration required by Jan. 18; space limited to 30. Information and registration: 812-535-2952, provctr@spsmw.org or www.spsmw.org/event. †

Holy Land retreat planned at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House on Jan. 11-12

"A Holy Land Retreat: Savoring the Graces," is the theme of an overnight retreat being held at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., in Indianapolis, starting at 6:30 p.m. on Jan. 11 and concluding at 2:30 p.m. on Jan. 12.

The retreat is designed for those who have had the experience of a Holy Land pilgrimage. Through Scripture, prayer and group discussion, attendees will have the opportunity to revisit the graces of walking in the footsteps of Jesus and consider how the experience influences the living out of their Christian faith.

The retreat will be led by Msgr. Paul Koetter, pastor of Holy Spirit Parish

in Indianapolis, and Father Eric Johnson, current pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in New Albany who will become the archdiocesan vicar for clergy, religious and parish life coordinators, archdiocesan vice-chancellor, and sacramental minister of St. Agnes Parish in Nashville in January.

The cost to attend is \$150 per person or \$275 for married couple. The cost includes overnight accommodations, snacks, breakfast and lunch.

Registration is required online at www.archindy.org/fatima/register.html. For more information, contact Kristine Meyer at 317-545-7681, ext. 101, or by e-mailing kmeyer@archindy.org. †

VIPs



Robert and M. Kathleen (Fagan) Sherman, members of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Indianapolis, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on Dec. 21.

The couple was married in St. Joan of Arc Church in Indianapolis on Dec. 21, 1968.

They have four children: Maura Sherman Mackey, Blane, Jason and Kyle Sherman.

The couple also has nine grandchildren. †

Christian-Muslim prayer service set for Dec. 16 at St. Philip Neri Church

The second annual Christian-Muslim Prayer Service will take place at St. Philip Neri Church, 550 N. Rural Street, in Indianapolis, at 4 p.m. on December 16.

Co-presiders will be Father Christopher Wadelton, pastor of St. Philip Neri Parish, and Imam Ahmed Al-Amine from Masjid Al-Fajr of Indianapolis. Dr. Eyas Raddad, president

of the Indianapolis Muslim Community Association, will also be in attendance.

This year, a prayer will be offered for recitation by all in attendance, praying for the second coming of Jesus Christ. Known as the Christian-Muslim Unity Prayer, it gives thanks to the God of Abraham for giving Christ to the world.

All are welcome to the service. A question-and-answer period will follow. †

New Albany Catholic Youth Ministries to host Safe Sitter class on Jan. 12

A Safe Sitter class for students in grades 6-8 will be held at the New Albany Catholic Youth Ministries Office, 101 Saint Anthony Dr., in Mt. St. Francis, from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. on Jan. 12.

The instructor-led class uses games and role-playing exercises to prepare students to be safe when they are home alone, watching younger siblings

or baby-sitting.

Topics include safety, first aid and rescue and management behavior skills.

The cost to attend is \$20. Registration is required by Jan. 3 online at goo.gl/7tE51J (case sensitive).

For additional information, contact Sandy Winstead at 812-923-8355 or e-mail sandy@nadyouth.org. †



A Providential path

On Nov. 10, 23 people made their commitment as Providence Associates of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in the sisters' Church of the Immaculate Conception. Providence Associates spend a year meeting and praying with a sister or another Providence Associate and learning about the mission and ministry of the Sisters of Providence. There are currently more than 270 Providence Associates throughout the United States and in Taiwan. To learn more about becoming a Providence Associate, go to ProvidenceAssociates.org or call Debbie Dillow at 317-250-3294 or Providence Sister Susan Paweski at 312-909-7492.

(Submitted photo)

Mass of Consolation planned at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church on Dec. 21

A Longest Night Mass of Consolation will be celebrated at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, 1725 Scheller Lane, in New Albany, at 7 p.m. on Dec. 21.

This Mass offers a consoling

message through prayer, ritual, word and Scripture for those who mourn and struggle during the Christmas season.

For more information, contact Tom Yost at 812-945-2374 or by e-mailing tyost@olphna.org. †

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: Cindy Clark, or by fax at 317-236-1593.

Filipino Simbang Gabi tradition will take place on Dec. 16-24

By Natalie Hoefer

The Filipino Catholic community invites all to join in a Christmas tradition of their culture, a nine-day novena of Masses called *Simbang Gabi*, beginning on Dec. 16 and ending on Christmas Eve.

The name, in the Tagalog language spoken in the Philippines, translates to “Dawn Mass,” says Deacon Wilfredo de la Rosa, a native of the Philippines, who ministers at Holy Angels Parish in Indianapolis.



Deacon Wilfredo de la Rosa

“It is a Catholic tradition in the Philippines in preparation for the birth of Christ,” he explains. “I was told by my parents that it has been practiced since the time of the Spaniards who colonized the Philippines 300 years ago.”

“It used to be called *Misa de Gallo*. *Gallo* translates [from Spanish] to ‘rooster,’ which crows at dawn to start a new day. The Masses were held at dawn to give the farmers time to worship and afterward eat breakfast before going to the field.”

In recent times, he says, the Masses in the Philippines begin at 4 a.m. Rather than waiting for roosters to crow, church bells ring a half hour before Mass.

Since the archdiocese’s Filipino Catholic community has no established

church home, the *Simbang Gabi* Masses will take place in the evening at nine churches in the Indianapolis area.

Deacon de la Rosa, his wife Melinda and their four sons moved to the United States in 2007 after a 12-year wait for permanent residency visas. He recalls practicing the *Simbang Gabi* tradition in his native country.

“There is an atmosphere of joy and excitement as families gather in and around a brightly lighted church that is decorated with the Nativity scene, called a ‘*belen*,’” he says.

“All the churches are always overflowing with the faithful. Outside the church are food vendors who offer the usual rice cake, called ‘*bibingka*’: a purple cylindrical cake, called ‘*puto bumbong*’; and ginger tea, called ‘*salabat*.’ Chain restaurants like McDonalds and Jolibee open their doors for breakfast.”

The Filipino Catholic community and the archdiocese’s Intercultural Office have joined to hold a *Simbang Gabi* reception in years prior. This is the first time they have coordinated a nine-day Mass schedule, with a reception after the Christmas Eve Mass.

The pastors of the nine parishes involved have been informed of the tradition. Since those participating in the nine days of Masses often do so for personal intentions, the pastors have been asked to pray for those intentions during the prayers of the faithful.

The final Mass of *Simbang Gabi* is the 10 p.m. Christmas Eve Mass at SS. Peter



Then-Archbishop Blase J. Cupich of Chicago distributes Communion to a man wearing traditional Filipino attire during the *Simbang Gabi* Mass at Our Lady of Mercy Church in Chicago in this 2014 file photo. *Simbang Gabi*, a Filipino tradition involving a nine-day novena of Masses from Dec. 16-24, will be celebrated this year in the Indianapolis area. (CNS photo/Karen Callaway, Catholic New World)

and Paul Cathedral. Archbishop Charles C. Thompson will be the principal celebrant. All will then be invited to a simple ‘*noche buena*’—midnight meal—in the cathedral rectory parlor after the Mass.

The *Simbang Gabi* Mass schedule is as follows:

- Dec. 16: 6 p.m. at St. Gabriel the Archangel Church, 6000 W. 34th St., in Indianapolis
- Dec. 17: 5:30 p.m. at St. Luke the Evangelist Church, 7575 Holliday Dr. E., in Indianapolis
- Dec. 18: 5:30 p.m. at St. Monica Church, 6131 N. Michigan Road, in Indianapolis
- Dec. 19: 6:30 p.m. at St. Simon the Apostle Church, 8155 Oaklandon Road, in Indianapolis

- Dec. 20: 6 p.m. at St. Jude Church, 5353 McFarland Road, in Indianapolis.
- Dec. 21: 5:45 p.m. at Our Lady of the Greenwood Church, 335 S. Meridian St., in Greenwood.
- Dec. 22: 5 p.m. Mass at St. Louis de Monfort Church, 11441 Hague Road, in Fishers (Lafayette Diocese).
- Dec. 23: 5:30 p.m. at St. Christopher Church, 5301 W. 16th St., in Indianapolis.
- Dec. 24: 10 p.m. at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, 1347 N. Meridian St., in Indianapolis, with small reception to follow in Cathedral rectory parlor.

(For questions or more information, contact Deacon Wilfredo de la Rosa at wilfredo.delarosa@yahoo.com, or Maria Solito at mariasolito@yahoo.com.) †

Marking feast day, pope asks Mary’s care of families seeking refuge

ROME (CNS)—In the heart of Rome, near streets of fancy shops already blinged out for Christmas shopping, Pope Francis prayed for Romans struggling to survive



Pope Francis

and for families in the city and around the world who face the same lack of welcome that Mary and Joseph experienced.

The pope concluded his public celebration of the feast of the Immaculate Conception on Dec. 8

by making a traditional papal visit to a statue of Mary erected in Rome’s historic center to honor Catholic teaching that Mary was conceived without sin.

The statue is located near the Spanish Steps and Rome’s most expensive clothing and jewelry stores. It is also next to the building housing the Vatican Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.

Instead of making a speech near the statue, the pope composed and read a prayer, and he left a basket of roses at the statue’s base.

In the prayer addressed to Mary, he said, “In this Advent time, thinking of the days when you and Joseph were anxious for the imminent birth of your baby, worried because there was a census and you had to leave your village, Nazareth,

and go to Bethlehem—you know what it means to carry life in your womb and sense around you indifference, rejection and sometimes contempt.

“So, I ask you to be close to the families who today in Rome, in Italy and throughout the world are living in similar situations,” the pope continued. He asked Mary to intervene “so that they would not be abandoned, but safeguarded with their rights, human rights that come before every other, even legitimate, demand,” an apparent reference to rights of migrants and refugees and the right of nations to control their borders.

Earlier, under brilliantly sunny skies, some 30,000 people gathered in St. Peter’s Square to recite the midday *Angelus* prayer with Pope Francis.

Before leading the prayer, he offered a meditation on the Bible readings for the day’s feast, highlighting the difference between Adam, who sinned and then hid from God, and Mary, who was conceived without sin and offered her life totally to doing God’s will.

“The ‘Here I am’ opens one to God, while sin closes, isolates, keeps one alone with oneself,” the pope said.

“‘Here I am’ is the key to life,” he said. “It marks the passage from a horizontal life focused on oneself and one’s own needs, to a vertical life, reaching toward God.”

Openness to God and to doing God’s will “is the cure for selfishness, the

antidote to an unsatisfying life where something is always missing. ‘Here I am’ is the remedy to the aging of sin, the therapy for remaining young at heart.

“Why don’t we begin each day with a ‘Here I am, Lord’? It would be beautiful to say each morning, ‘Here I am, Lord, may your will be done in me today,’” he said.

Turning one’s life over to God and to doing his will does not mean life will be free of troubles and problems, he said. Mary’s wasn’t.

“Being with God does not magically resolve problems,” he said.

In fact, the pope said, for Mary, the problems began immediately. “Think about her situation, which according to the law, was irregular, and the torment of St. Joseph, the life plans that were overturned, what people would say. But Mary put her trust in God.”

The “wise attitude” of Mary, which all Christians should try to imitate, is not to concentrate on the succession of life’s problems—“one ends and another presents itself”—but to trust in God and entrust oneself to him each day, Pope Francis said. †



A firefighter places a wreath on a tall statue of Mary overlooking the Spanish Steps in Rome on Dec. 8, the feast of the Immaculate Conception. Rome’s firefighters have observed the tradition every year since 1857. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

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\$52 PER TICKET
DRAWING FOR \$500 WEEKLY
ONLY 1,000 TICKETS WILL BE SOLD
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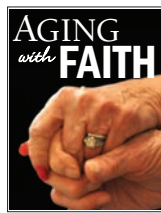
INITIATIVE

continued from page 1

“As we took the tour and learned about hospice care,” says Lentz, “I thought, ‘I don’t know any of this, and I’ve been a caregiver three times. If I don’t know this, what do my kids know, what does my staff know? What are the right ethical things to say? We need to arm people with this information.’”

A year and a half later, the Hospice and Palliative Care Initiative was under way.

‘Spirited vision and energy’



After the eye-opening blessing, Lentz shared her thoughts with John Short, director of development for the Franciscan Health Foundation in central Indiana.

“He suggested we talk about Franciscan Health, St. Vincent [now Ascension St. Vincent] and the archdiocese coming together to do some fundraising,” says Lentz. “Not an event, but something to draw attention to the challenges [of raising awareness of hospice and palliative care] and how we might meet them.”

Short recalls dinner conversations with friends about the subject, including with Archbishop Tobin, who conveyed “his spirited energy and vision for our Roman Catholic archdiocese, wishing we could bring together the two [hospitals] for a project with the archdiocese.”

A plan began to develop. It was based on a vision of “programs of education and parish resources in hospice and palliative ministry, drawing upon the notion that every family in support of their loved ones’ end-of-life [journey] or serious



Annette “Mickey” Lentz

illness seeks the wisdom and prayers of their parish priest or neighborhood minister,” says Short.

Lentz knew such an effort “was going to take a lot of time, a lot of work and a lot of money,” she says.

She, Short, Archbishop Tobin and

others conducted a private fundraising event. Nearly \$150,000 was raised to launch the initiative, with the majority of funds donated by Michael Browning of Browning Investments construction firm in Indianapolis. He is a member of St. Luke the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis.

‘There is a battle being fought’

The enthusiasm around the topic stemmed from one key principle: the dignity for the sick and the dying that hospice and palliative care offer, and how such care embodies the Church’s teaching on respect for all life.



Brie Anne Varick

“There is a battle being fought in our culture of death,” says Brie Anne Varick, coordinator of the archdiocesan Office of Human Life and Dignity.

“Our vulnerable sick, suffering and elderly are being fed the lies

that they are a burden.

“Many are afraid of death and the dying process. Many are afraid of being a burden to our loved ones. They are afraid of intolerable pain and suffering, losing their freedom with loss of control over their bodies, a fear of being abandoned and alone, or there is a fear of lingering in a state of limbo with Alzheimer’s disease or dementia.”

Society’s answer to such thoughts and fears, says Varick, is physician-assisted suicide. It has been spun as “death with dignity” and “mercy killing,” and it has already been legalized in three countries and seven states, plus the District of Columbia.

The Church’s response to physician-assisted suicide is an approach of “love, support and companionship.” The United States Conference of Catholic

Bishops wrote on the subject in their 2011 statement “To Live Each Day”:

“Our society should embrace what Pope John Paul II called ‘the way of love and true mercy’—a readiness to surround patients with love, support and companionship, providing the assistance needed to ease their physical, emotional and spiritual suffering. This approach must be anchored in unconditional respect for their human dignity, beginning with respect for the inherent value of their lives.”

It is just such an approach that hospice and palliative care offer—in personal residences, nursing and assisted living facilities, in hospitals or in specialized facilities run by hospitals.

But not all people are aware of this approach, or if they are, “their knowledge is based on misconceptions and misinformation,” says Dr. David Mandelbaum. He is medical director for palliative care services at Franciscan Hospice House in Indianapolis, and co-director of Franciscan Visiting Nurse Service Hospice.

“The problem facing hospice and palliative care today is that people don’t understand the difference between hospice and palliative care, so they use the terms interchangeably,” he says.

Same approach, but ‘two populations’

Mandelbaum defines palliative care as an approach that “provides collaboration of the patient’s doctor with other physicians, nurses, social workers, the chaplain and caregivers. The same approach is used to serve two populations.”

The first population are those who receive palliative care, which he defines as “an umbrella of care that is all about quality of life and team support of patients and their families through a serious or life-threatening—but not necessarily terminal—illness.”

Such patients are “undergoing curative therapy,” he says. “They’re not terminal, but they may still benefit from the input of a palliative care team giving spiritual [from a chaplain] or psychological support [from a counselor], or symptom management” from a pain specialist, such as easing pain while receiving chemotherapy or radiation for cancer.

The second population are the terminally ill. They receive a subset of palliative care called hospice.

With hospice care, Mandelbaum says, “The illness is incurable or the patient is no longer pursuing a cure. It’s all about the patient’s comfort and dignity and quality of life for however many days they have left.”



Dr. David Mandelbaum

Mandelbaum, who represents Franciscan Health in the joint initiative to support, raise awareness of and educate others on palliative and hospice care, is excited about the effort.

“How appropriate that such a collaborative form of health care is being promoted by the joint efforts of the archdiocese and two health care systems—in a world where hospitals are in competition for business,” he notes.

‘Foundational elements of Catholic health care’

Elliott Bedford, director of ethics integration for Ascension St. Vincent, is the initiative’s representative for the hospital. He, too, is enthusiastic about the effort.



Elliott Bedford

“As an ethicist, I want to help people to know God and go to heaven,” he says. “To do this, they need to make good choices, and I want to help by offering good ethical counsel. If people don’t know the good choices they have available,

like palliative care or hospice, that’s a disservice.”

Palliative and hospice care are “foundational elements” of the Catholic philosophy of medical care, he explains.



A chapel used for Mass on special occasions in Franciscan Hospice House in Indianapolis serves primarily as a quiet, reverent place for those in the home on their end-of-life journey and their family to pray. Hospice care is a form of palliative care offered to those with terminal illnesses, that they may live their final days in comfort, peace and dignity. Palliative care itself offers the same approach to the seriously ill who are still receiving treatment. (Photos by Natalie Hoefler)

“They recognize human beings in both their wholeness—body, mind, spirit, relationships—and their limitations and frailty. They meet people where they are in their journey, and they try to help the patient and their family have life to its fullest in their particular situation.

“When given the chance and done in the appropriate way, it can be downright beautiful in how they ensure the suffering person is respected and cared for.”

Bedford describes the initiative’s goals as “awareness, collaboration and promotion of the Church’s support for palliative care, advance care planning and living well. (See related article.)

“It’s time people in the pew really understand these things,” he adds.

‘An overwhelming desire for more’

The initiative’s first official event was a free, half-day palliative care and hospice care conference, held at Marian University in Indianapolis in June. It was open to “all those in the community who are interested in learning more” about the topic, says Varick.

In support of the initiative, Archbishop Charles C. Thompson opened the conference with prayer.

“Feedback from the conference indicated there was an overwhelming desire for more,” says Varick. Consequently, the same conference will be offered again on March 11 at St. Paul Catholic Center in Bloomington.

She is also pursuing the creation of videos “to promote the truth, beauty and goodness of hospice and palliative care,” she says.

The initiative is in its infancy stage. But as Varick notes, “The threat to the dignity of our vulnerable, our elderly, our disabled, mentally ill, sick and suffering is not going away anytime soon.

“Our families, community and medical professionals need to rise up and support those who are sick and suffering. Hospice and palliative care does this.”

(For more information on palliative care and hospice care, or to donate funds toward the initiative to raise awareness of and educate about palliative care and hospice care, go to tinyurl.com/y8fdu3p [case sensitive]. To register for the free palliative care and hospice care conference at St. Paul Catholic Center in Bloomington on March 11, go to tinyurl.com/ybecr8d6 [case sensitive].) †

Topics and goals of palliative care and hospice care initiative

Criterion staff report

A case study was developed to state the reasons for creating a collaborative initiative by the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, Ascension St. Vincent and Franciscan Health to raise awareness of and education on palliative care and hospice care. It also outlines the goals of the initiative.

The document notes that for patients receiving palliative care or hospice care, it is “a time for listening, praying, reassuring, and often, a time for emotional healing,” and that providing such “compassionate ... care is a ministry that the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, Ascension St. Vincent and Franciscan St. Francis Health are uniquely able to fulfill, because of our commitment to carrying out the healing ministry of Christ.”

Below are the areas to be addressed, and some of the actions hoped to be taken by the initiative, as listed in the case study.

Provide education

- Provide structured training opportunities ... on how to support families as they are faced with end of life decisions.
- Develop content for Having Difficult Conversations, a lecture series ... [that] seeks to reduce the unnecessary pain and suffering often associated with inadequate advance care planning.
- Educational efforts focusing on ... legislative issues that may arise.
- Enhance education on palliative care and end-of-life discussions ... through

the use of Respecting Choices Patient Information pamphlets that help families explore and discuss difficult end-of-life issues.

Increase pastoral and spiritual care services

- Enhance the support structure available to parish bereavement programs offered in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis with a goal of expanding this ministry to all parishes in central and southern Indiana.
- Financial support of the No One Dies Alone program, which provides the reassuring presence of a volunteer companion to dying patients who would otherwise be alone. Funds would be used for volunteer training and items of comfort for patients or their family members.
- Strengthen existing bereavement services such as individual and family counseling, as well as structured support groups.

Support of palliative medicine and hospice care

- Support specialized patient comfort and care services such as massage therapy, aromatherapy, art therapy and music therapy, [and] to purchase iPads for use as a communication tool for ventilated or otherwise non-verbal patients, so they can better communicate with their families.
- Financially assist hospice and palliative patients and their families who may not meet strict criteria for charity care, but are still struggling with expenses related to gas, meals, and/or groceries. †

Sisters launch Advent with the light appearing in darkness

By Katie Rutter

Catholic News Service

BEECH GROVE (CNS)—A few purple hangings and an Advent wreath were the only signs of the season in the dark chapel of Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove.

In the hallway just outside, the Benedictine sisters quietly assembled, intentionally stopping to gather their thoughts and silently reflect.

The light appearing in darkness served as a metaphor for the 38 women religious during their Dec. 1 evening prayer as they marked the beginning of Advent, four weeks of preparation before Christmas.

Outside of the monastery walls, Christmas decorations, shopping and celebrations were in full swing. Silent, sparse and contemplative, the religious house was a stark contrast.

One expert called this liturgical season of Advent a “radical critique” of the human tendency to binge on celebration.

“We need times to contemplate and to await the coming of that which is to come, and we need time to celebrate that which is here,” said Timothy O’Malley, academic director for the Center for Liturgy at the University of Notre Dame in northern Indiana.

“In a kind of perpetual cycle of wanting to move from event to event, to have no preparation but just to celebrate and move, Advent is a radical critique,” O’Malley told Catholic News Service (CNS).

For these monastic sisters, the period of preparation began with their Dec. 1 evening prayer service. They first observed “*statio*,” a short period of silent prayer and reflection before their communal service.

Then their prioress, Benedictine Sister Jennifer Mechtild Horner, led the way into the dark chapel carrying a single lit candle. The sisters’ hand-bell choir and a flutist played the haunting melody of “O Come, O Come Emmanuel” as the women filed into their seats.

“For us, it’s really a time of opening our heart so that we’re really ready to receive Christ when he comes at Christmas,” Sister Jennifer Mechtild said.

“I’m waiting for Christ to come and be my light and give me a few more hints on how to live, how to live better,” added Benedictine Sister Harriet Woehler.

The candlelit procession into the dark chapel, they said, symbolized Christ breaking through the darkness of the world.

Sister Jennifer Mechtild led the sisters in a blessing before using the flame to light the first candle of their Advent wreath. The four candles serve as a visual reminder of the time passing before Christmas.

“For me, seeing those candles lit each week, it’s a way for me to look and say, ‘Oh, where am I right now?’” said Benedictine Sister Marie Therese



Benedictine Sister Jennifer Mechtild Horner, prioress of Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove, lights the first candle of an Advent wreath on Dec. 1 in the monastery’s chapel. (CNS photo/Katie Rutter)

Racine, the director of liturgy at the monastery.

One candle of the Advent wreath, the candle that will be lit on the third week, is pink to symbolize joy. The remaining three candles are purple. This color, prevalent in the seasons of Advent and Lent, is meant to represent penance.

“It actually was a very rich color, so it was a sign of this desire to pour out the fullness of one’s heart to God,” O’Malley told CNS.

“It was an expensive color, so it was a sign of real commitment,” he said.

During their evening prayer, the voices of the sisters echoed through the chapel as they chanted passages from the Book of Psalms. They also listened to a reading from the Book of Isaiah, a prophet who predicted the Messiah’s coming.

Readings from the biblical prophets are frequently contained in Advent liturgies, as are passages about Mary. O’Malley explained that Mary serves as the model for the “three comings” of Christ anticipated by Advent.

“There’s Christ coming at the end of time, there’s Christ coming as the baby, there’s Christ coming into the heart of each and every Christian who prepares a space for Christ to come,” O’Malley said.

For the sisters, the sparseness of their environment pointed to the need for this interior preparation.

“We walk around our monastery now, it’s still that quiet waiting time. You walked into our lobby and you saw the purple, it’s just a reminder that we’re not quite there yet, and we need



The Benedictine sisters of Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove pray together on Dec. 1 during their first service for Advent. The sisters sang Psalms and heard a reading from the prophet Isaiah, who predicted the coming Messiah. (CNS photo/Katie Rutter)

to be prepared so we really can enter the Christmas season fully,” Sister Jennifer Mechtild explained.

Neither O’Malley or the sisters criticized the many Christmas-oriented activities that often take place during Advent, such as decorating, baking and Christmas card-writing. However, both suggested that the lay faithful integrate the spirit of penance and prayer into their Christmas commitments.

“I know for myself, yes you have to write the Christmas cards, but it’s the spirit that you do it in,” Sister Jennifer Mechtild said.

“For me, [I] think of people and pray [over] the cards as I’m writing them, not

just get them done. Not that I don’t do that toward the end,” she added with a laugh.

“This preparation is the real thing, the main thing of Christmas,” Sister Harriet said.

“It’s not all the tinsel and the elaborate—that’s nice, but the main part is the inside, the heart. To me, Advent is the heart of Christmas,” she said.

(Katie Rutter is a freelance writer and member of St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Bloomington. To watch a related video, go to youtu.be/jZAS8SYc_Y0 [case sensitive].) †

Algerian martyrs bear witness to dialogue, peace, Pope Francis says

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—The lives of 19 religious men and women martyred during the Algerian civil war

are a testament to God’s plan of love and peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims, Pope Francis said.



A nun lights a candle next to a photograph of Bishop Pierre Claverie at his grave in St. Mary’s Cathedral, where a vigil was held in Oran, Algeria, on Dec. 7. The vigil was to prepare for the Dec. 8 beatification of Bishop Claverie and a group of 18 others, who were martyred in the course of the Algerian civil war. (CNS photo/EPA)

In a message read on Dec. 8 at the beatification Mass for the six women religious, three religious brothers and 10 clerics, Pope Francis said it was a time for Catholics in Algeria and around the world to celebrate the martyrs’ commitment to peace, but it was also a time to remember the sacrifices made by all Algerians during the bloody war.

Cardinal Angelo Becciu, prefect of the Congregation for Saints’ Causes,

celebrated the Mass in Oran, Algeria, for the martyrs who were killed between 1994 and 1996.



Pope Francis

Both Christians and Muslims in Algeria “have been victims of the same violence for having lived, with faithfulness and respect for each other, their duties as believers and citizens in this blessed land. It is for them, too, that we pray and express our grateful tribute,” the pope said.

Among those who were beatified were Blessed Christian de Cherge and six of his fellow Trappists—Fathers Christophe Lebreton, Bruno Lemarchand and Celestin Ringard, as well as Brothers Luc Dochier, Michel Fleury and Paul Favre-Miville—who were murdered in 1996 by members of the Armed Islamic Group in Tibhirine, Algeria.

Their life and deaths were the subject of the movie *Of Gods and Men*, which won the grand prize at its premiere at the Cannes Film Festival in 2010.

Several months after their deaths, Blessed Pierre Claverie, bishop of Oran, was assassinated along with his driver by an explosive device. According to the website of the Order of Preachers, his death was mourned also by Muslims who considered him “their bishop.”

Pope Francis said that all Algerians are heirs of the great message of love that began with St. Augustine of Hippo and continued with the martyred religious men and women “at a time when all people are seeking to advance their aspiration to live together in peace.”

“By beatifying our 19 brothers and sisters, the Church wishes to bear witness to her desire to continue to work for dialogue, harmony and friendship,” the pope said. “We believe that this event, which is unprecedented in your country, will draw a great sign of brotherhood in the Algerian sky for the whole world.” †

HOLY FAMILY

continued from page 1

She especially didn't expect the gifts that the Catholic Charities Indianapolis shelter started to provide for her family and the other 21 families who found a home there.

"After a couple of weeks, it was comfortable," says the 38-year-old Nickerson. "Obviously, everyone here was in the same situation. So you have that support, and there were all these resources. And my children were able to stay in their schools and get bus transportation from here. That was awesome. We wanted to get back on our feet as soon as possible."

A year later, she and her children stand firmly. She has a job, and she lives in an apartment with her daughter while her son is experiencing his first semester in college.

As she looks back on that Christmas a year ago, Nickerson believes that the best gift she received from the shelter was the gift of hope. It's a gift she will never forget.

She also remembers a Christmas celebration that she and her children never thought possible.

Lasting gifts of Christmas

As Christmas approaches, volunteers arrive at the shelter to help the residents decorate it. Parish groups come to sing Christmas carols and to do arts-and-crafts with the children. Some families bring in meals, and one bakes and decorates Christmas cookies with the residents.

Then there is the Christmas Store that the shelter sets up, a store filled with age-appropriate clothes and gifts that parents can pick out for their children—a store where children can also select gifts for their parents.

"On Christmas morning, they open their presents as a family," says Bill Bickel, who oversees the shelter in his role as director of program evaluation and development for the archdiocese's Catholic Charities. "Even if they move out before Christmas, we make sure they have presents. And if they come in shortly after Christmas, we make sure there are gifts for them, too. A lot of the families also go to religious services together on Christmas."

Nickerson still cherishes that Christmas memory from a year ago.

"Our Christmas was great," she says. "It was awesome to tell my children that even though we are homeless, we are going to have Christmas. Just the fact that we were able to celebrate, have gifts and have dinner together."

Two other lasting gifts came from their time in the shelter.

"It was nice for my children to see there are people who are loving and caring to do this," she says. "Hopefully, it will inspire them to do the same when they get older."

The other gift means the most to this mother.

"We were in one room when we were here," she says about her and her children. "We had to interact with one another. We actually became closer as a family."

'They're always in my prayers'

Lasting gifts have also come to Theresa O'Brien in her four years of volunteering at Holy Family Shelter.

"I love what they do there," says O'Brien, a member of St. Luke the



During a Christmas party at Holy Family Shelter in Indianapolis, David Bethuram, executive director of the archdiocese's Catholic Charities, reads a story to children whose families have come to the shelter to live. (Submitted photo)

Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis. "The people who work there are very compassionate and committed to helping the residents better themselves.

"It's sure made me appreciate the blessings I have—and to not take what I have for granted. The kids are too cute. And your heart breaks for them because they really don't know what's going on."

One of her favorite parts of volunteering at the shelter is being involved in its Christmas Store, which is stocked with donated items that include books, puzzles, games, dolls, toys, clothes and even handmade wooden trains.



Theresa O'Brien

"It's very heartwarming," says the mother of three grown children. "First of all, they're overwhelmed with all the items in there and how many items they're allowed to pick. Every parent gets to pick out nine items for each child. In that moment, they feel they are shopping for their Christmas. It's not us providing it for them. It gives them satisfaction to do that."

Even when she's with her own family celebrating Christmas, O'Brien says she thinks of the families at the shelter on that holy day.

"They're always in my prayers and on my mind. I hope they're getting the same joy out of giving their kids their gifts that I get out of giving gifts to my kids."

An eye-opening connection

One memory connected to the Christmas season always stands out to Bickel from his 21 years of being involved with Holy Family Shelter.

The moment involves a 10-year-old boy shortly after he arrived at the shelter with his mother. Noticing a picture of Jesus, Mary and Joseph together on the wall near the shelter's entrance, the boy said, "Look, Mom, we're in good company. Here's the first homeless family."

"Often times, you're not sure what children are aware of," Bickel says. "It was such an eye opener to hear a child say that."

Just as eye-opening are some of the statistics that he shares.

"We serve in excess of 300 families a year. Seventy-five percent of those 1,000 homeless people are children. Twenty-two families will go to bed here on Christmas Eve. And we serve about 50 families through the holidays.

"It's a thankful time because these are families who would otherwise be staying with another family member, a friend or in the elements. At the same time, it's sad that we haven't made as much progress solving the problem of family homelessness.

"We really need to focus on completely alleviating family homelessness in Indianapolis. Human beings should not live like that, particularly children."

'We are all the same'

Holy Family Shelter does its part by offering services that include health care, job training and legal assistance. Life skill classes also focus on parenting, nutrition and budgeting.

Providing a sense of hope is intertwined in all the shelter's efforts, including the celebration of Christmas.

"As the name Holy Family implies, we try to make it a very festive, hope-filled and family-oriented holiday environment," Bickel says. "It helps that they see so many people other than the direct staff

who are concerned about them. What's also interesting is that former residents call to say, 'I'd like to volunteer or financially support the work.'"

These offers of help touch Bickel, who says the shelter needs such generosity throughout the year to help families who suddenly become homeless.

"We are in crucial need of financial support to serve our homeless families not just during the Christmas holiday but all year long," he says. "Family homelessness knows no season. As more and more homeless families look to us for help, we are dependent on the generosity of our community to serve them."

That year-round generosity leads to one of Bickel's favorite scenes at this time of year—watching the children at the shelter enjoy the Christmas festivities.

"You could take your own kids and put them in the middle of our families and you wouldn't know who is homeless. The same is true of the kids' reactions to seeing Santa Claus.

"We are all the same. The only difference is that these families don't have a permanent night-time residence."

That's the gift that everyone who works and volunteers at the shelter wants to make a reality for these families, Bickel says.

A home of their own.

"We're working very hard to make that happen for them."

(Donations to Holy Family Shelter can be mailed to: Holy Family Shelter, 907 N. Holmes Ave., Indianapolis, IN 46222. Donations can also be made online on the shelter's website, www.holyfamilyshelter.net, and then clicking the "Give Now" button. To volunteer at the shelter, go on the shelter's website and click on "How You Can Help." Or call 317-635-7830 and ask for the volunteer coordinator.) †

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P.O. Box 1410, Indianapolis, IN 46206-1410
317-236-1548 or 800-382-9836, ext. 1548
carlahill@archindy.org

Joy can be experienced in the midst of sadness, trials

By Susan Hines-Brigger

“Life moves pretty fast. If you don’t stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it.”

That iconic line from the 1986 film *Ferris Bueller’s Day Off* seems pretty off-base just a little more than a week away from Christmas, doesn’t it? Stop and look around? There’s no time for that.

There’s shopping and wrapping to be done. The house has to be cleaned, and Christmas cards have to be mailed. Cookies need to be baked, plated up and distributed. Who’s got time to stop or slow down?

Does any of this sound familiar? Unfortunately, it probably does for far too many of us. But, wait, isn’t this supposed to be a season of joy? After all, isn’t the whole purpose of this season to prepare for the amazing gift of the birth of Christ? Luckily, we have something that can get us back on track.

This week, we celebrate *Gaudete* Sunday. Literally translated from Latin, the word “*gaudete*” means “rejoice.” And that message comes through loud and clear in the readings for Mass this weekend.

This mid-Advent celebration offers us a short timeout to stop, catch our breath and refocus on the joy and purpose of the season. And if we didn’t notice the change in the Advent message this week, the rose-colored candle and vestments we see for this week only during Advent certainly provide a subtle stop—or at least a slow down—sign for us.

The message of “rejoice” comes through loud and clear starting with this week’s first reading from the Book of Zephaniah (Zep 3:14-18a). In fact, within the first three lines, we hear the words “joy,” “joyful” and “glad.” And it doesn’t stop there, further encouraging us to “sing joyfully” and “be glad and exult with all your heart.”

The second reading from St. Paul’s Letter to the Philippians offers even more ways to embrace the joy of the season, instructing us that “your kindness should be known to all,” and “have no anxiety at all” (Phil 4:5-6).

Great, you might be thinking, but the reality is that right now there are quite a few challenges to being joyful, of which the stress of the season is the least pressing. In fact, these days, joy or a cause for it sometimes seem to be in short supply.

Well, even then we are encouraged to remain joyful, says Pope Francis. In an *Angelus* address for *Gaudete* Sunday last year, he encouraged us to remain joyful “even when things do not go according to our desires. Anxieties, difficulties

‘Joy is the experience of knowing that you are unconditionally loved ...’
—Henri Nouwen



People stand near an Advent wreath in Budapest, Hungary. This week, we celebrate *Gaudete* Sunday. Literally translated from Latin, the word “*gaudete*” means “rejoice.” (CNS photo/Balazs Mohai, EPA)

and sufferings permeate our lives, and so many times the reality around us seems to be inhospitable and arid, like the desert in which the voice of John the Baptist resounded, as the Gospel of today recalls.”

OK, so the message in the first two readings is clear that now is the time to focus on the joy of the season. But what does that even look like? Does it mean we have to walk around happy all the time?

In his book, “*Here and Now*,” the late priest and renowned author Henri Nouwen said, “Joy is not the same as happiness. We can be unhappy about many things, but joy can still be there because it comes from the knowledge of God’s love for us.”

“Joy,” he said, “is essential to the spiritual life. Whatever we may think of or say about God, when we are not joyful, our thoughts and words cannot bear fruit.

Jesus reveals to us God’s love so that his joy may become ours and that our joy may become complete. Joy is the experience of knowing that you are unconditionally loved and that nothing—sickness, failure, emotional distress, oppression, war or even death—can take that love away.”

Once we embrace that joy, the Gospel reading from Luke offers a ready-made plan for ways to share that joy with others, saying, “Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise” (Lk 3:11).

As Henri Nouwen said, “Joy does not simply happen to us. We have to choose joy and keep choosing it every day.”

Luckily, *Gaudete* Sunday provides us a perfect opportunity to do just that as we head toward the end of Advent, culminating in the perfect joy of Christ’s birth.

(Susan Hines-Brigger is co-executive editor of St. Anthony Messenger.) †

Third Sunday of Advent invites Catholics to ‘choose joy’

By Harry J. Dudley

What I love about the Advent season is that it captures the mixed reality of our lives. Our moments of joy and sorrow are often closely woven together.

We lose a loved one in our family and soon after celebrate the birth of a newborn. We remain caught between longing for the more that God promises us and the joy that comes from knowing that God has already revealed his love for us in his only begotten Son.

This Sunday gets its name from the first Latin word in the entrance antiphon “*Gaudete*,” drawn from St. Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: “Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: Rejoice! ... The Lord is near” (Phil: 4:4,5).

Paul wrote these words from prison. He was no naive optimist. He knew real suffering. Despite the intense unhappiness of imprisonment, Paul was joyful anyway. The word appears more than 10 times in various forms throughout the short letter!

Sadly, as a cantor, I often found a tendency in most parishes to sing the joyful hymn, “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” so slowly that it sounded more like a dirge than a song of rejoicing.

Isn’t the refrain: “Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel?”

As a Church, we have known great sorrows this year. We experienced our sinfulness revealed and our need for greater conversion. This *Gaudete* Sunday reminds us of a deeper reality of God’s love for us. We are called to accompany victims and their families toward Emmanuel’s healing presence. He has set his tent among us—in the midst of these sorrows.

Reflecting on his own experience of the commingling of joy and sorrow, the late spiritual author Father Henri Nouwen wrote: “I remember the most painful times of my life as times in which I became aware of a spiritual reality much larger than myself, a reality that allowed me to live the pain with hope. ... Joy does not simply happen to us. We have to choose joy and keep choosing it every day.”

Now that we are at the halfway point of the Advent season, let us focus on how close we are to celebrating the One who came on the first Christmas and who will come again.

The excitement of how close we are to that celebration can no longer be held back. We choose to focus on the fact that our God has come, continues to show his unconditional love for us in the sacraments and offers food for the journey to the fullness of his kingdom yet to come.

This is the Sunday to make St. Paul’s



An Advent wreath is seen as a cantor sings during Mass. Each of the verses of “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” remind us of the promises already fulfilled in Christ’s coming.

(CNS photo/Jaclyn Lippelmann, Catholic Standard)

words written so long ago our own in the midst of our mixed life of joys and sorrows: “Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice!”

(Harry S. Dudley, recently retired from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Secretariat for Catholic Education, lives in New Castle, Pa.) †

Twenty Something/Christina Capecchi

Embracing divine revelations and accepting the unknown

It all started with a lost birth certificate. The Holy Spirit was at work that day and hasn't slowed down since.



My aunt Jan has always known she was adopted, and the many mysteries surrounding that reality had never haunted her. She raised her daughters near St. Paul, Minn., her husband's hometown, and cherished

her Catholic faith. Now 56, she is an empty-nester who volunteers often and paints religious icons.

Last summer, Jan was applying for her enhanced driver's license, and the Transportation Security Administration couldn't find her birth certificate. Finally, she resolved to send for another one from Pennsylvania, where she was born and raised. The state website noted that it would soon be issuing original birth certificates.

Eventually she applied, and the following month a copy of her original birth certificate arrived, bearing two revelations: her birth name, Theresa Anne, and her birth mother's name, Judy. The unusual maiden name prompted an online search, and within minutes, White Pages churned up a 1940 census showing that Judy had grown up—of all places—in St. Paul! She is 80 and still alive, living in Florida.

Within a week, Jan was mining

Ancestry.com. An obituary of her mom's brother listed his children, including one distinct name: a member of Jan's parish, St. Odilia, a thriving Catholic community in Shoreview, Minn.

Jan has known and worshipped alongside her first cousin for years!

The two have since forged a warm new friendship, meeting and texting regularly. Though her birth father's identity remains unclear, Jan has determined that she has five half-siblings, including one in Duluth, Minn. Many cousins live nearby, and Jan recently met an uncle in another St. Paul suburb.

Jan's spiritual life proved just as active as her adoption research. She took three icon classes and began the lay formation process for the Third Order Carmelites.

Reconnecting with her birth mom was never her goal, but suddenly it seemed prudent to reach out before someone else mentioned Jan to Judy.

And so, on a Friday night in August, Jan sat at her kitchen table and wrote a letter to her birth mom. The words and tears poured out.

"Thank you from the bottom of my heart for the gift of life and the gift of adoption," she wrote. "Thank you for having me baptized Catholic. I know God has been with me from the very beginning."

She expressed a willingness to meet, but left it up to her.

"I have prayed in thanksgiving for

you and my siblings and birth father for years," Jan wrote in closing. "I will continue to do so."

The letter was written in one sitting and in the mail the following morning.

Initially, Jan hoped for an immediate reply.

None has come, but she's OK with that. "God is so amazing to allow me to see these connections this side of heaven," she said. "He is working through me more and more!"

It's evident in her art: She has completed seven icons this year. Normally, she'd finish one or two. It's also evident in her abundant prayer life, including a daily rosary and many Masses offered for her birth parents and siblings.

"You have to be in motion for God to act," she said. "Prayer is action."

As the year draws to a close, Jan has a peaceful acceptance of the many remaining unknowns—and a joyful optimism for the future.

She'd love to paint icons full time to give to churches in need. She plans to learn the violin after retiring and eventually walk *El Camino* de Santiago (The Way of St. James) in Spain. She's dreaming big and believing, like never before, that anything is possible in God.

"I am living it!"

(Christina Capecchi is a freelance writer in Inver Grove Heights, Minn.) †

For The Journey/Effie Calderola

You can count on me

My husband and I raised three kids in Alaska.

It was a great place to live, but it was a long way from our families in the Midwest and on the East Coast. So when Christmas rolled around, we started out attempting the "I'll be home for Christmas" thing. The airports were—and still are—at their most frenzied then.



Santa had to find us as we spanned the United States. One child inevitably came down with a Christmas illness. We had to juggle Christmas programs, the greater cost of seasonal travel, the potential for blizzards thwarting us in at least one of the airports we had to negotiate.

It didn't take long to decide that we needed to establish our own Christmas traditions in our own house and save those long journeys to relatives for the summer months.

This was practical and made sense. But emotionally, it was tougher.

My neighborhood grocery must have seen me coming, and at my entrance would inevitably play, at high volume, Bing Crosby singing "I'll be home for Christmas. You can count on me."

It had to be Bing Crosby—a favorite of my mother's—and on cue, at those words, "you can count on me," I would puddle up and cry from the produce aisle to the deli to the bakery. I would try to compose myself in case I saw friends, but my coat sleeve would be soaked by the time I made it through the checkout.

Is there such a thing as "Catholic guilt"? Or is a feeling of family nostalgia built into this crazy season? I could not be counted on. Bing knew.

Christmas is a wonderful time, but it's definitely stressful. We want to carve out time for reflection while the culture pulls us in the other direction entirely. Parties, gift exchanges, cookies, checkbook shock, fatigue, to-do lists—it can be overwhelming.

And then there are the memories. My mom is gone now, and I look back and am proud that we made great effort and financial commitment to seeing our families. Friends would be heading to Hawaii or Mexico—favorite Alaskan destinations—while we'd be saving to visit family. We spent our vacation time seeing East Coast sights or sitting with Mom at her small-town pool while the kids splashed.

But sometimes at Christmas, I hear those words, "you can count on me," and I get a little pang. It is, after all, Christmas. And I wish I had one more with Mom.

Occasionally, I'll hear from a friend or relative that they are "estranged" from a family member. I hate to be too inquisitive so I don't ask why. But we all know families where somebody's angry at somebody. Or maybe someone's just drifted away.

If you are one of those families—if there is a sibling, a cousin, a parent, a child, a former best friend—with whom you no longer communicate, make an effort this year, if it seems prudent or possible. Take some of that promised quiet time, be completely silent before God and let him love you for a while with no other thoughts rattling around in your head.

Then, ask God if maybe it's time to reach out. The older you get, the more you know that life is incredibly short, our time on this Earth so limited. Maybe just a card, maybe a quick call. Just the basics, an "I love you" with no strings and no conditions and no accusations or expectations.

Just a very short, "You can count on me."

(Effie Calderola writes for Catholic News Service.) †

Our Works of Charity/David Bethuram

In 2019, Catholic Charities will continue to be 'light' for others

"Today too, amid so much darkness, we need to see the light of hope and to be men and women who bring hope to others."—Pope Francis

Women and men who bring hope to others—that's the mission behind what we do here at Catholic Charities in the



archdiocese. Many of the individuals we serve come from experiences of darkness: the loss of a job, an illness, a breakdown in their family structure. Many face homelessness and hunger.

At Catholic Charities, our work of bringing hope is more than just giving those in need a roof over their head or food to eat. It's about helping people become self-sustaining and realizing God's will for them. Life transformation is our goal.

Catholic Charities of the archdiocese of will be celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2019 with the theme "Be the Light."

For 100 years, Catholic Charities has been serving anyone in need and was founded after World War I. It was a time when women were left caring for their families, and children were left orphaned

following the flu epidemic. Bishop Joseph Chartrand of the-then Diocese of Indianapolis called on Father Maurice O'Connor to become the director of what was called the Catholic Community Center.

From its very beginning, Catholic Charities has been a pioneer in social services, leading the way in providing a holistic approach to an individual and family in need. It led the way in many innovative social service programs and partnerships with other Catholic health care and educational institutions.

Catholic Charities has grown tremendously beyond the Indianapolis area, expanding its services and coverage area to include the diocesan counties in and around Bloomington, Bedford, New Albany, Tell City and Terre Haute. It now serves 210,000 individuals annually.

Although a lot has changed since our founding in 1919, our mission has remained constant: to provide service to those in need, to advocate compassion and justice in the structures of society, and to call all people of goodwill to do the same. Our focus is on helping those who can move out of poverty and caring for those who are not able to do so. We serve in this way because our Catholic faith compels us to serve those on the margins and those who are most vulnerable.

Our experience shows that people face many types of poverty. For some, it

is situational poverty. Life was fine and then something happened, like a health issue or a job loss, and it sent the family spiraling out of control. For others, it is generational poverty: a cycle of poor parents having poor kids who then grow up to be poor parents with poor kids. The cycle continues unless something or someone intervenes to break it. Our commitment is stronger than ever in identifying and implementing strategies and opportunities which will lead those currently living in poverty out of poverty.

As we look toward the future, there is a tremendous need for Catholic Charities. We have been nimble and efficient throughout our history in providing compassionate care. All the people—archbishops, clergy, parishioners, staff, and hundreds of volunteers who have faithfully served in Catholic Charities—are important partners in our history.

As we enter 2019, let us together celebrate continuing to be "the light" for so many in our communities in need. Let us reaffirm our commitment to the next century of providing help and hope to all of those who need us most.

(David Bethuram is executive director of the archdiocesan Secretariat for Catholic Charities. E-mail him at dbethuram@archindy.org.) †

The Human Side/Fr. Eugene Hemrick

God's providence helps us to cherish the season of gifts

At no other time than the Christmas season are more gifts exchanged. To experience excited children opening their



presents and seeing the warm smile in elders receiving a gift in gratitude is a joy to behold. Allow me to give a suggestion for capturing an even greater joy in our season of gifts.

The Italian proverb, "*La provvidenza di Dio non manca mai*" translates, "God's providence never fails us."

The Christmas season is a time to especially recall God's providence. It is a unique opportunity to meditate on moments like the instant God thought of us and we became; to ponder, "Why me

and not someone else? Why am I living in this place, not somewhere else? Why am I blessed with supportive friends?"

In the Canticle of Daniel, we are reminded of God's providence in helping us through life. For example, we pray that the sun, moon and stars bless the Lord, encouraging us to be grateful for the beauty of the world's order and how it supports us.

"Seas and rivers, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. You sea monsters and all water creatures, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. All you birds of the air, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever" (Dn 3:78-80), reminds us how God sustains our necessities of life.

God's providence reminds us that even though we think we are in control of our life, it only exists thanks to God.

The Christmas season of gifts blesses

us with an opportunity to recall the ultimate gifts we enjoy daily thanks to God's providence.

Material gifts are a joy to receive, especially when they are given with care, and they warm a love-deserving heart. They turn the moment into ecstatic joy. We can only wonder how much more ecstatic we would be if we used our gifts to deepen the realization that all the goodness and beauty we experience are credited to a loving providential God.

May I suggest that each day during this season we thank God for the necessities of life, the beauty that surrounds us, the companionship of friends, our families and those who went before us and are the reason that we exist today.

(Father Eugene Hemrick writes for Catholic News Service.) †

Third Sunday of Advent/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, December 16, 2018

- Zephaniah 3:14-18a
- Philippians 4:4-7
- Luke 3:10-18

An atmosphere of delighted expectation overtakes this weekend's liturgy. It is "Gaudete Sunday," a name taken from the Latin rendition of the first word of the Entrance Antiphon, "Rejoice." The Lord is near!



Priests and deacons may opt to wear rose vestments. These vestments symbolize that the brightness of the Lord's coming

already is creeping across the horizon. Night is ending.

It is the Third Sunday of Advent. The Book of Zephaniah furnishes the first reading. It is a short book, only three brief chapters. This much is known about Zephaniah. He was the son of Chusi and traced his ancestry to Hezekiah, presumably King Hezekiah of Judah.

Evidently, the book was written between 640 and 609 BC, or during the reign of King Josiah of Judah. Josiah was a reformer, and his reforms were religious in intent and impact.

The kings saw themselves as representatives and agents of God. Aside from all else, their duty was to draw the people close to God. When the people were faithful to God, they brought peace and prosperity upon themselves.

Zephaniah believed this. He was a good prophet. This weekend's reading is an exuberant and bold exclamation of joy.

St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians provides the second reading. Philippi was a city, in what today is Greece, founded centuries before Christ and named in honor of King Philip, the father of Alexander the Great.

By the time of the first century, it was an important center in the Roman Empire, the location of a major military base.

Such centers often became the sites of Christian communities, as there was much movement of people through the empire. People moved to the great cities, bringing their ideas and values, such as Christianity.

As was the reading from Zephaniah, this reading is filled with excitement and joy. It foresees the coming of the Lord, and the Lord will come soon. Such was the assumption of many of the early Christians.

They thought that when Jesus came, all wrongs would be righted. Evil would be defeated. To prepare, devout Christians sought to conform themselves as much as possible to the Lord.

Paul proclaims that this holy transformation is occurring, declaring that the Christians of Philippi are unselfish and committed.

St. Luke's Gospel is the source of the last reading. In this reading, John the Baptist appears, urging that the man with two coats give one to the poor.

John also tells a tax collector to assess only the fixed amount. The Roman system of taxation was in effect legalized extortion. The law required the taxpayers to meet these demands.

The Roman authorities were not able or even inclined to send citizens of Rome into the far reaches of the empire to collect taxes. Locals had to be induced to do the work.

Local tax collectors were seen as greedy turncoats. They surrendered all honor and loyalty to their own for monetary profit, achieved through the crooked process of Roman taxation.

When the messiah is acknowledged, goodness and peace will prevail.

Reflection

These readings all predict the coming of God's power and justice. Such is the Lord's promise, however, that even while the Scriptures look forward to a sudden, dramatic coming of Jesus in glory, these readings this weekend also remind us that we can bring Jesus into our lives and into our communities by living the Gospel.

In the long run, Advent's advantage is that it prompts us to bring Jesus into our own hearts and surroundings.

With Jesus in our lives, sunbeams of hope and peace will pierce the blackest of moments. Jesus, the Messiah, came—and comes—as the light of the world. He is near! Christmas is near. *Gaudete!* Rejoice! †

Daily Readings

Monday, December 17

Genesis 49:2, 8-10
Psalm 72:3-4b, 7-8, 17
Matthew 1:1-17

Tuesday, December 18

Jeremiah 23:5-8
Psalm 72:1-2, 12-13, 18-19
Matthew 1:18-25

Wednesday, December 19

Judges 13:2-7, 24-25a
Psalm 71:3-4a, 5-6b, 16-17
Luke 1:5-25

Thursday, December 20

Isaiah 7:10-14
Psalm 24:1-6
Luke 1:26-38

Friday, 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

Saturday, December 22

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

Sunday, December 23

Fourth Sunday of Advent
Micah 5:1-4a
Psalm 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19
Hebrews 10:5-10
Luke 1:39-45

Question Corner/Fr. Kenneth Doyle

Single parents could benefit from more support from the Church

Recently you wrote a column about the vocation of singles in the Catholic Church and the need to pray for them. Unfortunately, you left out a whole cohort of people: single parents.



I have heard of only one ministry in the Church for us, and it was not in our diocese. We, as single parents, are expected

to support, guide and educate our children in a similar fashion to married folks, but we don't seem to get any of the time and attention paid to married couples.

It is very challenging to be all alone as a mother or father with the responsibilities of home-care, child care and work life. It is absolutely exhausting, and you are constantly second-guessing yourself because you know that the life and welfare of another human being falls totally on your own shoulders and no one else's.

Perhaps married couples might take single parents under their wings, mentor them and help see to their needs. (City of origin withheld)

This writer speaks eloquently to the plight of single parents, not an insignificant segment in contemporary America.

In terms of financial assistance, Catholic Charities in some instances has been able to help; the website of Catholic Charities USA indicates where grants might be available for such needs as housing, medical and dental care and legal assistance. But with regard to broader programs, I would say that the Church at this point primarily helps single parents in a piecemeal fashion at the local level.

The Archdiocese of Newark, N.J., for instance, offers support groups specific to single parents—providing them an opportunity to associate with their peers and to talk about the various struggles they face bringing up children alone. Throughout the country, a number of individual parishes are beginning to offer similar programs.

The parish of St. Stephen in Valley Center, Calif., for example, offers single parents the chance to meet regularly to discuss such challenges as "ride sharing, getting children to and from activities, baby-sitting, budgeting, planning and dealing with alternate holiday schedules and visitations."

I would recommend contacting the family life office in your diocese to see whether such programs might be available locally.

My question centers on the physical appearance of the body of Jesus as he hangs on various crucifixes. I have yet to see one which conveys the suffering that Christ must have experienced during his scourging, when straps covered with iron hooks penetrated to the bone and tore off large pieces of flesh. (Georgia)

Certainly the suffering of Jesus during the passion went beyond what we could ever imagine. I remember many years ago, as a seminarian, reading a book entitled *A Doctor at Calvary*. It was written in 1950 by a French surgeon named Pierre Barbet and described the passion in detail, including the scourging.

Scourges have been found in the catacombs made of brass chains tipped with lead, and the Shroud of Turin would indicate that Jesus was struck with such scourges more than 100 times.

Interestingly, the crucifixion does not appear regularly in Christian art until the sixth century. Scholars suggest that early Christians were reluctant to portray their Savior in that way because crucifixion represented a dishonorable death in the Roman world, a fate reserved to slaves and criminals.

During the Middle Ages, the crucified body of Christ began to be shown more realistically. A 1503 painting by Lucas Cranach displays blood spouting out of Christ's nailed feet, the feet bizarrely twisted together and shapeless.

Such depictions were offered during a time when plagues ravaged Europe, wide-scale death was a daily occurrence and criminals were still executed publicly. Artistic tastes change, and we in the 21st century seem to shy away from such graphic images, but it helps to be reminded of all that Christ went through on our behalf.

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

Readers may submit prose or poetry for faith column

The Criterion invites readers to submit original prose or poetry relating to faith or experiences of prayer for possible publication in the "My Journey to God" column.

Seasonal reflections also are appreciated. Please include name, address, parish and telephone number with submissions.

Send material for consideration to "My Journey to God," The Criterion, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367 or e-mail to nhoefer@archindy.org. †

My Journey to God

O Divine Savior, Come

By Katie Rahman

O Wisdom, O holy Word of God,
Come, resound in the valleyed scars of my mind
and make new again as you speak to me of you.

O Sacred Lord of ancient Israel,
Come, seek your wandering servant
and guard me from the master of lies.

O Flower of Jesse's stem,
Come, rescue my soul from shame
and heal me with the balm of forgiveness.

O Key of David, O royal Power of Israel,
Come, unlock me from the habits that imprison
and free me from the fears that trap.

O Radiant Dawn,
Come, light my way when darkness veils
and warm me with your indwelling love.

O King of all the nations,
Come, reclaim your creation
and establish your rule as my desire.

O Emmanuel,
Come, be with me now
and come, be with me at the end.



(Katie Rahman is a member of St. Patrick Parish in Terre Haute. Photo: The Holy Family is depicted in a wooden creche at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Rochester, N.Y. This poem is based on the "O" Antiphons of Advent, sung during Evening Prayer from Dec. 17-23 since at least the eighth century. Messianic imagery proclaims the coming Christ as the fulfillment of both Old Testament and present hopes. (CNS photo/Mike Crupi, Catholic Courier)

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.

BARNES, John A., 60, St. John the Evangelist, Nov. 16. Son of Tom and Mary Ellen Barnes. Brother of Kathleen Barnes Tekulve, Andrew, Christopher, Matthew, Thomas and Vincent Barnes. Uncle of several.

BRAUN, Marilyn, 72, St. Pius X, Indianapolis, Nov. 24. Wife of Mark Braun. Mother of Christine Nation, Benjamin Gault, David and James Braun. Sister of Karen Placek and Dennis Wallace. Grandmother of seven.

CHANDLER, Velma R., 96, St. Christopher, Indianapolis, Nov. 25. Mother of Martha Hurley, Marsha Lehman, Braden, Charles, Fred and Harry Chandler. Sister of Ralph Copen. Grandmother of 17. Great-grandmother of 27.

CONWAY, Jeanne G., 86, St. Mary, Greensburg, Nov. 27. Mother of Sandy Wenning. Grandmother of one. Great-grandmother of four.

CORBETT, John K., 76, St. Luke the Evangelist, Indianapolis, Nov. 23. Husband of Judy Corbett. Father of Kristy and Kasey Corbett. Brother of Martha Barber, Pat Moore and Wayne Corbett. Grandfather of two.

COURTNEY, Joan (Loughery), 95, St. Luke the Evangelist, Indianapolis, Oct. 31. Mother of Nancy Carlsen, Judy McNulty, Carolyn Rydberg, Susan and John Courtney. Sister of Jim Loughery. Grandmother of 15. Great-grandmother of 13.

DAILEY, James E., 80, St. John the Evangelist, Indianapolis, Nov. 26. Husband of Diane Schludecker. Father of Jennifer Prifogle. Brother of Naomi Trapp and Carly Dailey. Grandfather of three.

DILGER, Norbert J., 85, St. John Paul II, Sellersburg, Nov. 27. Father of Myra Coomes and Sandy Juliot. Brother of Arlene Renn and Lois Stephany. Grandfather of three.

ELSNER, Oscar A., 89, St. Joseph, Jennings County, Nov. 26. Father of Rose, Andy, Jim, Mark and Steve Elsner. Grandfather of 10. Great-grandfather of several.

HUEHLS, Sharon K., 72, Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary, Indianapolis, Nov. 30. Wife of Mark Huehls. Mother of Melissa Hyland, Rebecca King, Andrew and Keith Huehls. Sister of Debbie Boswell and Jackie Swartz. Grandmother of four.

KAUFMAN, Dorothy A., 97, Immaculate Heart of Mary, Indianapolis, Nov. 25. Mother of Gloria Bond, Dorothy Riley, James, Lawrence and Mark Kaufman. Sister of Mary Bowman. Grandmother of 10. Great-grandmother of several.

KEESLING, Louise, 92, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Richmond, Nov. 28. Grandmother of four. Great-grandmother of two.

KENDALL, Shirley A. (Glenn), 86, St. Michael, Cannelton, Nov. 17. Mother of Kris Bland and Matt Kendall. Grandmother of seven. Great-grandmother of three.



Presidential send off

Former U.S. President George W. Bush reaches to touch the flag-draped casket of former President George H.W. Bush after speaking at his father's state funeral on Dec. 5 at the Episcopal Church's Washington National Cathedral. The remains of the deceased president were laid to rest the following day at the George H.W. Bush Presidential Library in College Station, Texas. (CNS photo/Alex Brandon, pool via Reuters)

KRUER, Mary J., 91, St. John Paul II, Sellersburg, Nov. 25. Sister of Betty, Jerry and Roy Kruer. Aunt of several.

LAKERS, Peter J., 55, Holy Family, New Albany, Nov. 21. Husband of Corina Lakers. Father of Cody Erlei, Paul and Raymond Lakers. Son of Joseph and Ruth Lakers. Brother of Anna Kieliszewski, Paul and Raymond Lakers.

LAUB, Shirlene, 83, St. Charles Borromeo, Milan, Nov. 20. Mother of Dawn Skaggs, Tori and Jeff Laub. Grandmother of nine. Great-grandmother of 17. Great-great-grandmother of three.

LAUCK, Mary Ann, 90, St. Matthew the Apostle, Indianapolis, Nov. 27. Mother of Mary Barr, Anne Mills, Carole Clark, James, John, Joseph and Paul Lauck. Sister of Don Bush. Grandmother of nine. Great-grandmother of nine.

MINATEL, Winnie, 90, St. Luke the Evangelist, Indianapolis, Nov. 25. Wife of Roy Minatel. Mother of Anthony and Victor Minatel. Grandmother of four.

MOORMAN, Ronald J., 45, Holy Family, Oldenburg, Dec. 1. Son of Herbert and Mary Moorman. Father of Caroline, Lydia and Bryan Moorman. Brother of Angie Rauch and Lynn Schwallie.

MYERS, Mary Jane, 87, Holy Spirit, Indianapolis, Nov. 26. Mother of Jayne McGuinness, Kelly Peters, Lynda Weaver and Jay Myers. Sister of Carole Blankenship and Harry Shimer. Grandmother of eight. Great-grandmother of two.

NOËL, H. Jerome, Jr., 68, St. Luke the Evangelist, Indianapolis, Nov. 20. Husband of Michele Noël. Father of Christopher, H. Jerome III, Patrick and William Noël. Brother of Louise Malachowski, Carol, Irma, Nancy and William Noël.

OLIVER, Shirley (Baldock), 77, St. Charles Borromeo, Milan, Nov. 23. Wife of Philip Oliver. Mother of Janice Frank and Michell Frey. Sister of Betty Westermeyer. Grandmother of two.

PIFFNER, Lora M., 53, St. Bartholomew, Columbus, Nov. 21. Wife of Ted Piffner. Mother of Kiley and Jonathan Piffner. Sister of Wende Westhoff and Chad Welke.

PITSTICK, Leona C., 83, St. Gabriel, Connersville, Nov. 25. Mother of Milissa Miller, Beth Ann White, Bart and Michael Pitstick. Grandmother of 12. Great-grandmother of 11.

RICHEY, Alene (Bloom), 100, St. Mary, Greensburg, Dec. 3. Mother of Randy and Robin Richey. Grandmother of seven. Great-grandmother of nine.

ROELL, Joseph, 76, St. Vincent de Paul, Shelby County, Nov. 25. Husband of Sherry Roell. Father of Melissa Coulter, Dusty, Shane and Slade Roell. Brother of Linda Hudson, Donna Yarling and David Roell. Grandfather of eight.

SHUFF, Jane T., 81, St. Bartholomew, Columbus, Nov. 14. Wife of Robert Shuff. Mother of Dan, Dave and Mike Shuff. Grandmother of eight. Great-grandmother of nine.

STEWART, Blanche, 89, SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis, Nov. 22. Mother

of Dena, Dana and William Barnett. Grandmother of six. Great-grandmother of 10. Great-great-grandmother of three.

VOEGELE, Rose M., 88, St. Louis, Batesville, Dec. 3. Mother of Susie Burkhart, Terri Litmer, Marilyn Manlove, Dan, Jr. and Pat Voegele. Sister of Carolyn Robinson, Fran and Jim Telles. Grandmother of 11. Great-grandmother of nine.

WARD, Mary Ellen (Glotzbach), 72, St. John Paul II, Sellersburg, Nov. 19. Wife of Doug Ward. Mother of Greg, Kevin and Scott Ward. Sister of Barb Glotzbach Mathew and Ron Glotzbach. Grandmother of five. Great-grandmother of seven.

WILKINS, Mary M., 88, St. Lawrence, Indianapolis, Dec. 1. Mother of Margo Hoaglin, Denise Renick, Christine Ross, Laura Smith, Theresa Wagner, Carol, Irene, Jeanette, Jeffrey, Phillip and William Wilkins. Sister of Dorothy Jawoski, Francis McGough, Barbara Wilkins and Steven Keefer. Grandmother of 23. Great-grandmother of 34. Great-great-grandmother of one. †

SEEK

continued from page 3

communities in the archdiocese in ways that might take months or years otherwise.

"We're able to expose them to the fullness of that in a four-day period," said Faley. "It's a great gift to us to have it here." Kinast agrees.



Rebecca Kovert

"It's a huge opportunity for people to encounter Christ in a new way," she said. "The Holy Spirit will be alive and active at this conference. I want people to enter into that and see the young Church alive. That will feed what is happening on campuses or in parishes so that they're alive and thriving."

Kovert, event and volunteer coordinator for the archdiocesan Young Adult and College Campus Ministry Office, views SEEK as way to help young adult Catholics in central and southern Indiana to bring the Gospel to their peers.

"We can use this conference to truly make leaders that can go out and share that relationship with Christ with others and transform our community from within to make it a community of discipleship instead of just a social community," said Kovert, who served as a FOCUS missionary from 2013-15 at Bradley University in Peoria, Ill., and at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio.

Embracing the Church's mission

Faley, Kinast, Kovert and Vogel took the formation they received through

FOCUS and its conferences to be leaders in the Church.

"I grew in greater understanding of my mission as a Christian, it showed me the importance of vibrant team and staff life and most of all rooted all of my ministry work in daily prayer," said Faley of his time as a missionary. "I have the gift of bringing all of those things to my ministry with the archdiocese."

Vogel thinks the approach to ministry taken by FOCUS can help him if he is ordained a priest. FOCUS missionaries work on the organization's principle of "spiritual multiplication" in which they build up relationships and share the faith with a few students at a time, and then have those students go out and do the same with a few more students and so on.

"Building community and forming intentional disciples are two of the most important things a pastor can do," said Vogel. "Just do it as Jesus did it. Invest in a few and have them go out and invest in a few. Soon you'll reach the whole world."

Padilla says the same formation has helped her be a leader in the secular world and in her life as a wife and mother.

"No matter what you're being called to—married life, single life, parenthood, working for the Church, working outside the Church, being a student—FOCUS gives you the skills and the tools to have a stronger faith and to live out the life that Jesus is truly calling you to live," she said. "The mission of FOCUS is the mission of the Church."

(For more information about FOCUS, visit www.focus.org. For information about SEEK2019, including how to register for the Jan. 3-7 conference, visit www.SEEK2019.com.) †

Indianapolis to host SEEK2019 on Jan. 3-7

Criterion staff report

The Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS) will hold its SEEK2019 conference on Jan. 3-7, 2019, at the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis.



Although geared primarily for Catholic college students and other young adults, there is a "lifelong mission" track at the conference for adult Catholics. More than 16,000 people are expected to attend the five-day event.

Other tracks include one for college students and another for campus ministry leaders.

Keynote speakers will include Dr. Scott Hahn, Curtis Martin, Dr. Edward Sri, Chris Stefanick, Leah Darrow and Society of Our Lady of the Trinity Sister Mariam James Heidland.

Musicians playing at SEEK2019 will include Matt Maher and the Christian band NEEDTOBREATHE.

Mass will be celebrated daily throughout the conference. Eucharistic adoration and opportunities for the sacrament of penance, reflection and

discernment will also be available each day.

Commuter and day passes will be available throughout the conference. For more information about SEEK2019, including registration, visit www.seek2019.com.

Founded in 1998, FOCUS invites college students into a growing relationship with Christ and the Church, inspiring and equipping them for a lifetime of Christ-centered evangelization, discipleship and friendships in which they lead others to do the same.

In the current academic year, FOCUS has nearly 700 missionaries serving full time on 153 college campuses in 42 states and five international locations. In the archdiocese, FOCUS has missionaries at DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana University in Bloomington and Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis in Indianapolis.

The last SEEK conference, held in 2017, drew 13,000 participants, including students and chaplains from more than 500 colleges. Nearly 300 priests attended, concelebrated Mass daily and heard more than 5,000 confessions. †

2018: For pope, it was a year to come to terms with abuse crisis

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Francis marked the fifth anniversary of his election in March in the midst of a firestorm over his handling of clerical sexual abuse and



Archbishop Theodore E. McCarrick

bishops' accountability in Chile.

He soon apologized for his slow response, and invited Chilean abuse survivors to the Vatican and then all the country's bishops to meet with him in May. By mid-October, the pope had dismissed two Chilean bishops from the priesthood and accepted the resignations of seven others.

The firestorm began when Pope Francis visited Chile and Peru in January, but the trip also included a meeting with the region's indigenous peoples, marking an important stage in the preparation for the 2019 special Synod of Bishops on the Amazon, which will focus on safeguarding creation and on the pastoral care of the people who live in the region.

Also during 2018, Pope Francis traveled to the Geneva headquarters of the World Council of Churches to celebrate the ecumenical body's 70th anniversary; he went to Ireland for the World Meeting of Families; and he visited the Baltic nations of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

He spent most of October presiding over the Synod of Bishops on young people, and during the synod, he celebrated the canonizations of St. Paul VI, St. Oscar Romero and five others.

But the sex abuse crisis dominated news coverage of the pope's year, particularly after accusations were deemed credible that former Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick, retired archbishop of Washington, had abused a minor and for years had sexually harassed seminarians.

The pope accepted his resignation from the College of Cardinals, barred him from publicly exercising priestly ministry and ordered him to "a life of prayer and penance until the accusations made against him are examined" in a canonical process.

Less than a month later, Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganó, the former apostolic nuncio to the United States, inflamed the situation by claiming that Pope Francis had known of Archbishop McCarrick's history of sexual misconduct and of supposed sanctions imposed on him, but ignored or lifted them. Archbishop Viganó later admitted sanctions were never formally imposed, but he continued to insist Pope Francis ignored warnings about Archbishop McCarrick.

In mid-September, the Vatican announced that Pope Francis was calling the presidents of all the world's bishops' conferences to a four-day meeting at the Vatican in February to address the abuse crisis and better ways to protect children.

At the synod on young people, faith and vocational discernment, some bishops—especially from Australia and the United States—insisted the abuse crisis be a topic of discussion.

Australian Archbishop Anthony Fisher of Sydney used his speech at the synod to formally apologize to young people for all the ways the Catholic Church and its members have harmed them or let them down.

In the presence of Pope Francis, he apologized on Oct. 4 "for the shameful deeds of some priests, religious and laypeople, perpetrated upon you or other young people just like you, and the terrible damage that has done."

He apologized "for the failure of too many bishops and others to respond appropriately when abuse was identified, and to do all in their power to keep you safe; and for the damage thus done to the Church's credibility and to your trust."

U.S. Archbishop Charles J. Chaput of Philadelphia, a member of the synod council that planned the gathering, had asked Pope Francis in August to cancel the synod and focus instead on the abuse crisis.

In his speech to the synod, he urged his fellow bishops to reaffirm strongly and clearly Catholic teaching on sex, sexuality and sexual morality.

"Explaining why Catholic teaching about human sexuality is true, and why it's ennobling and merciful, seems crucial to any discussion of anthropological issues," the archbishop told the synod.

"The clergy sexual abuse crisis is precisely a result of the self-indulgence and confusion introduced into the Church in my lifetime, even among those tasked with teaching and leading," he said. "And minors—our young people—have paid the price for it."

While each of the 14 working groups at the synod reported having discussed the abuse scandal, in the end the final document removed a reference to "zero tolerance" of abuse that had been in the draft document.

But members retained a passage saying, "The Synod expresses gratitude to those who have had the courage to denounce the evil they have suffered: they help the Church become aware of what has happened, and of the need to react decisively" to ensure abuse does not continue to occur.



Pope Francis walks in front of a candle in memory of victims of sexual abuse as he visits St. Mary's Pro-Cathedral in Dublin on Aug. 25. Pope Francis apologized for clerical sexual abuse in Ireland but on the final day of the trip, he was accused of ignoring abuse committed by Archbishop Theodore E. McCarrick. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

The synod was enlivened by the presence of three dozen young people in their 20s and 30s who addressed the assembly, participated in the small groups, spoke at press briefings and—uncommonly at a synod—cheered for some of the speeches of bishops and other observers.

In the end, the synod affirmed that the Catholic Church and all its members must get better at listening to young people, taking their questions seriously, recognizing them as full members of the Church, patiently walking with them and offering guidance as they discern the best way to live their faith.

Pope Francis' trip to the former Soviet republics of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia in September coincided with the announcement that after decades of talks with China's communist government officials, the Vatican had reached a provisional agreement on the appointment of bishops.

Giving the government input on bishop candidates in exchange for official papal appointment to their office was a move widely debated. Some people, including the pope, saw it as an essential step toward ensuring the unity of Catholics in China with the universal Church, while others viewed it as an unacceptable concession to the Chinese government and a betrayal of Chinese Catholics who have risked their lives for decades by refusing to

allow the government to control the Church.

One positive result, however, was that for the first time, two bishops from mainland China were allowed to attend a Synod of Bishops, although they had to leave early.

Canonizing St. Paul VI and St. Oscar Romero during the synod, Pope Francis focused on Jesus' call to leave everything behind and follow him. "Do not walk behind Jesus only when you want to, but seek him out every day," the pope said. "Do not be content to keep the commandments, to give a little alms and say a few prayers: find in him the God who always loves you; seek in Jesus the God who is the meaning of your life, the God who gives you the strength to give of yourself."

The sainthood ceremony came seven months after Pope Francis published his third apostolic exhortation, "Gaudete et Exsultate" ("Rejoice and Be Glad") on how every person is called to holiness.

"We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves," he said, citing the example of "saints next door," as seen, for example, in "parents who raise their children with immense love, in those men and women who work hard to support their families, in the sick, in elderly religious who never lose their smile" (#7). †

Advent penance services are scheduled at archdiocesan parishes

Parishes throughout the archdiocese have scheduled communal penance services for Advent. The following is a list of services that have been reported to *The Criterion*.

Batesville Deanery

Dec. 14, 10 a.m.-10 p.m. at St. Martin Campus of All Saints, Dearborn County

Dec. 17, 7 p.m. at Holy Family, Oldenburg

Dec. 18, 7 p.m. at St. John the Evangelist Campus of St. Catherine of Siena, Decatur County

Dec. 19, 7 p.m. at St. Louis, Batesville

Bloomington Deanery

Dec. 19, 6:30 p.m. at St. Jude the Apostle, Spencer

Dec. 20, 6 p.m. at St. John the Apostle, Bloomington

Connersville Deanery

Dec. 18, 6 p.m. at St. Mary Campus of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Richmond

Dec. 19, after 6 p.m. Mass at St. Gabriel, Connersville

Indianapolis East Deanery

Dec. 18, 7 p.m. at St. Philip Neri

Indianapolis South Deanery

Dec. 15, 9 a.m. at SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi, Greenwood

Dec. 17, 7 p.m. at Our Lady of the Greenwood, Greenwood

Indianapolis West Deanery

Dec. 17, 7 p.m. at St. Thomas More, Mooresville

Dec. 18, 7 p.m. at St. Monica

Dec. 19, 7 p.m. at St. Susanna, Plainfield

Dec. 20, 7 p.m. at St. Gabriel the Archangel

New Albany Deanery

Dec. 15, following 8 a.m. Mass at Holy Family, New Albany

Dec. 16, 1 p.m. at St. John the Baptist, Starlight

Dec. 16, 4 p.m. at St. Mary, New Albany

Dec. 19, 6:30 p.m. at St. Paul Campus of St. John Paul II, Sellersburg

Dec. 19, 7 p.m. at St. Anthony of Padua, Clarksville

Dec. 20, 7 p.m. at Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jeffersonville

(Additionally, the following New Albany Deanery parishes offer recurring opportunities:)

Dec. 19, 6:30-7:30 p.m. at St. Mary-of-the-Knobs, Floyd County

Dec. 19, 6:30-7:30 p.m. at St. Mary, New Albany

Dec. 19, 5:30-7:30 p.m. at St. Michael, Charlestown

Dec. 20, 5:30-7:30 p.m. at St. Francis Xavier, Henryville

Seymour Deanery

Dec. 19, 7 p.m. at St. Ambrose, Seymour

Dec. 20, 7 p.m. for St. Bartholomew, Columbus, and Holy Trinity, Edinburgh, at St. Bartholomew

Terre Haute Deanery

Dec. 19, 7 p.m. at Sacred Heart, Clinton

Dec. 20, 1:30 p.m. at Sacred Heart of Jesus, Terre Haute †

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Woman who once assisted with abortions to address March for Life on Jan. 18

WASHINGTON (CNS)—Abby Johnson, who early in her career assisted in carrying out abortions, will be among the speakers during the 2019 March for Life rally on Jan. 18 on the National Mall in Washington.



Abby Johnson

Johnson, a one-time Planned Parenthood clinic director, is the founder of And Then There Were None, a ministry that assists abortion clinic workers who have left their position.

“Unique From Day One: Pro-Life Is Pro-Science” is the theme of the 2019 march, Jeanne Mancini, March for Life president, said during a media briefing on Dec. 5 in Washington.

Mancini said this year’s events will focus on the scientific discoveries that have led to new understanding about life in the womb.

“Science and technology are on the side of life in large part because they show the humanity of the child at a very young age,” Mancini told Catholic News Service after the briefing.

“We can hear and see a baby’s heartbeat now at six weeks. There are blood tests to know a baby’s gender at seven weeks. Now that’s changed enormously over the course of the last few years,” she said.

The annual march for Life events

‘We can hear and see a baby’s heartbeat now at six weeks. There are blood tests to know a baby’s gender at seven weeks. Now that’s changed enormously over the course of the last few years.’



— Jeanne Mancini, president of March for Life

mark the Supreme Court’s 1973 decision in *Roe v. Wade* and its companion case, *Doe v. Bolton*, that legalized abortion.

The 2019 march follows encouraging news for the pro-life movement that abortions overall as well as the country’s abortion rate continued to decline in 2015, according to data compiled by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

CDC determined that the abortion rate in 2015—the last year for which statistics are available—is at 11.8 abortions per 1,000 women ages 15-44. The rate has dropped eight of the past nine years since 2006’s rate of 15.9. The rate of 15.6 held steady in 2008.

The overall number of abortions also continued to slide. The 2015 number of reported abortions was 638,169, about one-fourth less than the 852,385 reported in 2006. It is down 2 percent from 2014’s figure of 652,639.

The number of legal abortions in the United States peaked in the 1980s before beginning a slow but steady decline, interrupted only by the slight rise in, or holding steady of, numbers in the late 2000s.

Two days of events open with the annual March for Life conference and expo on Jan. 17. A panel discussion during the conference will include Dr. Grazie Christie, a policy adviser for the Catholic Association; Dr. David Prentice, vice president and research director of the Charlotte Lozier Institute; Rick Smith, founder of Hope Story, a nonprofit organization that helps families with a Down Syndrome child; and Christine Accurso, executive director of Pro Women’s Health Care Centers.

In addition, popular commentator Ben Shapiro planned to bring his podcast to the march for live recording at 10 a.m. (EST) on Jan. 18.

The main event, the March for Life Rally, is set for noon at 12th Street NW on the National Mall between Madison Drive and Jefferson Drive. Afterward, participants will gather for the official march on Constitution Avenue between 12th and 14th streets and make their way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The annual Rose Dinner closes the observance the evening after the march.

Details of events are online at marchforlife.org/mfl-2019/rally-march-info/. †



Grotto dedication at St. Agnes

On Aug. 15, 1982, Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara celebrated the dedication Mass for the Blessed Virgin grotto at St. Agnes Parish in Nashville. Archbishop O’Meara can be seen at the center of the photo. St. Agnes Parish was founded in 1940 and was at the north end of the town when this liturgy took place. The parish relocated to a new location at the west end of Nashville in 2003.

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

Reading of edict opens canonization cause for Sister Thea Bowman

JACKSON, Miss. (CNS)—Bishop Joseph R. Kopacz of Jackson read the edict to open the sainthood cause for Sister Thea Bowman at Mass on Nov. 18 at the Cathedral of St. Peter the Apostle in downtown Jackson.



Sr. Thea Bowman, F.S.P.A.

The church was packed with people who loved Sister Thea and can’t wait to see her become a saint.

Days before the Mass, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops unanimously voted in support of the cause moving forward during their fall general assembly in Baltimore.

Sister Thea, a Mississippi native and the only African-American member of her order, the Wisconsin-based Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, was a widely known speaker, evangelizer and singer until she died of cancer in 1990 at age 52. She even made a presentation at the U.S. bishops’ spring meeting in 1989, moving some prelates to tears.

Some of the songs she sang at that bishops’ meeting took center stage during the Mass.

Phyllis Lewis-Hale, a professor from Jackson State University sang “Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child” as a prelude to the Mass and brought the congregation to its feet with “We Shall Overcome” after Communion. Everyone in the church spontaneously joined hands and swayed as they sang with Lewis-Hale—much like the bishops did in 1989.



Mary Woodward, diocesan chancellor in Jackson, Miss., displays the edict for the canonization cause of Sister Thea Bowman on Nov. 18 at Cathedral of St. Peter the Apostle. Jackson Bishop Joseph R. Kopacz, at left, read the edict at the start of the Mass.

(CNS photo/Maureen Smith, *Mississippi Catholic*)

Members of the choir from Sister Thea’s home parish of Holy Child Jesus in Canton offered “Be Encouraged” during Communion.

Bernadette Otto-Russell, one of the singers, first sang in Sister Thea’s choir when she was in the third grade.

“This was awesome. This is an enjoyable and memorable moment—I’m getting full just thinking about it. I think the people that know Sister Thea—they know who she is, and they will always cherish her and also her memories. She will never die,” said Otto-Russell, adding that it was a joy and an honor to sing for her childhood teacher.

The postulator for Sister Thea’s sainthood cause, Andrea Ambrosi of Rome, and his assistant, Nina Bartulica, sat in the front pew with representatives from the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration: Sister Eileen McKenzie, president; Sister Marla Lang and Sister Helen Elsbernd, both classmates of Sister Thea; and Sister Dorothy Kundering, Sister Thea’s assistant during her illness.

“She was my sister and my friend,” said Sister Dorothy, who was all smiles after the Mass, greeting friends and enjoying the moment.

A delegation of students from Sister Thea Bowman School in Jackson handed out prayer cards after Mass. The students were thrilled to be a part of this historic moment for their school’s namesake.

Sixth-grader Alexander Mason said he and his fellow students know the story of her life and have learned many lessons from Sister Thea’s mantra that she wanted to live until she died.

“She taught me to always have perseverance and that I should never give up—even if I am close to death, I should keep on pushing myself to try,” Alexander told the *Mississippi Catholic*, newspaper of the Diocese of Jackson.

In his homily Bishop Kopacz quoted the old testament reading for the day from the Book of Daniel, “The wise shall shine like the splendor of the firmament. Those who lead the many to justice shall be like the stars forever.” He spoke of Sister Thea’s wisdom, joy and holiness, saying that today “her holiness shines upon us.”

The Diocese of Jackson has launched a website detailing Sister Thea’s life and the cause for her canonization at sistertheabowman.com. †

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