



The

Criterion

December 16, 2022

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A Christmas Message from Archbishop Charles C. Thompson Mensaje de Navidad del Arzobispo Charles C. Thompson

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

Christmas greetings and blessings to everyone throughout the 38-plus counties of the archdiocese and beyond! The Incarnation of God becoming human, the living Word made flesh, is cause for great joy. May we never grow weary or too old to embrace this great reality wrapped in mystery with wonder and awe.

This has been a challenging year for individuals and families experiencing economic challenges, health issues, alienation from family, violence, injustice, abuse, addiction, loss and uncertain futures.

This time of the year can be very difficult for many people. The tension caused by all the polarization, inflation and threats to human life impacts everyone at some level. Thus, we have reason to pause and ponder Emmanuel, God with us, as revealed in the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In both prayer and outreach, let us be especially attentive to those like Joseph and Mary, who find themselves struggling for the essentials during pivotal moments of life. Let us particularly remember those without a sense of belonging, meaning, purpose or the sacred in their lives.

Rather than gold, frankincense and myrrh, may we offer the gifts of dialogue, respect and mercy to all we encounter in honor of our beloved Savior.

Relying on divine grace to be witnesses of the hope and the joy of the Gospel, Come, let us adore Him!

Yours in Christ,

+ Charles C. Thompson

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

Queridos hermanos y hermanas en Cristo:

¡Saludos navideños y bendiciones para todos en los más de 38 condados de la Arquidiócesis y más allá! La encarnación de Dios hecho hombre, el Verbo vivo hecho carne, es motivo de gran alegría.

Que nunca nos cansemos ni estemos demasiado viejos para vivir esta maravillosa realidad con asombro y emoción.

Este ha sido un año difícil para todos aquellos que atraviesan dificultades económicas, problemas de salud, distanciamiento de la familia, violencia, injusticia, abusos, adicción, pérdidas y un futuro incierto.

Esta época del año puede ser muy difícil para muchos. La tensión que genera toda la polarización, la inflación y las amenazas a la vida humana afecta a todos de algún modo. Por lo tanto, tenemos motivos para detenernos a reflexionar sobre el Emmanuel, Dios con nosotros, tal como se revela en la Natividad de nuestro Señor Jesucristo.

Tanto en la oración como en el alcance comunitario debemos estar especialmente atentos a aquellos que, como José y María, se encuentran luchando por lo esencial en momentos cruciales de la vida. Recordemos en especial a quienes carecen de un sentido de pertenencia, significado, propósito o de aquello que es sagrado en sus vidas.

En lugar de oro, incienso y mirra, ofrezcamos los dones del diálogo, el respeto y la misericordia a todos los que encontremos, en honor de nuestro amado Salvador.

Apoyándonos en la gracia divina para ser testigos de la esperanza y la alegría del Evangelio, *venite adoremus!*

De ustedes en Cristo,

+ Charles C. Thompson

Arzobispo Charles C. Thompson





The front half of an estimated 1,000 participants in the Indiana March for Life in Indianapolis on Jan. 24 head toward the Indiana Statehouse for a pro-life rally. (File photo by Natalie Hoefler)

Indiana March for Life vigil, Mass and march and rally plans set for Jan. 22-23

Criterion staff report

The archdiocesan Office of Human Life and Dignity, in conjunction with the Diocese of Lafayette, Ind., and Right to Life Indianapolis, has announced the plans for the solemn *Roe v. Wade* observance events in Indianapolis on Jan. 22-23.

The events begin with a Vigil for Life co-sponsored by the archdiocese and the Lafayette Diocese at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, 10655 Haverstick Road, in Carmel, Ind. (Lafayette Diocese), from 2-4 p.m. on Jan. 22. Mark Hublar of New Albany, a professional speaker on the dignity of all life, is the featured speaker.

On Jan. 23, Archbishop Charles C. Thompson will serve as principal celebrant at a Mass at St. John the Evangelist Church, 126 W. Georgia St., in Indianapolis, at 10:30 a.m.

The Indiana March for Life and rally, both sponsored by Right to Life Indianapolis, will take place after the Mass.

The march will begin at noon starting from West Georgia Street next to St. John the Evangelist Church. It will proceed to the Soldiers and Sailors Monument (Monument Circle) then to the south steps of the State Capital Building at 200 W. Washington St.

There, a rally will take place featuring pro-life speakers.

For information on parking for individuals or buses for the Mass, march and rally, go to cutt.ly/INMarch4Life2023.

For other questions or more information, contact Brie Anne Varick, director of the archdiocesan Office of Human Life and Dignity, at 317-236-1543 or bvarick@archindy.org. †

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, 101 Hill Drive, in St. Meinrad, are as follows:

SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

Both liturgies will be livestreamed at www.sppc.org/streaming.

Dec. 24—10 p.m. Mass with Archbishop Charles C. Thompson as the principal celebrant. Parking will be available from 9 p.m.-midnight behind the cathedral and at the Archbishop

Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center, 1400 N. Meridian St. Dec. 25—10 a.m. Mass.

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Church

Seating in the Archabbey Church is limited; however, the Christmas services will be livestreamed at www.saintmeinrad.org/live.

Dec. 24—Vespers (Liturgy of the Hours) 5 p.m. CT, Mass 10 p.m. CT

Dec. 25—Mass 10:30 a.m. CT, Vespers 5 p.m. CT

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

Official Appointment

Effective January 1, 2023

Rev. Aaron Jenkins, pastor of St. Michael Parish, Greenfield, and St. Thomas the Apostle Parish, Fortville, appointed

archdiocesan chaplain to the Catholic Committee on Scouting for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, while continuing as pastor of St. Michael, Greenfield, and St. Thomas the Apostle, Fortville.

(This appointment is from the office of the Most Rev. Charles C. Thompson, Archbishop of Indianapolis.) †



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NEWS FROM YOU!

Do you have something exciting or newsworthy you want to be considered to be printed in *The Criterion*?

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Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

December 17, 2022–January 8, 2023

<p>December 17 – 5 p.m. Mass and pastor installation for St. Anthony of Padua Parish, Clarksville, at St. Anthony of Padua Church</p> <p>December 19 – 5:15 p.m. Serra Club Dinner for seminarians and guests at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center, Indianapolis</p> <p>December 21 – 10 a.m. Department Heads meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center</p>	<p>December 24 – 10 p.m. Nativity of the Lord—Mass During the Night at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis</p> <p>January 2-5 SEEK23 Conference, St. Louis, Mo.</p> <p>January 8 – 9:30 a.m. Mass at Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary, Indianapolis</p>
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The Criterion and Catholic Center are closed from Dec. 23 to Jan. 1 for Christmas holiday

This week's issue of *The Criterion*, which is our annual Christmas publication, is the last issue of 2022.

The Criterion will be published again on Jan. 6, 2023, and resume its weekly schedule.

The Archbishop O'Meara Catholic Center will be closed from Dec. 23 through Jan. 1 in observance of the holidays.

Archdiocesan agencies will reopen at 8 a.m. on Monday, Jan. 2, 2023. †

Pope Francis praises firefighters' service, calls them good Samaritans

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Francis offered a little prayer for firefighters: "Lord, let them not have work."

Meeting hundreds of Italian firefighters and their family members on Dec. 10, the pope praised them as true good Samaritans, always ready to save others from calamity.

"Your sense of dedication—and this is decisive, you have so much of it—promptness, selflessness, courage and willingness to sacrifice even to the point of risking your own lives are well known and people are rightly proud of it," the pope told them.

Service to others, both in emergencies and in the work of education and prevention, is an essential part of building a healthy society, he said, and is a value

that must be cultivated on and off the job.

With Christmas approaching, Pope Francis urged the men and women to think of how they should embody the virtues Jesus displayed: "closeness, compassion, tenderness; solidarity, service and brotherhood."

Born in a stable, "God came to save us by being like us," the pope said. "He did what you do: he came to rescue us when we were in danger, to save us, and he did it in the most radical way, knowing that he had to give his life to save us."

Pope Francis prayed that "the Virgin Mary, who went in haste to her cousin Elizabeth to help her—and you always go in haste when you are needed, don't you?—may she be your model." †



Pope's prayer intentions for January

- **For educators**—We pray that educators may be credible witnesses, teaching fraternity rather than competition and helping the youngest and most vulnerable above all.

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

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St. Roch Parish celebrates 100 years of ‘sacraments and service’

By Natalie Hoefler

In 1922, the world was returning to normal after suffering the deadly effects of the 3-year Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918-1920.

During those years, Bishop Joseph Chartrand of the then-Diocese of Indianapolis called upon the intercession of St. Roch, patron saint against contagious diseases. He vowed that the diocese's next parish would be named in the saint's honor.

Now, as the world once again cautiously moves forward from a pandemic, St. Roch Parish is marking its 100th anniversary.

“We’re preparing for the next 100 years,” says Father Douglas Hunter, the parish’s pastor. “This is a new beginning of our history.”

‘There is cause for rejoicing here’

That new beginning was honored on Dec. 11 when Archbishop Charles C. Thompson concelebrated a special 100th anniversary Mass at St. Roch Church. Joining him in concelebrating the Mass were Father Hunter, retired former pastor Father James Wilmoth and retired Father Nicholas Dant.

With the parish’s founding in 1922 and its school opening in 1924, the Mass and reception that followed launched a time of particular rejoicing in the faith community through 2024.

“On any Third Sunday of Advent, our sense of anticipation would be greatly heightened,” the archbishop said in his homily. “Add to the mix a 100-year anniversary, and the cause for rejoicing is only intensified for a parish.”

He noted that Father Wilmoth had once attributed the growth and vitality of the parish “to the dedication and

commitment of the people, describing the community of St. Roch as ‘a very active, ministry-oriented parish.’ I would imagine that your current pastor, Father Doug Hunter, would echo these same words today.”

While much has happened locally, nationally and internationally since 1922, the archbishop said, “Through it all, the community of St. Roch Parish has remained rooted in prayer, Scripture, sacraments and service. At the center of it all has been Jesus Christ. ...

“May the parishioners of St. Roch never grow tired of celebrating, proclaiming and witnessing to the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ. ...

“Taking it all in—past, present, and future—there is cause for rejoicing here,” Archbishop Thompson said in closing. “Happy anniversary!”

“I was moved to tears during the Mass,” said Wanda Daprile. At 96, she is among the parish’s oldest members.

“I wish my husband could have been here to see this,” she said of her late spouse Anthony. “He was so devoted to the parish.”

‘I just love this place’

The Dapriles raised their five children in the parish after moving to the area in 1963. The founding of the parish 41 years prior is described on the yellowed paper of an archived document from 1922.

It recounts how, in January of that year, a new parish was established in Indianapolis two miles “south of Sacred Heart Church for the people now living there and for the people that are sure to move out in that direction in the coming years. ...

“[T]he site selected for the erection of St. Roch Church was a plot of ground consisting of two acres in the 3600 block [of] S. Meridian Street, bordering Sumner Avenue.”

The parish’s first building was a combination church and school. Mass was celebrated in the basement until the top two stories of the structure were completed in 1924. The first floor then served as the sanctuary while the rest of the building served as the school.

So it remained until 1951, when the current church was built. The current school was completed in 1959.

For 75 years, the parish was served by Franciscan priests.

“In 1997, when the Franciscans said they could no longer staff the parish, Archbishop [Daniel M.] Buechlein asked if I would be pastor,” recalled Father Wilmoth. “I was the first archdiocesan priest in the parish’s history.”

He served in that role until he retired in 2018.

“I just love this place,” Father Wilmoth said emphatically at a reception following the Mass. “The people are just fantastic. They participate in everything.

“While I was here, we built the Parish Life Center, we renovated the church. And the people of St. Roch made that possible.

“The people here are so faith-filled. They’ve got real reason to celebrate.”

Father Hunter said it’s “actually pretty exciting” to lead the parish into its next century and beyond.

“I like planning for the future,” he said. “I try to show others in the parish to look to the future and plan for it, whatever that may be: what we see the parish needs or what the community around us needs, what is the future goal of our school—our biggest ministry. There’s a lot to look forward to.”

Listening to people’s stories during the last year has allowed him to “envision how [the parish and school] came about in the last 100 years,” said Father Hunter.



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson blesses the congregation at the close of a special Mass on Dec. 11 at St. Roch Church in Indianapolis marking the 100th anniversary of the parish’s founding. In front of the archbishop are St. Roch pastor Father Douglas Hunter, left, Deacon Jerome Bessler and Father Nicholas Dant. Behind the archbishop are Ezra Littell, left, Michael Riedeman and John Schneider. Sitting behind the altar is retired Father James Wilmoth, St. Roch’s former pastor. (Photos by Natalie Hoefler)

“One [story] that sticks out is when they ran out of money to finish the [school] building, and two men volunteered and finished it. ... You can see in each stone, whether in the church or school, that it’s tied to someone in this parish community.”

‘It’s just a big family’

Lynn Baumann (née Meyer) recalls the current school being built.

See ST. ROCH, page 12

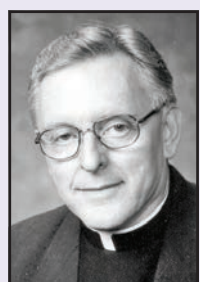


Lynn Baumann, left, a part-time assistant teacher at St. Roch School in Indianapolis, looks at historic photos of the parish with two of her students—third-grader Ethan McCoy, center, and fifth-grader Quinn McCoy—during the faith community’s 100th anniversary celebration in its Parish Life Center on Dec. 11.

Ordained at age 59, Father Harold Rightor served in parishes for 10 years

By Sean Gallagher

Father Harold Rightor II, a retired archdiocesan priest, died on Dec. 9 at Franciscan Health in Indianapolis. He was 79.



Fr. Harold Rightor II

Washington St., in Indianapolis.

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson is scheduled to be the principal celebrant of the funeral Mass. Father Robert Hausladen, pastor of St. Joseph Parish and of St. Susanna Parish in Plainfield, is scheduled to be the homilist.

Raised in the Lutheran faith, Father Rightor was received into the full

communion of the Church in 1991 at the age of 48. Just a few years later, he was accepted as a seminarian for the archdiocese.

“It wasn’t a case of being unhappy in the Lutheran Church,” said Father Rightor in a 2002 interview with *The Criterion* just prior to his ordination as a priest. “It was really God speaking to me in my heart. I’ve always been an open person.”

“Ministry was always sort of in the background,” he said in the interview, “and then it just seems like the Lord led me along the path he wanted me to, and when I joined the Catholic Church, wow, things just really went from one thing to the other at a pretty decent pace.”

At the time of his ordination, Father Rightor was looking forward to ministering to the faithful in parishes across central and southern Indiana.

“I truly love working with people and helping people,” he said. “When you’re very approachable, you can really win people over. Or they’ll come to you, and they’ll come to the Lord.”

Harold Warren Rightor II was born on

Feb. 28, 1943, in Beech Grove to the late Harold Rightor, Sr., and Mary (Fisher) Rightor.

He graduated from Arsenal Technical High School in Indianapolis in 1961.

Before becoming a seminarian, Father Rightor worked in several jobs in Indianapolis. He also used his vocal talents in several musical productions in the city and was the director and member of the Jubilation Singers, which sang in several churches.

As an archdiocesan seminarian, he received priestly formation at Cardinal Stritch University in Milwaukee, where he earned a bachelor’s degree; Sacred Heart School of Theology in Hales Corners, Wis.; and Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad, where he earned a master’s of divinity degree.

Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein ordained him a priest on June 29, 2002, in SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis. Father Rightor celebrated a Mass of Thanksgiving the following day at St. Ann Church in Indianapolis.

His first pastoral assignment was as associate pastor of Holy Spirit Parish in Indianapolis, where he served from 2002-04.

Father Rightor led the former St. Martin Parish in Yorkville and the former St. Paul Parish in New Alsace from 2004-07. He was administrator of the two faith communities in 2004 and was their pastor from 2005-07. He was also sacramental minister of the former St. Mary-of-the-Rock Parish from 2005-07.

In 2007, Father Rightor was appointed pastor of St. Mark the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis. That same year, his ministry assignment was changed, and he served as associate pastor of St. Joseph Parish and St. Ann Parish, both in Indianapolis.

Beginning in 2009, Father Rightor served as pastor of Annunciation Parish in Brazil and the former Holy Rosary Parish in Seeleyville.

He retired from active ministry in 2012.

He is survived by two sisters, Sharon Larmore and Carol Steindorf, and a brother, Jimmy Rightor. †



The Criterion

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Editorial



A girl holds a figurine of the baby Jesus after Pope Francis' recitation of the *Angelus* from the window of his studio overlooking St. Peter's Square at the Vatican on Dec. 11. The pope blessed figurines of the baby Jesus brought by children for their Nativity scenes. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

This Christmas, new year, be bearers of Jesus to a world that needs him

A light will shine on us this day: the Lord is born for us.

The responsorial psalm prayed during the Mass at Dawn for the Nativity of Our Lord on Dec. 25 speaks to the heart of what we celebrate on Christmas.

The Christ Child, in all his vulnerability and weakness, is born to Mary and Joseph in a stable in Bethlehem. The three Wise Men follow his star to pay him homage, bringing gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. It is a day we, too, should pay the Child homage, understanding our Savior who is Christ the Lord has been born for humanity. What a great gift from our Creator!

He will be a light for the world on this day and beyond, bringing joy to many who are his brothers and sisters, and helping others overcome the suffering, wars and sorrows that grip parts of humanity. We must remember: as we celebrate Christmas and every day beyond, it is this truth that must fill us with joyful hope amid the darkness many are experiencing.

As our late shepherd, Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein, wrote in his Christmas message in 2008, "All we need to do is look at a Christmas crib scene for a little while in order to realize that Christmas belongs to everybody. We like that. For one brief moment, Christmas brings everybody together."

Our current shepherd, Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, reminded us in his Christmas message last year, "In the person of Jesus Christ, God became one like us in all things but sin. He came to us so that nothing could prevent us from being reconciled to him and one another."

As we reflect on all that's transpired in 2022 and patiently await to begin a new calendar year, we encourage people of faith to "keep Christ" not only in Christmas, but in all they say and do during this season and in 2023.

Like the message the angel shared with Mary at the Annunciation, we must not be afraid of what is in front of us. Trusting in God's providence, we must

believe his Son will be with us on our earthly journey, and like Mary, respond, "May it be done to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38).

Archbishop Thompson in recent years has spoken poignantly and frequently about the need to build up the body of Christ throughout central and southern Indiana and beyond.

There is too much anger, vitriol and a lack of civility in many places, the archbishop has noted. An increase in violence, mental health issues and an ever-increasing polarization—along with humanitarian concerns and natural disasters—continually offer stark reminders that the human condition is in a very vulnerable state.

Although we face ongoing and sometimes unforeseen challenges, we must not let these situations overwhelm us. It is true that for many, it's getting harder and harder to see our Lord, to recognize him in all things and to follow him. But these are the times we need to run to God in prayer.

As Christmas and a new calendar year approach, why not make prayer, Scripture and the sacraments paramount to your life of faith?

If transforming your life is among your New Year's goals, we encourage you to reflect on two words in preparation: determination and perseverance. If you are determined, you will have a firmness of purpose and resoluteness to complete things you set out to do. Perseverance, we understand, means you will have persistence in doing something despite difficulty or delay in achieving success.

Our faith implores us to keep Christ at the center of all we do. It must be at the heart of each of our vocations. In today's ever-increasingly secularized world, determination and perseverance are needed for us to do just that.

As we celebrate Christmas, New Year's and every day beyond, may we be bearers of Jesus to a world that needs him more than ever.

—Mike Krokos

Be Our Guest/Mary Ann Etling

I hope you hear the bells this Christmas season

I was sitting in Mass last year at this time in Christ the King Church in Indianapolis. Though as I write this today



on *Gaudete* Sunday, I am many miles away attending Mass in a small village in western Kenya, I am reminded of the story the parish's then-pastor, Father Todd Riebe—wearing rose-colored vestments symbolizing joy—

shared about a 19th-century poet named Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

He told us that Longfellow had unexpectedly lost his wife Frances in a fire while she was warming wax to seal envelopes. Shortly after her death, his son, Charley, enlisted in the 1st Massachusetts Artillery to serve as a soldier in the Civil War. While on the frontlines, Charley suffered a nearly fatal gunshot wound. Longfellow traveled to the hospital in Washington, D.C., to bring Charley home and nurse him back to health.

On Christmas morning of 1863, Longfellow woke up and, in his deep depression, wrote what would become the poem and hymn, "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day." As I got into the car to drive home from Mass, I typed it in on Spotify. The top result was a rendition by the musical group Casting Crowns. I could not recommend it more.

It begins, "I heard the bells on Christmas Day, their old, familiar carols play, and wild and sweet, the words repeat of peace on Earth, goodwill to men . . ."

Admiring the beautiful homes adorned with Christmas lights as I drove, I was reminded of the familiar traditions and words we recite every year. Even now living in Kenya, I am witnessing new traditions and reminded that the Advent season and Christmas are universal.

Later, the tone in the hymn shifts: "And in despair I bowed my head; 'There is no peace on Earth,' I said; 'For hate is strong, and mocks the song of peace on Earth, goodwill to men!'"

I thought about Longfellow. How could he believe in "peace on Earth" amid a raging war outside his home? How could he trust in "goodwill to men" with the loss of his wife and the injury of his son? Are these just empty, false promises of words? How can we possibly rejoice when our lives and the lives of our neighbors are marked by undeniable human suffering?

The song concludes, "Then pealed the bells more loud and deep: 'God is not dead, nor doth he sleep; the wrong shall fail, the right prevail, with peace on Earth, goodwill to men.'"

Longfellow knew that his own suffering and the suffering of his neighbors would not be the end. He believed in something greater: peace, goodwill, a baby born in a stable to redeem our broken world. Perhaps the joy we are longing for is not based on our circumstances, but in the very reason we celebrate Christmas every year.

I keep listening to this song, reflecting on the priest's words, and telling people about Longfellow. I was unsure as to why I was so captivated by this story until I realized that our world needs this story.

This year may have been marked by suffering for you, for those in your community or for our neighbors far away. But Longfellow reminds us to cling to God, who prevails through every situation, no matter how dark, and brings about a joy that transcends.

This Christmas season, I hope that no matter where you are, you can hear the bells, too.

(Mary Ann Etling is a fourth-year medical student at Indiana University School of Medicine.) †

Be Our Guest/Phyllis and Bob Burkholder

In retirement, Father Buchanan shared his gift of priesthood in the confessional

Father Donald Buchanan, who died on Nov. 19, was truly a servant of God. We knew him from his response of "yes" every year when we called on him to hear confessions on Divine Mercy Sunday. Different parishes in the New Albany Deanery held the Divine Mercy Sunday celebration, and he was always very willing and able to drive to any parish.

This past year he came to our parish, St. John Paul II in Sellersburg in southern Indiana. Father Buchanan was undergoing dialysis three times weekly and had some scalp issues due to being in the sun too much from years ago. He was still very able-bodied as he moved along with his walker. He knew the true meaning of suffering.

In the confessional, he seemed to feel right at home and took his time in listening and sharing the words of our Lord—plus he had a wealth of knowledge, probably due to his many years as a chaplain in the U.S. Navy.

Father Buchanan was a holy priest and someone who could be counted on to drive the distance, be available to counsel, and feel right at home each year in the confessional.

The graces from the confessional received through him made us all feel worthy to receive our Lord in the holy Eucharist.

God bless Father Buchanan.

(Phyllis and Bob Burkholder are members of St. John Paul II Parish in Sellersburg.) †

Letter to the Editor

As we near the end of Advent and approach Christmas, let us be a people of hope

As we light another candle each week during Advent, I think of what we studied at Saint Meinrad Seminary.

Advent is about "hope," and hope can come in different forms: salvation, healing, peace, etc. Hope re-entered the world on Christmas morning with the birth of the Christ Child.

That hope would later see expression in the words of the adult Jesus, which centered on love and forgiveness. It would reach its ultimate fulfillment on Easter morning with the resurrected Jesus.

We learned at seminary that "resurrection" too, can come in different forms. There is our eventual end-times

resurrection, an "intermediate state" found in heaven, but also the kind of resurrection a person experiences when they come to know Jesus as master, Savior and best friend. They become changed, transformed, new. They step out of the darkness and into the light.

As we come nearer and nearer to the hope found at Christmas, let us as already resurrected beings give thanks to God, and then share this hope with others—especially through our actions of healing, love and forgiveness.

Sonny Shanks
Corydon



Christ the Cornerstone

Joseph accepts God's invitation to be guardian of our Savior

The Gospel reading for the Fourth Sunday of Advent (Mt 1:18-24) tells the story of Joseph's hesitation to take Mary as his wife because, as "a righteous man," he did not want to "expose her to shame" (Mt 1:19). An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (Mt 1:20-21).

The angel then quoted from the prophet Isaiah saying: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means 'God is with us'" (Mt 1:23, Is 7:14). St. Matthew tells us that "when Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home" (Mt 1:24).

As Pope St. John Paul II wrote in "*Custos Redemptoris*," Joseph was chosen by God to be the guardian of our Redeemer, the Word Incarnate. Although St. Matthew says that the angel "commanded" (Mt 1:24) Joseph to accept this awesome

responsibility, no one forced him to do this; he was given a free choice. He could have decided to marry someone else and live a "normal" life as a carpenter in the town of Nazareth. Instead, because he was a God-fearing, humble man who sought to do God's will, Joseph said "yes" to a vocation that he could not possibly understand.

Joseph brought Mary and her unborn child into his home, and he promised to care for them in good times and hard times, in spite of his understandable personal doubts and fears.

We know that Joseph's commitment was tested—first by the census requirement that forced him to travel with his pregnant wife on an arduous journey to Bethlehem, where he had to suffer the indignity of sheltering them in a stable. Then, after the child was born, having been warned by an angel in another dream, Joseph fled King Herod's murderous wrath and lived with Mary and Jesus as refugees in Egypt.

When it was safe to return to Nazareth, Joseph brought his family home. They lived there in relative peace and security under Joseph's protection and care, and the last we learn of him is

when Jesus was 12 years old and feared lost on the family's return from their pilgrimage to Jerusalem (Lk 2:41-52).

St. Luke tells us that when Mary and Joseph discovered their missing child in the temple he was "sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions" (Lk 2:46). Imagine how Joseph must have felt when Jesus, his adopted son, responded to his mother's urgent question, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you" (Lk 2:48) with a simple declaration of his independence: "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" (Lk 2:49). St. Luke tells us that Mary and Joseph did not understand what Jesus was saying to them, but, as they always did, they accepted what they did not understand, and they trusted in the Spirit of God who guided them in carrying out the divine will.

St. Luke concludes this amazing story about the Holy Family by telling us that Jesus did not insist on his independence. "He went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them" (Lk 2:51).

We know that Mary treasured all

these things in her heart, but we don't know how Joseph responded to the demands of helping Jesus grow "in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (Lk 2:52). We can only assume that he accepted in faith the things he didn't understand, and that he remained faithful to his utterly unique vocation until the day he died.

The Basilica of the Sacred Heart on the campus of the University of Notre Dame in northern Indiana contains a beautiful and inspiring portrait of St. Joseph on his deathbed in the company of Jesus and Mary. Their love and compassion for this good and holy man stands out for all to see. He has done what the Lord commanded. He has taken his wife and her son into his home, and he has loved them, protected them, and accompanied them on many difficult journeys.

Let's ask St. Joseph to walk with us during the final days of our Advent journey. Let's look to him as an example of what to do whenever we are confronted with challenges we do not understand.

St. Joseph, pray for us. Help us celebrate Christ's birth with reverence and great joy! †



Cristo, la piedra angular

José acepta la invitación de Dios para ser guardián de nuestro Salvador

La lectura del Evangelio del cuarto domingo de Adviento (Mt 1, 18-24) narra la vacilación de José a la hora de tomar a María por esposa porque, como era "un hombre justo," no quería "exponerla a vergüenza pública" (Mt 1:19). Un ángel del Señor se le apareció en sueños y le dijo: "José, hijo de David, no temas recibir a María por esposa, porque ella ha concebido por obra del Espíritu Santo. Dará a luz un hijo, y le pondrás por nombre Jesús, porque él salvará a su pueblo de sus pecados" (Mt 1:20-21).

Entonces el ángel citó al profeta Isaías diciendo: "La virgen concebirá y dará a luz un hijo, y lo llamarán Emanuel, que significa 'Dios con nosotros'" (Mt 1:23; Is 7:14). San Mateo nos dice que "Cuando José se despertó, hizo lo que el ángel del Señor le había mandado y recibió a María por esposa" (Mt 1:24).

Como escribió el Papa San Juan Pablo II en "*Custos Redemptoris*," José fue elegido por Dios para ser el guardián de nuestro Redentor, el Verbo encarnado. Aunque San Mateo dice que el ángel "mandó" (Mt 1:24) a que José aceptara esta impresionante responsabilidad, nadie le obligó a hacerlo; tuvo libre elección. Podría

haber decidido casarse con otra persona y llevar una vida "normal" como carpintero en la ciudad de Nazaret. En cambio, como era un hombre temeroso de Dios, humilde, que buscaba hacer la voluntad de Dios, José dijo «sí» a una vocación que no podía comprender.

José acogió en su casa a María y a su hijo no nacido, y prometió cuidar de ellos en los buenos y en los malos momentos, a pesar de sus comprensibles dudas y temores personales.

Sabemos que el compromiso de José fue puesto a prueba, primero por el requisito del censo que le obligó a viajar con su esposa embarazada en un arduo viaje hasta Belén, donde tuvo que sufrir la indignidad de albergarlos en un establo. Después de que naciera el niño, tras la advertencia que recibió de un ángel en otro sueño, José huyó de la ira asesina del rey Herodes y vivió con María y Jesús como refugiados en Egipto.

Cuando fue seguro regresar a Nazaret, José llevó a su familia a casa. Allí vivían en relativa paz y seguridad bajo la protección y el cuidado de José, y lo último que sabemos de él es cuando Jesús tenía 12 años y temió haberlo perdido durante la

peregrinación de la familia a Jerusalén (Lc 2:41-52).

San Lucas cuenta que, cuando María y José descubrieron a su hijo desaparecido en el templo, estaba "sentado entre los maestros, escuchándolos y haciéndoles preguntas" (Lc 2:46). Imagínese cómo debió de sentirse José cuando Jesús, su hijo adoptivo, respondió a la urgente pregunta de su madre: "Hijo, ¿por qué te has portado así con nosotros?—le dijo su madre—. ¡Mira que tu padre y yo te hemos estado buscando angustiados!" (Lc 2:48) con una sencilla declaración de su independencia: "¿No sabían que tengo que estar en la casa de mi Padre?" (Lc 2:49). San Lucas nos dice que María y José no entendían lo que Jesús les decía, pero, como hacían siempre, aceptaron lo que no entendían, y confiaron en el Espíritu de Dios que les guiaba para cumplir la voluntad divina.

San Lucas concluye esta asombrosa historia sobre la Sagrada Familia contándonos que Jesús no insistió en cuanto a su independencia. "bajó con sus padres a Nazaret y vivió sujeto a ellos" (Lc 2:51).

Sabemos que María atesoraba todas

estas cosas en su corazón, pero no sabemos cómo respondió José a las exigencias de ayudar a Jesús a crecer "en sabiduría y estatura, y cada vez más gozaba del favor de Dios y de toda la gente" (Lc 2:52). Solo podemos suponer que aceptó con fe las cosas que no entendía, y que permaneció fiel a su vocación absolutamente única hasta el día de su muerte.

La Basílica del Sagrado Corazón del campus de la Universidad de Notre Dame, en el norte de Indiana, contiene un bello e inspirador retrato de San José en su lecho de muerte en compañía de Jesús y María. Su amor y compasión por este hombre bueno y santo salta a la vista de todos. Hizo lo que el Señor le ordenó. Acogió en su casa a su mujer y a su hijo, y los amó, protegió y acompañó en muchos recorridos difíciles.

Pidamos a san José que camine con nosotros durante los últimos días de nuestro camino de Adviento. Veámosle como ejemplo de lo que hay que hacer cuando nos enfrentamos a retos que no comprendemos.

San José, ora por nosotros. ¡Ayúdanos a celebrar el nacimiento de Cristo con reverencia y gran alegría! †

Events Calendar

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

December 19

The Villages of Indiana online Foster Parenting Virtual Information Night, 6-8 p.m., for those interested in becoming a foster parent, free. Information, registration: 317-775-6500 or cutt.ly/villagesindyreg.

SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral Parish, 1347 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. **Simbang Gabi Advent Mass Novena**, 5:15 p.m., sponsored by Archdiocesan Philippine Ministry, day five of nine-day Mass novena, potluck reception to follow. Information: mariasolito@yahoo.com.

December 19, Jan. 16

Sr. Thea Bowman Black Catholic Women Monthly Prayer Gathering, via Zoom, third Monday of each month, sponsored by archdiocesan Black Catholic Ministry, 7 p.m. Join meeting: cutt.ly/SrTheaPrayer, meeting ID: 810 3567 0684 or dial-in at 301-715-8592. Information: Pearllette Springer, pspringer@archindy.org or 317-236-1474.

December 20

St. Lawrence Parish, 6944 E. 46th St., Indianapolis. **Simbang Gabi Advent Mass Novena**, 5 p.m.,

sponsored by Archdiocesan Philippine Ministry, day six of nine-day Mass novena, potluck reception to follow. Information: mariasolito@yahoo.com.

December 21

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

Holy Angels Parish, 740 W. 28th St., Indianapolis. **Simbang Gabi Advent Mass Novena**, 6:30 p.m., sponsored by Archdiocesan Philippine Ministry, day seven of nine-day Mass novena, potluck reception to follow. Information: mariasolito@yahoo.com.

December 22

St. Louis de Montfort Parish, 11441 Hauge Rd., Fishers, Ind. (Lafayette Diocese). **Simbang Gabi Advent Mass Novena**, 5:30 p.m., sponsored by Archdiocesan Philippine Ministry, day eight of nine-day Mass novena, potluck reception to follow. Information: mariasolito@yahoo.com.

December 23

St. Michael the Archangel Parish, 3354 30th St.,

Indianapolis. **Simbang Gabi Advent Mass Novena**, 6 p.m., sponsored by Archdiocesan Philippine Ministry, day nine of nine-day Mass novena, potluck reception to follow. Information: mariasolito@yahoo.com.

December 28

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

2023

January 6

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

Our Lady of the Greenwood Church, 335 S. Meridian St., Greenwood. **First Friday bilingual celebration of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus**, Mass 5:45 p.m. followed by adoration until 9 p.m., sacrament of reconciliation available. Information: 317-750-7309, msross1@hotmail.com.

St. John Paul II Church, 2253 St. Joe Rd. W., Sellersburg. **First Friday Devotion**, 11:45 a.m., litany, consecration to the Sacred Heart, Divine Mercy Chaplet followed by noon Mass. Information: 812-246-2512.

January 7

St. John Paul II Church, 2253 St. Joe Rd. W., Sellersburg. **First Saturday Devotion**, 8 a.m., rosary, litany, consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, confessions 8:10-8:30 a.m. followed by 8:30 a.m. Mass. Information: 812-246-2512.

January 7-8

Mary Queen of Peace Church, 1005 W. Main St., Danville. **Bruté Weekend**, Sat. 5 p.m., Sun. 8 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. Masses celebrated by Father Andrew Syberg, vice rector of Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary, talks on how the seminary forms future priests. Information: Ellen Sanders, 317-236-1501 or esanders@archindy.org.

January 14

Providence Spirituality and Conference Center, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Teen Volunteering Opportunity**, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., ages 12-18,

assist retired Providence Sisters. Information, registration: TeenVolunteer.SistersofProvidence.org, jluna@spsmw.org or 361-500-9505.

St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) Parish, 4720 E. 13th St., Indianapolis.

Gabriel Project Angel Training, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., lunch provided, free. Information: 317-213-4778 or moodyak1@aol.com.

January 14-15

St. Michael Church, 1400 Farmers Lane NE, Greenville. **Bruté Weekend**, Sat. 4 p.m., Sun. 10:30 a.m. Masses celebrated by Father Joseph Moriarty, rector of Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary, talks on how the seminary forms future priests. Information: Ellen Sanders, 317-236-1501 or esanders@archindy.org.

January 15

St. Bernard Church, 7600 Highway 337 NW, DePauw. **Bruté Weekend**, 8:30 a.m. Mass celebrated by Father Joseph Moriarty, rector of Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary, talk on how the seminary forms future priests. Information: Ellen Sanders, 317-236-1501 or esanders@archindy.org.

January 18

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

January 19

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

January 20

Northside Events and Social Club, 2100 E. 71st St., Indianapolis. **Catholic Business Exchange**, presenter TBA, rosary 6:35 a.m., Mass 7 a.m., buffet breakfast and program following, \$18 members, \$24 non-members. Register by 4 p.m. on Jan. 17. Information, registration: cutt.ly/CBE-Reg.

January 21-22

St. Jude Church, 5353 McFarland Rd., Indianapolis. **Bruté Weekend**, Sat. 4 p.m., Sun. 7:30 a.m. and 10 a.m. Masses celebrated by Father Daniel Bedel, spiritual director of Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary, talks on how the seminary forms future priests. Information: Ellen Sanders, 317-236-1501 or esanders@archindy.org. †

Providence Sisters offering 'In the Footsteps of St. Theodore Guérin' pilgrimage to France on July 12-22

The Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods are offering a pilgrimage to northern France called "In the Footsteps of St. Theodore Guérin" on July 12-22, 2023.

The pilgrimage includes stops in Chartres, Ruillé-sur-Loir, Etables-sur-Mer, Mont St. Michel, Bayeux, Alençon, St. Malo, Omaha Beach, Lisieux, Paris, Pléhédal and Ile de Bréhat. Visits include sites associated with the lives of St. Theodore Guérin and St. Thérèse of Lisieux, as well as cathedrals and places of historical importance from the medieval era to World War II.

The cost is \$4,849 per person for a double occupancy room, with a limited number of single rooms available for an additional \$969. The cost is based on a minimum of 27

travelers. Pilgrims must pay \$500 upon registering, \$1,200 by Feb. 1 and the full amount by April 1.

The pilgrimage includes round-trip air transportation from Chicago, including taxes and fees; nine nights in 3- to 4-star hotels; daily breakfast; one lunch and five dinners as noted in the itinerary; a professional tour manager to accompany the group in Europe; private motorcoach; sightseeing as outlined in the itinerary, including applicable entrance fees; and portage of one suitcase per person at European hotels.

For more information, a complete itinerary and reservation form, go to cutt.ly/GuerinPilgrimage. For questions, contact Providence Sister Susan Paweski at spaweski@spsmw.org or 312-909-7492. †

Catholic Business Exchange offers discount to Indiana Historical Society's 'Festival of Trees'

The Catholic Business Exchange (CBE) is sponsoring a Nativity-themed Christmas tree as part of the annual Festival of Trees held at the Indiana Historical Society (IHS), 450 W. Ohio St., in Indianapolis, through Jan. 7.

The tree is one of more than 75 theme-decorated Christmas trees. The public will vote on their favorite tree, with the winner announced in January.

As a tree sponsor, CBE is offering a promo code for \$5 off adult and senior (ages 60 and older) tickets when purchased online, making the cost \$10 for adults and \$9 for seniors. Tickets for children ages 5-17 are \$5, and there is no cost for children younger than 5.

To purchase tickets with the discount code, go to indianahistory.org, click on "Plan Your Visit" in the upper right, then select "Purchase Festival of Tree Tickets." Select the desired day and time, enter the number of tickets, then click on "Add to Cart." On the next screen, fill in the necessary information and enter FOT61 as the discount code.

IHS is open on Tuesday- Saturday from 10 a.m.-5 p.m., on Sunday from noon-5 p.m., and on Dec. 20 from 10 a.m.-8 p.m. It will be closed on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and New Year's Day.

When visiting, don't forget to vote for the Catholic Business Exchange tree as your favorite! †

Retreats and Programs

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

December 31

Mount Saint Francis Center for Spirituality, 101 St. Anthony Dr., Mt. St. Francis. **Prayer Vigil for Peace**, 7:30 p.m.-12:30 a.m., includes Eucharistic adoration, Scripture readings, music, reflection, free. Information:

cutt.ly/SFCNYEvigil or 812-923-8817.

2023

January 7

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Crossing the**

Threshold into the New Year—Day of Reflection, 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m., Benedictine Sister Kathleen Yeadon facilitating, \$45 includes lunch and program, register by Jan. 6. Registration: ftm.retreatportal.com/events, 317-545-7681 or jbunger@archindy.org. †

Wedding Anniversaries

JAMES AND JEANETTE (BULLOCK) GRANNAN, members of Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ Parish in Indianapolis, will celebrate their 65th wedding anniversary on Dec. 28.

The couple was married in All Saints Church in Cannelburg, Ind. (Evansville Diocese), on Dec. 28, 1957.

They have two children: Jealyn Verhines and the late Jeffrey Grannan.

The couple also has five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.



STEPHEN AND REBEKAH (DEPOSITAR) ARVIN, members of St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) Parish in Indianapolis, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on Dec. 16.

The couple was married in St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) Church in Indianapolis on Dec. 16, 1972.

They have two children: Anthony and Kevin Arvin. The couple also has one grandchild.



KELLY AND JUDITH (JONES) BARMANN, members of St. Joan of Arc Parish in Indianapolis, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on Dec. 23.

The couple was married on Dec. 23, 1972.

They have four children: Kerry and Meghan James and Kathleen and Patrick Barmann.

The couple also has four grandchildren.

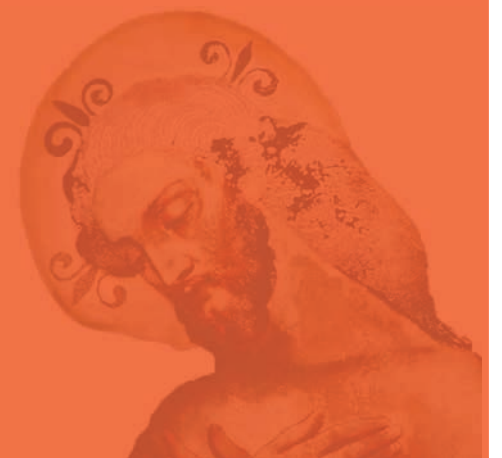


Announcements for couples celebrating 50, 55, 60, 65, 70 or more years of marriage are accepted. Go to cutt.ly/anniversaries or call 317-236-1585.



The Face of Mercy

By Daniel Conway



Difficult times: the spring of hope or the winter of despair?

The great English novelist Charles Dickens famously begins his novel set in London and Paris during the period leading up to the French Revolution with the words:

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair. (A Tale of Two Cities)

Does anyone doubt that we live in similar times? From one perspective, enormous progress has been made in nearly every field of human endeavor, suggesting that we are experiencing a “spring of hope.” But from another equally valid point of view, millions of people remain in poverty, the victims of war, injustice, and a bitter “winter of despair.” As Christians, what should our response be to the difficult times we are living in today?

Pope Francis’ homily on Nov. 13, the World Day of the Poor, responds as follows:

Let us take to heart the clear and unmistakable summons in the Gospel not to be led astray. Let us not listen to prophets of doom. Let us not be enchanted by the sirens of populism, which exploit people’s real needs by facile and hasty solutions. Let us not follow the false “messiahs” who, in the name of profit, proclaim recipes useful only for increasing the wealth of a few, while condemning the poor to the margins of society. Instead, let us bear witness. Let us light candles of hope in the midst of darkness. Amid dramatic situations, let us seize opportunities to bear witness to the Gospel of joy and to build a fraternal world, or at least a bit more fraternal. Let us commit ourselves courageously to justice, the rule of law and peace, and stand always at the side of the weakest. Let us not step back to protect ourselves from history, but strive to give this moment of history, which we are experiencing, a different face.

The pope’s admonition, “Let us not step back to protect ourselves from history,” speaks directly to our role in the unfolding drama of hope and despair. If

we are passive or uncaring in the face of the world’s evils, then we are guilty of the sin of indifference which Pope Francis observed, during the height of the pandemic, is a greater evil than COVID-19.

If we are able to overcome our indifference in the face of the crises we are facing in health care, poverty, social justice, wars and the economy, what courses of action can we take to make our world “at least a bit more fraternal”? Pope Francis believes that we can do something good even when our situation in life is not ideal. He says:

It is a skill typically Christian not to be a victim of everything that happens—a Christian is not a victim, and the psychology of victimhood is not good, it is harmful—but to seize the opportunity that lies hidden in everything that befalls us, the good—however small—that can come about even from negative situations. Every crisis is a possibility and offers opportunities for growth. Every crisis is an openness to the presence of God, openness to humanity. But what does the spirit of evil want us to do? He

wants us to turn crisis into conflict, and conflict is always closed in, without a horizon; a dead-end. No. Let us experience a crisis like human persons, like Christians, let us not turn it into conflict, because every crisis is a possibility and offers opportunities for growth.

The world thrives on conflict—reported hourly in the media—and our human tendency is to categorize everything as either black or white as we take refuge in opposing red or blue camps. But the Holy Father tells us that there is a significant difference between conflict, which is a dead-end, and crisis, which can present us with new possibilities and opportunities for growth.

The choice is ours. We can remain indifferent or we can accept the “difficult times” that we live in as grace-filled moments of opportunity. As Pope Francis sees things, our course of action is clear: “Let us light candles of hope in the midst of darkness.”

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

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

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

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

—Papa Francisco, “*Misericordiae Vultus*” (“El rostro de la misericordia”)

El rostro de la misericordia/Daniel Conway

Tiempos difíciles: ¿la primavera de la esperanza o el invierno de la desesperación?

El gran novelista inglés Charles Dickens comienza su novela ambientada en Londres y París durante el período previo a la Revolución Francesa con las siguientes palabras:

Fue la mejor de las épocas, fue la peor de las épocas, fue la época de la sabiduría, fue la época de la necedad, fue la época de la creencia, fue la época de la incredulidad, fue la época de la luz, fue la época de la oscuridad, fue la primavera de la esperanza, fue el invierno de la desesperación. (Historia de dos ciudades)

¿Alguien duda de que vivimos en tiempos similares? Por una parte, está la perspectiva de se han hecho enormes avances en casi todos los campos del quehacer humano, lo que sugiere que estamos viviendo una “primavera de la Esperanza.” Pero por otro lado, está la perspectiva igualmente válida, de que millones de personas siguen en la pobreza, víctimas de la guerra, la injusticia y un amargo «invierno de la desesperación». Como cristianos, ¿cuál debe ser nuestra respuesta a los tiempos difíciles que vivimos hoy?

La homilía del Papa Francisco el 13 de noviembre durante la Jornada Mundial de los Pobres, responde así:

Tomemos en serio la clara e

inequívoca invitación del Evangelio a no dejarse llevar por el mal camino. No escuchemos a los agoreros; no nos dejemos encantar por las sirenas del populismo, que se aprovechan de las necesidades reales de la gente con soluciones fáciles y precipitadas. No sigamos a los falsos “profetas” que, en nombre del beneficio, proclaman recetas útiles sólo para aumentar la riqueza de unos pocos, mientras condenan a los pobres a los márgenes de la sociedad. En vez de ello, demos testimonio. Encendamos velas de esperanza en medio de la oscuridad. En medio de situaciones dramáticas, aprovechemos las oportunidades para dar testimonio del Evangelio de la alegría y para construir un mundo fraterno, o al menos un poco más fraterno. Comprometámonos valientemente con la justicia, el Estado de Derecho y la paz, y acompañemos siempre a los más débiles. No retrocedamos para protegernos de la historia, sino esforcémonos por dar a este momento histórico que estamos viviendo, un rostro diferente.

La advertencia del Papa, “No retrocedamos para protegernos de la historia,” habla directamente de nuestro papel en el desarrollo del drama de la esperanza y la desesperación. Si somos

pasivos o indiferentes ante los males del mundo, entonces somos culpables del pecado de la indiferencia que, según señaló el Papa Francisco durante el apogeo de la pandemia, es un mal mayor que la COVID-19.

Si somos capaces de superar nuestra indiferencia ante las crisis que afrontamos en materia de salud, pobreza, justicia social, guerras y economía, ¿qué medidas podemos tomar para que nuestro mundo sea «al menos un poco más fraternal»? El Papa Francisco cree que podemos hacer algo bueno incluso cuando nuestra situación de vida no sea ideal. Expresa:

Es una habilidad típicamente cristiana no ser una víctima de todo lo que sucede—el cristiano no es una víctima, y la psicología del victimismo no es buena, es dañina—sino aprovechar la oportunidad que se esconde en todo lo que nos sucede, el bien, por pequeño que sea, que puede surgir incluso de las situaciones negativas. Cada crisis es una posibilidad y ofrece oportunidades de crecimiento. Toda crisis es una apertura a la presencia de Dios, una apertura a la humanidad. Pero, ¿qué quiere el espíritu del mal que hagamos? Quiere que convirtamos

la crisis en conflicto, y el conflicto es siempre cerrado, sin horizonte; un callejón sin salida. No. Vivamos la crisis como personas humanas, como cristianos, no la convirtamos en conflicto, porque toda crisis es una posibilidad y ofrece oportunidades de crecimiento.

El mundo se nutre de los conflictos que reportan cada hora los medios de comunicación y nuestra tendencia humana es categorizar todo como blanco o negro mientras nos refugiamos en campos rojos o azules opuestos. Pero el Santo Padre nos dice que hay una diferencia significativa entre el conflicto, que es un callejón sin salida, y la crisis, que puede presentarnos nuevas posibilidades, oportunidades de crecimiento.

La elección es nuestra. Podemos permanecer indiferentes o podemos aceptar los “tiempos difíciles” que vivimos como momentos de oportunidad llenos de gracia. Desde la perspectiva del Papa Francisco, nuestro curso de acción está claro: “Encendamos velas de esperanza en medio de la oscuridad.”

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

'Virgin and Child' stamp features one of world's most revered images

BOSTON (CNS)—Every two years, the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) issues a traditional first-class Christmas stamp showing Mary and Jesus, and this year's stamp features an oil-on-panel painting from the first half of the 16th century titled "Virgin and Child."

Attributed to a Florentine artist known since the late 1960s as the Master of the Scandicci Lamentation, the painting is in the Robert Dawson Evans Collection at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

The stamp was designed by Greg Breeding, co-founder and creative director of the Journey Group design firm in Charlottesville, Va. He is one of four art directors who regularly work with the USPS.

The painting depicts Mary gazing downward at the Christ Child, with one of her arms holding him protectively at his waist and the other tenderly touching his arm, while the Christ Child turns his head to look out of the frame to the left.

"I am honored to represent the Postal Service as we dedicate a Christmas stamp that features one of the most revered images in the world—the Virgin Mary holding her infant child, Jesus," Jenny Utterback, USPS organization development vice president, said when the

stamp was unveiled on Sept. 22 at the Boston museum.

The Postal Service has released religion-themed stamps since the 1960s.

The 2022 religious Christmas stamp is "a beautiful piece of art, with particular meaning this time of year," Utterback said.

"I choose my holiday cards with care, sign them with love or best wishes, and may write a personal note inside," she added. "Holiday cards are a special way to connect with family and friends. The stamp on the envelope holds significance as well."

"Virgin and Child" is a first-class, 60-cent stamp. It carries the "forever" designation, as do the other new releases from the USPS for the 2022 holiday season: "Holiday Elves," "Snowy Beauty," "Winter Blooms," "Hanukkah" and "Kwanzaa." The USPS said popular holiday stamps from years past also continue to be available.

The new Hanukkah stamp features a bright, multicolored menorah, or "hanukkiyah," which is a nine-branched candelabrum lit during the eight-day Jewish holiday of Hanukkah. Also known as the festival of the lights, Hanukkah is on Dec. 18-26.

It commemorates the miraculous victory of Judah Maccabee and a small group of Jewish freedom fighters who defeated their vastly more powerful Syrian oppressors in the second century B.C., regaining control of the temple in Jerusalem and the freedom to practice their religion.

The stamp for Kwanzaa, celebrated on Dec. 26-Jan. 1, depicts two children standing together with a "kinara," or candleholder, and seven lit candles, called "mishumaa saba," in front of them.

The candles represent the seven principles of Kwanzaa: unity; self-determination; collective work and responsibility; cooperative economics; purpose; creativity; and faith. †



(CNS photo/courtesy U.S. Postal Service)

'O Holy Night' tops all hymns used in churches in December, according to poll

WASHINGTON (CNS)—The Christmas carol "O Holy Night" ranked first in a list of hymns most played in December at Christian churches in the United States.

"O Come All Ye Faithful" and "Silent Night" ranked second and third, respectively.

The list was compiled by Pushpay, which offers electronic giving options for churches and its congregants.

It asked its 15,000 subscribing

churches last December what hymns they used that month, and released the results on Dec. 1. A Pushpay spokeswoman, Katie Griffin, could not supply a breakdown of Catholic parishes among those churches.

The top-10 list is filled with carols familiar to Catholics. Following the top three choices are, in order, "The First Noel," "Joy To The World" and "Angels We Have Heard On High."

Following those are two songs featured

more in the repertoire of non-Catholic churches.

"Glorious Day," which ranked seventh overall, was recorded by the contemporary Christian group Passion, featuring Kristian Stanfill on vocals. It is more of a salvation narrative without any lyrics taking note of the birth or infancy of Jesus. Still, the song's official music and lyrics video has received 6.6 million views on YouTube.

There are several versions of the eighth-ranked song, "Goodness of God." One video of the song has climbed up to 7 million YouTube views. The song is another in the Christian contemporary genre which focuses more on a first-person-singular, personal relationship with Jesus than a first-person plural voice

found more often in Catholic hymnody.

Ninth is the Gospel melody "Go Tell It On the Mountain," which has found a home in many Catholic hymnals and parishes.

And, to prove that the list took into account all of December and not just the week beginning on Dec. 25, winding up in the 10th spot was "O Come O Come Emmanuel," an Advent song based on a chant melody familiar to Catholics not only in the United States but throughout the world.

Griffin told Catholic News Service it is conducting the poll again this December. The top five songs from the 2020 poll were, in order, "Joy To The World," "O Come All Ye Faithful," "Silent Night," "O Come O Come Emmanuel" and "O Holy Night." †



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- You offer retreats and sabbaticals for current priests.

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United

in the Eucharist

Sixteen members of the Oldenburg Franciscans celebrate jubilees

Criterion staff report

In 2022, 16 members of the Sisters of St. Francis in Oldenburg celebrated significant milestones in their religious community.

The anniversaries are marked by the year in which the sisters entered religious life with the Franciscans. Some who entered in February celebrated their jubilees this year in anticipation of the actual anniversary of their entering religious life.

80-year jubilarians

Sister Jean Sora is a native of Middletown, Ohio. She entered the community on Sept. 8, 1942, and professed final vows on Aug. 12, 1948.

Sister Jean earned a bachelor's degree at Marian University in Indianapolis and a master's degree at the University of Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music in Cincinnati.

In the archdiocese, Sister Jean served at Our Lady of Lourdes School in Indianapolis from 1949-51 and at the former St. Mary School in New Albany from 1955-58. She also ministered in the Diocese of Evansville, Ind., and in Missouri and Ohio.

Sister Jean currently lives in retirement at the motherhouse.

75-year jubilarians

Sister Timothy Kavanaugh is a native of Beech Grove. She entered the community on Sept. 7, 1947, and professed final vows on Aug. 12, 1953.

Sister Timothy earned a bachelor's degree at Marian University and a master's degree at Xavier University in Cincinnati.

In the archdiocese, she served at St. Joseph School in Shelbyville from 1954-56, St. Vincent de Paul School in Bedford from 1961-62 and the former St. Gabriel the Archangel School in Indianapolis from 1971-2006.

Sister Timothy also served in the Diocese of Evansville and in Ohio.

She currently lives in retirement at the motherhouse.

Sister Irene Hoff is a native of Batesville. She entered the community on Sept. 8, 1947, and professed final vows on Aug. 12, 1953.

Sister Irene earned a bachelor's degree at Marian University and a master's degree at Xavier University.

In the archdiocese, she served in Indianapolis at the former St. Francis de Sales School from 1949-53, the former St. Bernadette School from 1953-55 and Our Lady of Lourdes School from 1955-58, and at the motherhouse from 1975-2012.

Sister Irene also served in the Diocese of Evansville and in Michigan, Missouri and Ohio.

She currently lives in retirement at the motherhouse.

Sister Claire Whalen (formerly Sister Mary Giles) is a native of Cincinnati. She entered the community on Sept. 12, 1947, and professed final vows on Aug. 12, 1953.

Sister Claire earned a bachelor's degree at Marian University, a master's degree in education at Butler University in Indianapolis and a doctorate in education at the University of Cincinnati.

In the archdiocese, she served in Indianapolis at St. Christopher School from 1949-56 and at Marian University from 1956-72, 1973-79 and 1987-91. She also served at St. Charles Borromeo School in Bloomington from 1972-73 and at the motherhouse from 1979-86 and 1993-2016.

Sister Claire currently lives in retirement at the motherhouse.

Sister Virginia Van Benten (formerly Sister Lucia) is a native of Beech Grove. She entered the community on Feb. 10, 1948, and professed final vows on Aug. 12, 1953.

Sister Virginia earned a bachelor's degree at Marian University and a master's degree in library science at Dominican University in River Forest, Ill.

She served in the archdiocese in Indianapolis at Our Lady of Lourdes School from 1953-55, Father Thomas Scecina Memorial High School from 1963-65 and Marian University from 1980-81. She also ministered at St. Susanna School in Plainfield from 1987-90 and at the motherhouse from 1990-2016.

Sister Virginia also served in Kansas and Ohio.

She currently lives in retirement in Batesville.

70-year jubilarians

Sister Doris Holohan is a native of Streator, Ill. She entered the community on Feb. 2, 1953, and professed perpetual vows on Aug. 12, 1958.

Sister Doris earned a bachelor's degree at Marian University.

In the archdiocese, Sister Doris served at the former St. Mary School in New Albany from 1954-56, St. Mary School in Aurora from 1956-59 and St. Louis School in Batesville from 1959-60.

She also served in Ohio and Papua New Guinea.

Sister Doris currently lives in retirement at the motherhouse.

Sister Janice Scheidler is a native of Millhouses. She entered the community on Feb. 2, 1953, and professed final vows on Aug. 12, 1958.

Sister Janice earned a bachelor's degree at Marian University.

She ministered in the archdiocese at Our Lady of Lourdes School in Indianapolis from 1954-58, St. Joseph School in Shelbyville from 1958-62, at the motherhouse from 1964-85 and Marian University from 1985-2013.

Sister Janice also served in Missouri and Ohio.

She currently lives in retirement at the motherhouse.

60-year jubilarians

Sister Margaret Maher (formerly Sister Catherine Siena) is a native of Cincinnati. She entered the community on Sept. 8, 1962, and professed final vows on Aug. 12, 1968.

Sister Margaret earned a bachelor's degree at Marian University and a master's degree in education at Ball State University in Muncie, Ind.

In the archdiocese, she served at St. Christopher School in Indianapolis from 1964-65 and at the motherhouse from 2006-21.

Sister Margaret also served in Ohio.

She currently lives in retirement at the motherhouse.

Sister Carol Ann Mause (formerly Sister Rosirita) is a native of Cincinnati. She entered the community on Sept. 9, 1962, and professed final vows on Aug. 12, 1968.

Sister Carol Ann earned a bachelor's degree at Marian University and a master's degree at Clarke University in Dubuque, Iowa.

In the archdiocese, she ministered at Oldenburg Academy of the Immaculate Conception in Oldenburg from 1995-97 and St. Nicholas School in Ripley County from 2012-16.

Sister Carol Ann also served in Missouri and Ohio.

She currently lives in retirement at the motherhouse.

Sister Daria Mitchell (formerly Sister Mary Alisa) is a native of Hamilton, Ohio. She entered the community on Feb. 2, 1963, and professed final vows on Aug. 12, 1968.

Sister Daria earned a bachelor's degree at Marian University and master's degrees at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, and the Franciscan University in Allegany, N.Y.

In the archdiocese, she served at St. Joseph School in Shelbyville from 1964-65.

Sister Daria also ministered in New York and Ohio.

She currently lives in retirement at the motherhouse.

Sister Barbara Riemensperger (formerly Sister Mary Cabrini) is a native of Cincinnati. She entered the community on Feb. 2, 1963, and professed final vows on Aug. 12, 1968.

Sister Barbara earned an associate degree in nursing at Miami University and a bachelor's degree at Marian University.

In the archdiocese, she ministered at St. Louis School in Batesville from 1964-65, St. Lawrence School in Lawrenceburg from 1966-68 and at the motherhouse from 1969-70, 1972-82 and 1984-2017.

Sister Barbara also served in Mississippi and Ohio.

She currently lives in retirement at the motherhouse.

Sister Marya Grathwohl is a native of Cincinnati. She entered the community on Feb. 2, 1963, and professed final vows on Aug. 12, 1968.



Sr. Jean Sora, O.S.F.



Sr. Timothy Kavanaugh, O.S.F.



Sr. Irene Hoff, O.S.F.



Sr. Claire Whalen, O.S.F.



Sr. Virginia Van Benten, O.S.F.



Sr. Doris Holohan, O.S.F.



Sr. Janice Scheidler, O.S.F.



Sr. Margaret Maher, O.S.F.



Sr. Carol Ann Mause, O.S.F.



Sr. Daria Mitchell, O.S.F.



Sr. Barbara Riemensperger, OSF.



Sr. Marya Grathwohl, O.S.F.



Sr. Diane Jamison, O.S.F.



Sr. Marlene Kochert, O.S.F.



Sr. Donna Prickel, O.S.F.



Sr. Mary Moster, O.S.F.

Sister Marya earned a bachelor's degree at Marian University and master's degrees at St. Mary of the Lake in Mundelein, Ill., and at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco.

In the archdiocese, she served at the motherhouse from 1986-94.

Sister Marya also served in the Diocese of Evansville and in Missouri, Montana and Wyoming.

She currently ministers as a spiritual director, in retreats and as director of Earth Hope in Billings, Mont.

Sister Diane Jamison (formerly Sister Gabrielle) is a native of Cincinnati. She entered the community on Feb. 2, 1963, and professed final vows on Aug. 12, 1968.

Sister Diane earned a bachelor's degree at Marian University and a master's degree at St. Bonaventure University in Allegany, N.Y.

In the archdiocese, she ministered in Indianapolis at St. Barnabas School from 1980-88, Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House from 1988-89 and Marian University from 2005-06, at Holy Name School in Beech Grove from 1964-66, Our Lady of Perpetual Help School in New Albany from 1968-69 and at the motherhouse since 2009.

Sister Diane also served in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Ind., and in Illinois, Michigan and Minnesota.

She currently ministers as director of ongoing formation at the motherhouse.

Sister Marlene Kochert (formerly Sister Mary Alicia) is a native of Lanesville. She entered the community on Sept. 8, 1962, and professed final vows on Aug. 12, 1968.

She earned a bachelor's degree at Marian University and a master's degree in education at the former Marygrove College in Detroit.

In the archdiocese, Sister Marlene served at the former St. Bernadette School in Indianapolis from 1964-65, Our Lady of Perpetual Help School in New Albany from 1966-68, St. Louis School in Batesville from 1975-79 and St. Gabriel School in Connersville from 1979-88.

She also ministered in New Mexico and Ohio.

Sister Marlene currently ministers as a pastoral associate at St. Mary Mission in Tohatchi, N.M.

Honoring St. Lucy



Lucy Kempf, a member of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Parish in Indianapolis, processes through her parish's church on Dec. 13, the feast of St. Lucy, who was a virgin martyr in Sicily, Italy, in the early fourth century. It is a centuries-old custom in Scandinavia to have a young woman—while wearing a white gown with a red sash (symbolizing Lucy's virginity and martyrdom)—to be the centerpiece of a procession. The lit candles on the young woman's head emphasize the light of Christ as St. Lucy's name is rooted in the Latin word for light.

(Photo by Sean Gallagher)

Disarmament is the only way to build peaceful future, cardinal says

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Disarmament is the only way to build a peaceful future, said Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state.



Cardinal Pietro Parolin

"We need to imagine and build a new concept of peace and international solidarity, remembering that so many countries and peoples are asking to be heard and represented," he said. "We need courage to bet on peace and not on the inevitability of war, on dialogue and cooperation and not on threats and divisions. We need military and verbal de-escalation" to rediscover the human face of others, the cardinal said on Dec. 13.

Cardinal Parolin was speaking at an event sponsored by the Italian Embassy to the Holy See in partnership with Vatican Media and the Italian geopolitical journal, *Limes*.

The meeting, which was attended by Italian President Sergio Mattarella, was dedicated to reviving the "spirit" of the so-called Helsinki Process, which was a yearslong series of negotiations seeking to improve the détente between the East and the West. It resulted in the signing of the Helsinki Accords in 1975, establishing the inviolability of European borders, rejecting the use of force or intervention in the internal affairs of other nations and urging the 35 signatories to respect human rights.

In his speech, Cardinal Parolin said, "We cannot help but wonder if we are really doing everything, everything possible," to end the tragedy of the war in Ukraine, "which began with the aggression perpetrated by the army of the Russian Federation" more than nine months ago.

Pope Francis has called for "the use of all diplomatic means, including those that have not yet been used, to achieve a cease-fire and a just peace," the cardinal said.

Cardinal Parolin said the possible use of nuclear weapons and atomic warfare is "terrifying," and it is distressing to see the acceleration of the arms race in several countries, especially when the huge amounts of money could instead be used "to fight hunger, create jobs and ensure adequate medical care for millions who never had any."

The world has seen "how real the possibility of sliding into the abyss of nuclear conflict is, even because of human error. Disarmament is the only adequate and decisive response if we are to build a peaceful future," he said.

The spirit of Helsinki should be revived "by working creatively" and finding new ways to address crises and war, he said, because the present and future cannot be based on "old patterns, old military alliances or ideological and economic colonization."

The cardinal called for "a new major European conference dedicated to peace," which should include the participation of experts and organizations dedicated to nonviolence and dialogue.

"The Holy See is ready to do everything possible to facilitate this path," he said. "We hope to revive the spirit of Helsinki in a renewed way adapted to the current situation."

He called for greater commitments "to put an end to the fratricidal barbarism taking place in Ukraine."

"Let us all commit ourselves to building a new system of international relations in which it is not just the powerful or the bullies who make the decisions. Let us return to the spirit of Helsinki to find the way back to peace in Europe," he said. †

Mary accompanies migrants heading north, pope says on Guadalupe feast

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—During this "bitter time" of war, hunger, injustice and poverty, Our Lady of Guadalupe invites everyone to open their lives to her son, Jesus, and to learn to love others like he does, Pope Francis said.



Pope Francis

"The Lord, through the Virgin Mother, continues to give us his son, who calls us to fraternity, to set aside selfishness, indifference and enmity, inviting us to get involved with each other 'without delay,' to go out to meet our brothers and sisters who have been forgotten and discarded by our consumerist and indifferent societies," he said.

Today, just like five centuries ago when Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared to St. Juan Diego, she "came to accompany the American people on this hard road of poverty, exploitation, socioeconomic and cultural colonialism," the pope said in his homily during a Mass in St. Peter's Basilica on Dec. 12, the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

"She is in the midst of the caravans that walk northward in search of freedom and well-being. She is in the midst of the American people, whose identity is threatened by a savage and exploitative paganism, wounded by the active preaching of a practical and pragmatic atheism," the pope said, in handwritten remarks that were not part of his previously prepared text.

Because of his difficulty with walking, Pope Francis

did not take part in the procession into the basilica and was seated to the right of the altar.

Cardinal Marc Ouellet, prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops, was the principal celebrant. After he incensed the altar, he made his way to a replica of St. Juan Diego's *tilma*, which bears the image of Mary, who appeared to the Indigenous saint in 1531.

In his homily, the pope reflected on the Gospel reading from St. Luke, which recalled Mary going "in haste" (Lk 1:39) to visit her cousin Elizabeth after the angel Gabriel told Mary that she would conceive the Son of God through the Holy Spirit, and that Elizabeth was also with child.

"In Jesus, born of Mary, the eternal one becomes forever and irreversibly 'God-with-us,' and walks beside us as brother and companion," the pope said in his homily.

"Our God guides human history at every moment; nothing remains outside his power, which is tenderness and providential love," he said, and "he never stops watching over our world—needy and wounded—eager to assist it with his compassion and mercy."

God sent Mary as messenger "nearly five centuries ago, at a complicated and difficult time for the inhabitants of the new world," Pope Francis said.

"Our Lady of Guadalupe came to the blessed lands of America, presenting herself as the 'mother of the true God for whom we live' to console and attend to the needs of the little ones, without excluding anyone, to embrace them as a caring mother with her presence, love and

consolation," he said. "She is our '*mestiza*' mother, that is, a mother of mixed race."

This year, the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe is being celebrated "at a difficult time for humanity. It is a bitter time, filled with the rumbling of war, growing injustice, famine, poverty and suffering and hunger," he said.

And yet, God shows his divine love and tells "us that this, too, is a propitious time of salvation," he said.

Our Lady "wants to meet us, too, as she one day met Juan Diego on the Hill of Tepeyac," Mexico, and "she begs us to allow her to be our mother, to open our lives to her son Jesus and to welcome his message so as to learn to love like him," the pope said.

Pope Francis urged all the faithful "of the pilgrim Church in the Americas" to take part in the preparations for the celebration of the Fifth Centennial of the Guadalupian Apparition in 2031, which began with the Guadalupian Intercontinental Novena on Dec. 12, 2022.

"This celebratory journey," he said, "aims to promote an encounter with God through Our Lady of Guadalupe, for the renewal of the social and ecclesial fabric of these peoples and communities."

However, the pope expressed his concern about "proposals with an ideological-cultural bent of various kinds that want to appropriate the people's encounter with their mother, who want to dismiss and disguise the mother. Please, let us not allow the message to be distilled" or filtered into something "worldly and ideological." †

OLDENBURG

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50-year jubilarians

Sister Donna Prickel is a native of Morris. She entered the community on Sept. 8, 1972, and professed final vows on Aug. 19, 1979.

Sister Donna earned bachelor's degrees at Marian University and at the Cincinnati State Bethesda School of

Nursing in Cincinnati.

In the archdiocese, she served at the motherhouse from 1976-77 and 1984-86, St. Vincent Hospital in Indianapolis from 1987-92 and as parish life coordinator of Immaculate Conception Parish in Millhousen from 2016-22.

Sister Donna has also ministered in Michigan.

She currently serves as parish life coordinator of Holy Trinity Parish in Edinburg.

Sister Mary Moster is a native of Liberty. She entered

the community on Sept. 8, 1972, and professed final vows on Aug. 7, 1982.

Sister Mary earned a bachelor's degree at Marian University and a doctorate at the University of Minnesota.

In the archdiocese, she ministered in Indianapolis at St. Lawrence School from 1976-78 and Martin University from 1993-95.

Sister Mary has also served in Missouri, Ohio and South Dakota.

She currently ministers as a clinical psychologist at Batesville Community Health in Batesville. †

Like 5th Circuit, 8th Circuit strikes down Biden's transgender mandate

WASHINGTON (CNS)—The 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in St. Louis on Dec. 9 permanently blocked a transgender mandate the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) had implemented as a revision to the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

The mandate would force doctors and hospitals to perform gender-transition procedures on their patients even if this violates their conscience and best medical judgment.

The 8th Circuit concluded the mandate violates a key federal law protecting religious liberty—the Religious Freedom Restoration Act.

The Biden administration has 45 days from the date of the ruling to ask the 8th Circuit to rehear the case, *Sisters of Mercy v. Becerra*, or 90 days to appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.

“Becerra” is HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra.

“The federal government has no business forcing doctors to violate their consciences or perform controversial procedures that could permanently harm their patients,” said Luke Goodrich, vice president and senior counsel at Becket, a Washington-based religious liberty law firm representing the plaintiffs.

“This is a commonsense ruling that protects patients, aligns with best medical practice, and ensures doctors can follow their Hippocratic oath to ‘do no harm,’” he said in a Dec. 9 statement.

The 8th Circuit’s ruling echoes a unanimous ruling by the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans, which struck down the mandate in a late August ruling in *Franciscan Alliance v. Becerra*.

The Biden administration had until Nov. 25 to appeal the 5th Circuit’s decision to the U.S. Supreme Court. But the deadline came and went without an appeal being filed, “meaning this win is FINAL,” Goodrich tweeted that day.

Becket represented Franciscan Alliance, a Catholic health care network, and a group of nearly 19,000 health care professionals who first sued HHS over the mandate in 2016.

On Aug. 4, the 5th Circuit heard oral arguments in the case.

“Franciscan Alliance and the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration seek to carry on Jesus Christ’s healing ministry by providing the best possible care to every person who comes through our doors,” said Sister Petra Nielsen, a Sister of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration, who is a member of the Franciscan Alliance’s corporate board.

“We are simply asking the courts to let us keep caring for all our patients with joy and compassion—as we’ve done for over 145 years,” she said in a statement released

by Becket ahead of the oral arguments.

Franciscan Alliance operates two hospitals in the archdiocese—in Indianapolis and Mooresville.

The 5th Circuit on Aug. 26 affirmed a U.S. District Court’s order “permanently enjoining [HHS] from requiring Franciscan Alliance to perform gender-reassignment surgeries or abortions in violation of its sincerely held religious beliefs.”

The government argued it should get more chances to show why it needed religious health care providers to participate in such gender-transition procedures, but the court said other cases showed that permanent protection “was appropriate—including, ironically, cases brought by the ACLU, who had intervened in [the case] to support the government.”

Becket said in a statement when the ruling was issued.

In May 2016, under the Obama administration, the HHS civil rights office finalized regulations for an ACA provision called Section 1557.

The agency added “sexual orientation and gender identity” to the provision, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex—including pregnancy—in covered health programs or activities.

The mandate required doctors to perform gender transition procedures on any patient, including children, and required private insurance companies—except plans run by Medicare and Medicaid—and many employers to cover gender reassignment therapy or face severe penalties and legal action.

On Aug. 23, 2016, Becket, joined by eight state governments, filed a lawsuit in Texas against the HHS mandate on behalf of Franciscan Alliance and the Christian Medical and Dental Associations.

After years of litigation, including an earlier appeal to the 5th Circuit and a remand to the lower court, a U.S. District Court granted the doctors and hospitals in



A court gavel is seen in this illustration photo. (CNS photo/Andrew Kelly, Reuters)

the case involved permanent relief from the mandate and protected their medical conscience rights.

The Biden administration then appealed to the 5th Circuit to keep the mandate in place.

The case that ended up before the 8th Circuit, *Sisters of Mercy v. Becerra*, was first filed in federal court in November 2016 by Becket on behalf of the Sisters of Mercy, the University of Mary and SMP Health System. The state of North Dakota also joined the suit.

In December 2016, two different federal courts ruled that the policy was “an unlawful overreach by a federal agency and a likely violation of religious liberty.”

In 2019, HHS under President Donald J. Trump said it would propose a change to Section 1557, and in 2020, the Trump administration issued a rule that defined “sex discrimination” as only applying when someone faces discrimination for being female or male. But that effort was blocked by other courts.

On Jan. 21, 2021, a court struck down the Obama-era HHS mandate, and the Biden administration appealed to the 8th Circuit, which heard oral arguments in the case on Dec. 15, 2021. †

After vote, House sends Respect for Marriage Act to Biden for signature

WASHINGTON (CNS)—By a vote of 258-169, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Respect for Marriage Act Dec. 8 and sent it to President Joe Biden for his signature.

Biden was expected to sign the bill legalizing same-sex marriage into law on Dec. 13, as *The Criterion* went to press.

The president praised Congress for a measure the U.S. Catholic bishops and other religious leaders have said does not clearly protect the religious freedom of churches and individuals who believe in traditional marriage between one man and one woman.

The House approved the measure by a wide margin in July, but had to vote on it again after the Senate passed an amended version on Nov. 29 in a 61-36 vote.

Senate Democrats were joined by 12 Republicans—including Indiana Sen. Todd Young—who backed the bill after they were satisfied with an amendment they said would protect the rights of those who oppose same-sex marriage on religious grounds.

But after Senate passage, the chairman of the U.S. bishops’ Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth said he was “gravely disappointed.”

Bishop Robert E. Barron of Winona-Rochester, Minn., said on Dec. 1 that the measure “fails to include clear, comprehensive and affirmative conscience protections for religious organizations and individuals who uphold the sanctity of traditional marriage that are needed.”

Decades of social and legal developments “have torn sexuality, childbearing, and marriage from each other in the public consciousness,” Bishop Barron said in a statement released by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

“Much of society has lost sight of the purpose of marriage and now equates it with adults’ companionship,” he said.

“We affirm our respect for the dignity of all engaged in this debate and acknowledge differing perspectives in our civil society,” Bishop Barron added, “but the impact of this bill will only contribute to the diminishment of the sacredness and integrity of marriage in our society.”

Ahead of the Senate vote, Bishop Barron joined Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York, chairman of the USCCB’s Committee for Religious Liberty, in reiterating the bishops’ “firm opposition”

to what they called a “misnamed” measure.

In a Nov. 23 joint letter to all members of Congress, the chairmen said they were writing “to implore Congress to

reverse course” on the Respect for Marriage Act, also known as RMA.

The letter said the bishops’ opposition to the legislation “by no means condones any hostility toward anyone who experiences same-sex attraction.

“Catholic teaching on marriage is

inseparable from Catholic teaching on the inherent dignity and worth of every human being. To attack one is to attack the other. Congress must have the courage to defend both,” the letter said.

The bill codifies the Supreme Court’s 2015 ruling in *Obergefell v. Hodges* that found a constitutional right to same-sex marriage. It also protects interracial marriage.

In a Nov. 17 statement after the bill advanced in the Senate, Cardinal Dolan called it “a bad deal for the many courageous Americans of faith and no faith who continue to believe and uphold the truth about marriage in the public square today.

“It is deeply concerning that the U.S. Senate has voted to proceed toward potential passage of the Respect for Marriage Act,” he said. “[It] does not strike a balance that appropriately respects our nation’s commitment to the fundamental right of religious liberty.”

In their joint letter, Cardinal Dolan and Bishop Barron said the measure’s

“rejection of timeless truths about marriage is evident on its face and in its purpose.” They repeated the cardinal’s earlier point that it “would also betray our country’s commitment to the fundamental right of religious liberty.”

In a detailed analysis, the USCCB said the Respect for Marriage Act “will be used to argue that the government has a compelling interest in forcing religious organizations and individuals to treat same-sex civil marriages as valid.”

The amendment to the bill says it “protects all religious liberty and conscience protections available under the Constitution or federal law, including but not limited to the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, and prevents this bill from being used to diminish or repeal any such protection.”

It also “confirms that nonprofit religious organizations will not be required to provide any services, facilities, or goods for the solemnization or celebration of a marriage.”

But the USCCB analysis said that even with the amendment, “religious objectors are likelier to be denied exemptions under the First Amendment and RFRA in cases where they would have prevailed but for the passage of RMA.”

The measure “would have a ripple effect that hurts religious freedom in every context where conflicts with same-sex marriage arise, not just in the context of compliance with RMA itself,” the analysis said.

“Employment decisions, employees’ spousal benefits, eligibility for grants or contracts, accreditation, tax exemptions—it runs the full gamut, even in religious liberty conflicts arising out of state or local laws,” it added. †



‘We affirm our respect for the dignity of all engaged in this debate and acknowledge differing perspectives in our civil society, but the impact of this bill will only contribute to the diminishment of the sacredness and integrity of marriage in our society.’

—Bishop Robert E. Barron

ST. ROCH

continued from page 3

“I have a memory of my dad taking us [children] to see the construction site,” she said. “I remember seeing the steel beams.”

She and her husband Gary graduated



Retired Father James Wilmoth, right, former pastor of St. Roch Parish in Indianapolis from 1997-2018, embraces St. Roch parishioner Megan Chamblee. Chamblee holds her daughter Rosemary who, at 15 weeks, is one of the youngest members of the parish.

from that school. Born in 1955, both are lifelong members of the parish. Baumanns and Meyers have been parishioners since St. Roch’s founding, she said. And the tradition continues—the couple raised their three sons there (one of whom died in 2015), and now seven of their grandchildren are also parishioners.

When Baumann retired, she started working part time as a teaching assistant at St. Roch School.

“Now I’m teaching grandkids of my classmates,” she said. “And so many of the kids’ parents were friends of my boys who spent the night at our house.”

Baumann called the faith community “home.”

“You attend Mass with people who you know so well,” she said. “You know their families, you’ve been to their homes. ... I think of all the people that formed my village here.”

Christina Murray used the same word to describe the parish community.

“Between the church and the school, we really have a good village here,” said Murray, a member since 2008 when she married her husband Jarrod, a lifelong parishioner. He marks the fourth generation of Murrays at St. Roch, and the couple’s four children mark the fifth generation.

“We really find that at St. Roch, it’s just a big family,” Murray said. “Feeling that connection is important for us as parents, navigating our lives together.”

And creating memories in the process. Memories like Father Wilmoth being “so



Father Douglas Hunter, left, Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, Father Nicholas Dant and Father James Wilmoth extend their hands during the eucharistic prayer of a special Mass on Dec. 11 at St. Roch Church in Indianapolis marking the parish’s 100th anniversary of its founding. Kneeling in back are altar servers Ezekiel Littell, left, and Isaiah Littell, far right.



Wanda Daprile, left, and Betty Stumpf, both members of St. Roch Parish in Indianapolis, pose during a reception in the faith community’s Parish Life Center on Dec. 11. Stumpf makes sure her 96-year-old friend has a ride to Mass each Sunday. (Photos by Natalie Hoefler)

excited his face lit up” when using the sparklers the Murrays offered at their wedding.

Or Father Hunter Facetime-ing their youngest child (“who just adores him!”) to say “I missed you at Mass” when the family was sick with COVID.

Or in the Baumann’s case, the outpouring of support from St. Roch parishioners when one of their sons died in an accident in 2015.

And so, too, for Daprile, after the death of her husband eight years ago.

“I didn’t drive, and I didn’t know how I was going to get to Mass,” she recalled.

Then she reached out and patted the arm of the woman sitting next to her—Betty Stumpf, a parishioner younger by several decades.

“Betty said, ‘Father, she’ll be there,’ and she’s still taking me after all this time,” Daprile shared.

“I think the most wonderful thing in the world is love, and I feel that here at the parish.”

‘Such a staple in the community’

Daprile shared her memories as she and Stumpf enjoyed the reception following the Mass—the first of many special events scheduled through 2024 to celebrate the centennial of the parish and its school.

Among the festivities planned are a trivia night, a kickball tournament, a gala, a day of service, a chili cook-off and more, said Jeffrey Feltman, chairman of the parish’s centennial committee.

“Being part of this milestone is a humbling experience,” said the 32-year-old lifetime parishioner. “Being able to hear about people’s past experiences and not only see but feel how this parish has impacted their lives is an absolute blessing.”

Baumann reflected on that generational impact.

“I look at when [the prior generation of] my family moved in the parish and



Members of St. Roch Parish in Indianapolis point to photos laid out in the Parish Life Center during a reception after a Mass on Dec. 11 marking the faith community’s 100th anniversary.

had their family,” she said. “Could they have imagined all that came after, how the parish would be instrumental in so many parts of our lives—the school, the sacraments, the relationships, [my] working here?”

“That makes me look ahead to the next 100 years, how my great-grandkids will be coming here and be involved.”

The milestone also made Murray consider the impact of St. Roch’s 100-year history.

“It’s been such a staple in the community for so long,” she said. “Think how many people the parish has helped. To think about how many people have been touched over the last 100 years—I don’t even know how you can measure it.

“I hope it’s around 100 years from now still helping people.” †

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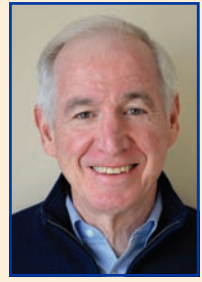
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Christmas Reflection/John Shaughnessy

Questions of Christmas—and the answers we hold in our hearts

If you could choose just one Christmas song to listen to during this season, what would be your choice?



I'm in awe of the harmony that the musical group Pentatonix brings to their stunning version of "Mary, Did You Know?" And there's something about the classic duet of Bing Crosby and

David Bowie combining my mom's favorite Christmas song, "The Little Drummer Boy" with "Peace on Earth." And through the years, my appreciation continues to grow for the lively "Feliz Navidad" by Jose Feliciano.

Still—and it's not even close—my favorite Christmas song is "Breath of Heaven" by Amy Grant, a song that tries to capture what a young Mary must have felt as she carried a baby, the Son of God, on the way to Bethlehem.

In the song, Mary shares these words with God: "Do you wonder, as you watch my face, if a wiser one should have had my place? But I offer all I am. For the mercy of your plan."

In the same song, there are three short sentences that show Mary's need of God and her faith in God. If you've ever turned to God in a time of need, you will identify with the three things that Mary pleads for from God. In this hauntingly emotional part of the song, she says, "Help me be strong. Help me be. Help me."

Yet through it all, Mary continues to say "yes" to God. It's a powerful example for all of us as we try to move closer to God during this Advent and Christmas.

If you could choose just one Christmas movie to watch during this season, what would be your choice?

In a recent conversation with friends about this question, *Elf*, *The Christmas Story* and *It's A Wonderful Life* were mentioned. For my wife, the Christmas season isn't complete without watching *White Christmas*. And *The Polar Express* and *Miracle on 34th Street* deserve a mention, too.

Still, my personal choice is *The Bells of St. Mary's*. If the true gifts of Christmas are faith, family, friendship, forgiveness, generosity and a path to



A person takes a cellphone photo of a Nativity scene in the Viennese Christmas Market at City Hall Square in Vienna on Dec. 6. (CNS photo/Lisa Leutner, Reuters)

redemption—all wrapped with love, humor and tenderness—then no film does it better than this 1945 classic starring Bing Crosby and Ingrid Bergman.

This movie also provides a heartfelt reflection of many of the positive qualities of what the priesthood and religious life can be—positive qualities that I've often seen in many of the priests and religious sisters who now serve here in the archdiocese.

If you had to choose just one family-related Christmas tradition connected to the Catholic faith, what would be your choice?

My choice connects to the scene of Christ being born in a manger in a stable.

When I was growing up, my mom and dad established a tradition at the end of the Christmas Mass we attended. They led their five children up to the altar where the Nativity scene was on display, surrounded by fresh straw. We knelt in front of the stable, focusing on

Mary, Joseph, baby Jesus, the angels, the shepherds, the three kings and all the animals, as we each offered our personal prayer. And before we got up from our knees, we all reached for a single piece of straw—a reminder of the humble surroundings in which Christ was born, a reminder that even though all seven of us lived in one story of a home that had just one bathroom, we were richly blessed.

I still kneel in front of the stable after Christmas Mass. So do my children and their children—a connection across time of family and faith.

If you had to choose just one ornament that represented everything you hold dear about Christmas, what would it be?

This year marks 70 years since my parents were married. This year marks the third year since we haven't had my father here physically for Christmas, although we believe he is still with us.

On my parents' first Christmas as a

married couple, they were given the gift of an angel that was designed to fit on the top of a Christmas tree. And every year since then—70 years!—that angel has continued to shine at the top of the tree.

It already lights up the tree in the home of one of my sisters, the home where my 94-year-old mother lives. As my mother looks at the angel, there's no doubt that it reminds her of when she was young, when their marriage and their love had just begun, when there was so much of life ahead of them.

The years have passed by too quickly, she has told me often through the years. I'm at the point in my life where I understand what she means. Still, the memories, the traditions and the love endure. And they lead me again to embrace the true gifts of Christmas—family, faith and friendship.

I wish the same for you.

(John Shaughnessy is assistant editor of *The Criterion newspaper*.) †

Doubt can be a step toward deeper faith, Pope Francis says at *Angelus*

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Even the most fervent believers go through moments of doubt and questioning about God, and it is a good thing, Pope Francis said, because it helps one see that God does not fit into the

little box people make for him.

Doubt "helps us understand that God is always greater than we imagine him to be. His works are surprising compared to our calculations; his actions are different,

always, they exceed our needs and expectations; and therefore, we must never stop seeking him," the pope told people joining him for the *Angelus* prayer on Dec. 11.

People face a constant "temptation: to make ourselves a God to our measure, a God to use," the pope said. But "God is something else."

Pope Francis spoke about the day's Gospel reading about how John the Baptist, while in prison, sent followers to ask Jesus if he was the Messiah even though John had earlier baptized Jesus in the Jordan.

With an estimated 25,000 people gathered in St. Peter's Square for the midday prayer, the pope said sometimes people find themselves in an "inner

jail," unable to recognize the Lord or even trying to hold him "captive" to preconceived ideas about who God must be.

"Dear brothers and sisters, one never knows everything about God, never!" he said. "Perhaps we have in mind a powerful God who does what he wants, instead of the God of humble meekness, the God of mercy and love, who always intervenes respecting our freedom and our choices."

And, he said, it is a temptation to think one knows everything about other people, too, using one's prejudices "to attach rigid labels to others, especially those we feel are different from us."

Advent, he said, is a time to let go and allow oneself to be surprised by God.

Especially as families prepare a Nativity scene or one goes to look at one set up somewhere, he said, it is an occasion to think about who the Lord really is and how to imitate him in daily life.

"Advent is a time in which, instead of thinking about gifts for ourselves, we can give words and gestures of consolation to those who are wounded, as Jesus did with the blind, the deaf and the lame," the pope said.

After reciting the *Angelus* prayer, Pope Francis blessed figurines of the baby Jesus that hundreds of children had brought to the square in preparation to place them in Nativity scenes at home or at school.

He asked children "to pray before the crèche that the nativity of the Lord will bring a ray of peace to children all over the world, especially those forced to live the terrible and dark days of war, this war in Ukraine that destroys many lives, so many lives, and many children." †



A boy holds figurines of the baby Jesus as Pope Francis leads the *Angelus* from the window of his studio overlooking St. Peter's Square at the Vatican on Dec. 11. The pope blessed figurines of the baby Jesus brought by children for their Nativity scenes. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

Ken's 12-Pack/Ken Ogorek

Things most Catholics wish they knew better: The 12-Pack is almost empty!

12th in a yearlong catechetical series

The end is near. This is the final serving from Ken's 12-Pack.

Where have we been together this year? What have we learned, with whom should we share it—and how?



'Fluffy'
We've reviewed 10 doctrinal deficiencies in catechesis from the 1970s and 1980s.

To be clear: our reflection was neither accusatory nor without hope.

Many folks catechized from the late 1960s through the early 1990s describe their experience as fluffy—or words to that effect.

An analysis by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, in light of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, found that many religion books available circa 1995 (their doctrinal content was largely unchanged for 30 years) showed a clear pattern of deficiency in 10 areas of doctrine.

Presuming good intentions by the

architects of catechesis in that era, and acknowledging methodological gains as well as ways the culture of the time influenced folks' knowledge and experience of the faith, the fact remains that lots of adult Catholics today say they feel sorely lacking in knowledge of their Catholic faith. These same adults struggle to raise children and influence grandchildren in a culture that doesn't exactly reinforce the doctrinal and moral teaching of our holy, Catholic Church.

Teach your adults well

Adult catechesis, then, not only remains the most important area of faith formation (according to multiple Church documents) but must also shore up in an intentional way these identifiable gaps in knowing who God is, what Jesus has accomplished, how the Holy Spirit remains with us, etc. An easy way to see a list of these deficiencies is cutt.ly/1997report.

A personal, disciple relationship

with Jesus remains the context for catechesis. To know Jesus, though, knowing about him is helpful. To live a disciple relationship with Jesus in full communion with his mystical body and spotless bride, the Church, knowing her basic doctrinal and moral teaching goes a long way.



Get to adults via their kids

In my years of catechetical administration, I've often encouraged catechists to give assignments requiring children and teens to sit down with mom and/or dad, discussing this or that aspect of the faith. Knowing

that parents are the primary educators of their children, we know that kids can struggle to grasp some aspects of our Catholic faith when their parents are fuzzy on it.

These both/and types of assignments (encouraging both children and adults to reflect on doctrinal and moral teaching) can strengthen the

faith knowledge of moms, dads, grandparents, guardians, etc., while seeing to it that young folks don't inherit the deficiencies of our older generations' childhood catechesis.

Sympathy and teachable moments

Let's be patient with each other. We all need ongoing catechesis and lifelong faith formation.

Let's remember that Jesus is our teacher. Sacred Scripture and sacred tradition—including the 10 key areas of doctrine filling up Ken's 12-Pack—help us encounter the authentic Jesus, the one Savior of the world.

In the end, intimacy with Jesus should be the result—by God's grace and mercy—of any catechetical effort. I pray that Ken's 12-Pack has helped quench your thirst for knowledge of the living Jesus, and that together we'll drink a toast at the never-ending wedding banquet in heaven.

Cheers!

(Ken Ogorek, archdiocesan director of catechesis, can be reached at his archdiocesan e-mail address kogorek@archindy.org or by using the contact information at www.kenogorek.com.) †

Being 'inclusive' of those with disabilities means valuing them, pope says

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Making churches accessible and liturgies understandable is important, but having wheelchair ramps and sign-language

interpreters is not enough for a parish to call itself "inclusive," Pope Francis said.

The Church also must meet people's needs for "belonging, relating to others

and cultivating their spiritual lives so they experience the fullness and blessing of the Lord" for the "unique and marvelous gift" that they are, the pope told a group of people with disabilities and those who minister with them.

The pope's meeting with the group on Dec. 3 marked the International Day for Persons with Disabilities; the pope also issued a written message for the occasion.

In the meeting, Pope Francis called for the "conversion" of the Catholic community to move from using inclusion as a "slogan" to ensuring people with disabilities are welcomed, integrated, recognized and supported as full members of the community.

"There is no inclusion if the experience of fraternity and mutual communion is missing," the pope said. "There is no inclusion if there is no conversion in the practices of coexistence and relationships."

Inclusion, he said, means "each person, with his or her limitations and gifts, feels encouraged to do his or her part for the good of the entire ecclesial body and for the good of society as a whole."

In his written message for the international day, Pope Francis focused on how Catholics with disabilities can teach others one of the central messages of the Gospel: human beings need God's love, mercy and strength.

The awareness of one's limits, he wrote, "allows us to appreciate all the more God's loving decision to help us in our weakness. An awareness that frees us from sorrow and lament—even for good reason—and opens our hearts to praise.

"The joy that radiates from those who encounter Jesus and entrust their lives to him is no illusion or the fruit of naiveté," the pope said. "It is the power of his resurrection penetrating lives marked by fragility."

"Truly, we can speak of a 'magisterium of fragility' that, if heeded, would make our

society more humane and fraternal, enabling all of us to understand that happiness is bread that is not eaten alone," he said.

If everyone became more aware of their frailty and need for others, he said, it would "help us to have less hostile relationships with those around us" and begin to work together to find solutions to "the senseless conflicts we are experiencing."

Pope Francis also used his message to urge people to remember "all those women and men with disabilities who live in the midst of war or have been themselves disabled as a result of warfare.

"How many people—in Ukraine and in other theaters of war—remain imprisoned by ongoing conflicts, without the possibility of escape?" he asked. "They need to be given special attention and their access to humanitarian aid facilitated in every possible way."

The pope also thanked Catholics with disabilities who participated in the listening process for the Synod of Bishops, sharing their experiences and pointing out the ways they have been included or excluded in their parish communities.

The synod process, he said, is a reminder that in the Church "there can be no us and them, but a single us, with Jesus Christ at the center, where each person brings his or her own gifts and limitations.

"This awareness, founded on the fact that we are all part of the same vulnerable humanity assumed and sanctified by Christ, eliminates arbitrary distinctions and opens the door to the participation of each baptized member in the life of the Church," he said.

"I trust that every Christian community will be open to the presence of our brothers and sisters with disabilities and ensure that they are always welcomed and fully included," Pope Francis wrote. †



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—Pope Francis

Faith *Alive!*

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Palestinians light candles before Christmas morning Mass at St. Catherine Church, adjacent to the Church of the Nativity, in Bethlehem, West Bank, on Dec. 25, 2021. The birth of Christ can be seen as a “new beginning for humanity” here and now. (CNS photo/Debbie Hill)

The birth of Christ offers ‘a new beginning for humanity’ today

By Father Herbert Weber

A woman in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) admitted that she had almost no knowledge of Christianity until she met her husband-to-be. In fact, she said, the only thing she knew about Jesus when she was growing up was what she had heard in a few Christmas songs.

Although her statement is astounding, since most people who read this have been immersed in aspects of Christianity their entire lives, people need to remember that this is not true for everyone.

Some people simply are not privileged with Gospel accounts or regular worship to inspire them.

At the same time, however, this woman’s reference to Christmas songs is

a reminder that carols, paintings and other ways of remembering the Christmas story can serve a purpose of letting the good news enter a secular world.

As a priest, I have found that the celebration of the Lord’s birth can be both the most joyful and the most challenging of times. The story of the Savior’s birth must be told again and again. And people need to listen once again, but each time as if it is the first time!

Among the challenges of Christmas can be the crowds. It’s not uncommon that regular church attendees become critical of those who only attend once or twice a year, usually at Christmas or Easter. They may even feel overrun by others who sit in their regular place.

I would invite those with such an understandable view to see the presence of these visitors as something to rejoice

in. In weeks before Christmas, I have frequently reminded parishioners to maximize their sense of hospitality on such occasions.

Christmas Masses also bring in families with both parents and children suffering from distractions of the holiday. Little kids often can’t sit quietly. Parents, in addition to guiding their children, can easily be preoccupied by the way they have, or have not, planned this Christmas Day.

Some have told me they were worried throughout the Mass about how long it would last because grandmother was expecting them for dinner and they dare not be late!

Perhaps the biggest challenge for Christmas is for people to hear the accounts of the first Christmas in a new way. Most people already know the story of Jesus’ birth. Even the woman in RCIA with no religious background was aware of Jesus’ coming among us in Bethlehem.

Because so many people think they already know, they might not listen fully. Preaching has to go beyond some lovely platitudes about birth, stables, love and poverty. The homilist has to help people reflect on the story again in a new light.

How that is done can vary according to the ability of the homilist.

First of all, there has to be focus on the overall message of the Gospel. Many times Church people compartmentalize the life of Jesus: one segment on Jesus as infant; one slice of his adult teaching; and then addressing Jesus on the cross or after the resurrection. That can be a disservice, since the entire message is present in all parts of Jesus’ life.

At Christmas, perhaps instead of only highlighting Jesus as infant, we need to underscore Jesus as God taking humanity upon himself, entering the human family, being truly and fully a person.

With this in mind, we can look at the nativity of the Lord as a new beginning for humanity. The call for people to live selflessly flows from the selfless love of God in the incarnation. It is a reminder

of what each person is called to be: fully human saturated with the divine.

Perhaps, most of all, worshipers have to find ways to connect this divine mystery with the present. It is easy for people to think, often with pious gratitude, about an event two millennia in the past. To highlight that Jesus truly remains among us here and now is another matter. It means going beyond remembering and allowing the past to be present.

The very images that so many people have in their minds of Christmas can provide a warm feeling, but they are not sufficient. Good feelings must lead to conviction and commitment to a new way of living.

Since childhood I have liked the Christmas carol, “O Little Town of Bethlehem” because of its words about how “the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.” Mostly, though, I had created an image of the little town based on the Nativity set that was enshrined in my childhood parish church.

Upon visiting the contemporary Bethlehem, however, I discovered with dismay that it is no longer a little town. In fact, there are high-rise, five-star hotels for pilgrims and plenty of room in the inn!

Most disconcerting, however, was seeing the armed soldiers at the checkpoint as our bus crossed the line from Israeli to Palestinian territory.

On reflection, however, I discovered a renewed meaning of Jesus’ birth. What we often take so glibly of the oppressive times into which Jesus was born needed to be translated into the 21st century.

The truth remains, however, that God has truly entered this world in all its divisiveness and frailty, and in doing so, gives hope and purpose to all people!

(Father Herbert Weber is founding pastor of St. John XXIII Parish in Perrysburg, Ohio. His weekly podcast can be found at 23.church.) †



Young people of the Yasmineen Choir from the Magnificat Institute School for Music in Jerusalem sing a special version of “O Little Town of Bethlehem” on a field that has been cleared of land mines in the West Bank village of Husan, near Bethlehem on Dec. 23, 2013. What we often take so glibly of the oppressive times into which Jesus was born needs to be translated into the 21st century.

(CNS photo/Debbie Hill)

Worship and Evangelization Outreach/Ken Ogorek

Strive for a childlike faith on your earthly pilgrimage

We're not getting any younger. Many of you reading this are in your golden years.

You're not a kid anymore. Yet Jesus commands us to be like little children—even those among his disciples who are now elderly folks.



How can we be childlike without becoming childish? Whether you're a senior citizen or have an elderly person in

your life—or both—these reflections might help complete the circle of faith as eternal life draws near.

Childlike, Not Childish

A childish person is very self-centered. Stubbornness is also a childish trait.

"I don't want to take a nap!" is often on the lips of a child. A childish adult manifests this thought by being unbalanced—by not giving work and life, activity and rest their proper proportion.

The Faith of a Child

Here are 10 traits of a childlike faith. I encourage you to ponder them.

- **"Why? Why? Why?"**—Children tend to be curious. Hold on to your curiosity about God.

- **Sense of family**—Kids depend on their families. Retain a strong connection to your family, the Church.

- **Opportunities for others to practice virtue**—"Pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant, too." Enough said.

- **Run to Mom for comfort**—The Blessed Virgin Mary sees you with a mother's eyes, no matter your age. Continue including Mary, plus all the angels and saints, in your prayer life.

- **Close to Baptism**—Most Catholic kids are pretty fresh off their baptism as infants. Reflect on your baptism often, pondering its meaning for your life at any age.

- **Open to learning**—"Teach me! Teach me!" You're never too old to learn more about our Lord Jesus or deepen your understanding and appreciation of the Trinity, Church, sacraments, etc.

- **Awe of God's love, creation, saving action**—Wonder and awe are pretty easily observable in a child. Do you pause and allow wonder to fill you at the immensity of God's love, the beauty of his creation, his selflessness in offering you salvation from sin and death by the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus?

- **Again! Again!**—Little kids never tire of revisiting a fun activity, an engaging story, an "I love you" received or given. While you can, treasure good

memories in your heart, grateful to God each time they resurface.

- **Resilient**—A tendency to be resilient is often observed in children. Embracing the paschal mystery at every age, we remain confident that our struggles and hardships are never the ultimate end of life's story. We strive to bounce back, persevering in prayer and faith.

- **Docile**—Stubborn fits aside, kids will often comply with simple requests. Docility to the Holy Spirit never loses its value, doing as we're told through God's voice in sacred Scripture, Church teaching, a sacramental prayer life and all the ways our heavenly Father reveals his loving will to us.

I had the pleasure of sharing these thoughts and more in an interactive presentation to a group of elderly nuns a while ago. If a session focusing on this topic for older folks in your parish (or elsewhere) is of interest to you, feel free to reach me using the contact information below.

Let's strive for a childlike faith throughout our earthly pilgrimage. And when we reach the pearly gates, may we hear Jesus say, "Here's lookin' at you, kid."

(Ken Ogorek is director of catechesis within the archdiocesan Secretariat for Worship and Evangelization. He can be reached at kogorek@archindy.org.) †

Faith and Family/Sean Gallagher

Grow in love for Christ to eagerly await both his comings

Through the years, my boys have often kept an excited vigil by our windows that look out upon the street in front of



our house as they await the arrival of special guests—often grandparents or uncles, aunts and cousins.

When the awaited car comes around the corner and parks in front of our house, the boys will rush to tell Cindy and me of their

arrival and then go barreling out the front door to greet our guests.

I've always smiled at this scene. It's good to see my sons so thrilled to be with people they love.

Memories of my boys' enthusiasm have played through my mind in these days leading up to Christmas as I've meditated upon St. Paul's words to the Christians of Philippi that "we eagerly await the coming of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ," which are included in the Church's Liturgy of the Hours during Advent (Phil 3:20b).

How eager are we adults in awaiting the coming of Christ? The celebration of Christ's birth at Christmas inspires varying levels of excitement in us. But it's usually due to gifts we will give or receive, or the chance to spend time with loved ones.

Gathering for Mass at Christmas in a church filled with worshippers, decorated beautifully for the feast and echoing with heartwarming music, can put a smile on our faces, too. And that's all for the good.

We're often rightly invited to seek out how Christ comes to us in our daily lives—in our friends and loved ones, our co-workers, neighbors, those in need and strangers. Christ also comes to us here and now in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist.

But sit with those words from St. Paul for a little bit.

Paul and the Philippian Christians were truly eager for Christ's promised second coming in glory.

How eager are we for that?

I dare say that for many of us, myself included, the second coming has often been nothing more than a theological concept with no discernible effect on our daily lives.

It's understandable that this may be the case. We're usually focused on our lives here and now, even when that means we're trying with God's grace to grow in virtue and holiness every day.

But that striving to live a holy life can be strengthened when our relationship with Christ grows deeper and we yearn to be closer to him.

When we love someone, we want to be with that person. We eagerly await his or her arrival.

Having a desire for Christ's second coming at the end of time might seem morbid given the frightening descriptions of it that we read in the Gospels. But after giving one such alarming account of the end, Jesus tells his Apostles, "When these signs begin to happen, stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand" (Lk 21:28).

Such happenings, then, are not a reason to fear but instead to look for Christ's arrival.

So, as we celebrate Christmas this year, let's ask Christ for the gift of allowing our love for him to grow so that we'll eagerly await his second coming like Paul and the Christians of Philippi did.

That will make us more like my boys as they eagerly look out our front window for the coming of loved ones.

Maybe it's this childlike eagerness to be with those we love that Jesus was in part thinking about when he said that "unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 18:3). †

That All May Be One/Fr. Rick Ginther

Week making Christian unity a sign of universality for believers

As we hurtle toward the Christmas season and a new calendar year, we might be tempted to see only that which is in front of us. After all, we have enough to plan for, prepare for, celebrate and then recover!



Sorry, I am going to violate that.

Jan. 18-25 each year is the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (WPCU). This octave calls heightened attention to unity among those who believe in Christ.

This is not to say that Christians pray for unity only during this octave. We do not seek to face our sinfulness and be converted to Christ only during Lent, do we? Christian unity is a full-time pilgrimage.

Three years ago, the United States was chosen to lead the WPCU planning for 2023. In turn, the Minnesota Council of Churches was the regional body chosen to create the theme and choose the central Scripture passage. As in past years, the theme arose from the reality of a region.

In 2018, the week centered on how Scripture had been used to the good (freedom) and evil (slavery) at the same time in the Caribbean.

In 2020, the creators were from Malta. They focused on

care for refugees—a reality they face every day—based in the shipwreck of St. Paul on that island.

The 2023 theme "Do Good, Seek Justice" and Scripture (Is 1:12-18) center on racism and prejudice toward people of color and indigenous peoples of the United States.

"[T]he theological work on unity done by the World Council of Churches' Commission on Faith and Order [and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity have] traditionally sought to hold together the search for the churches' unity and the search for overcoming walls of separation within the human family," read the preparation notes in the resource materials for WPCU 2023.

"That is why prayer, especially prayer for Christian unity, takes an even more important meaning when it takes place in the heart of the struggles against what separates us as humans created with equal dignity in the image and likeness of God," the resource materials continue.

The indigenous peoples of Minnesota have endured a long history of oppression—even murder—since colonization. This truth played a part in choosing the theme.

The more recent murder of George Floyd in 2020 did as well. That tragedy was rooted in the racism that is a sad legacy and reality

See GINTHER, page 18

Guest column/Viola Maria Miller

Follow the gift of the Messiah Star, open your heart to our King

Christians, when you read the Christmas story in your Bible, do you take it for granted? Or does your heart still skip a beat? When you read about the Magi in the Gospel of Matthew or about the shepherds in Luke, do you feel awe in your heart about what they saw in the sky? You should.



These very learned men (the scientists and

astronomers of their time) possibly read about "the Star" and the coming Messiah in ancient Hebrew texts and possibly heard of it from some of the captives in Babylonia. It was no secret about the Hebrews waiting for a Jewish king. This might help explain why they were watching the night sky so closely for a special star.

When these practical and learned men saw the star rise out of Jacob as foretold, how their Babylonian hearts stirred, but did they know why? All they knew was that they had to follow this star; they had to get to the land of Jacob, no matter what the cost or inconvenience to their lives. They were stirred up and enflamed—but

by what, they did not know.

So, Christians, are you stirred up and enflamed by the mystery of your faith? Does the star still rise out of Jacob for you? See, the star didn't just rise up for them—it rose up for you. The Messiah's Star rose up in the sky for you.

The Wise Men would leave all their familiar surroundings and go on a journey toward a miracle. These learned men knew it would mean hardship at times, maybe even some danger to get there. But that didn't stop them. No matter what, they would get to the land of Jacob. And they would bring gifts.

So, brothers and sisters, as you read and meditate on the biblical story, are you on the journey to the land of Jacob with them? Are you bringing any gifts with you? Have you packed awe and wonder and anticipation in your heart?

As you approach Jacob's land, as you approach the throne of grace in your church—or whatever holy ground your knees fall down upon—what are you bringing? If you place holiness and purity in your heart while you pray, is that not as royal as gold, frankincense and myrrh?

So, the Wise Men journeyed, questioned by the evil king, interrogated, delayed. But they kept the holy secret.

The star had re-appeared to them, and they were overjoyed. They found the holy place. They followed the star in holy abandonment and faith. They fell down on their knees at the holy sight of the Messiah. They felt the grace.

Do you follow the Father's guidance in holy abandonment and faith? Do you still fall down on your knees and feel the holy grace?

They found Jesus where the Father was leading them. They presented their gifts. They saw Jesus. They really saw Jesus. They saw a great King, who would save his people, Israel. They opened their gifts, but they had also opened more.

When you are on your knees, when you kneel before the King in prayer, do you see the Messiah? Do you really see him? Open your heart Christians—really open your hearts. Do you see his beautiful face yet? Do you feel his love, his grace?

That's why you followed the star. Jesus, the Messiah, came to Earth for you. He gives his grace to you. He is the holiest gift. So, open your heart to our King. You are his gift.

(Viola Maria Miller is a member of St. Joseph Parish in Shelbyville.) †

Fourth Sunday of Advent/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, December 18, 2022

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

The Church is observing the last Sunday of Advent. In only seven days, joyfully and in great faith, the Church will celebrate the Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord, or Christmas.



The Church chooses for the first reading on this weekend a passage from the Book of Isaiah. Central in the reading is King

Ahaz of the southern Hebrew kingdom of Judah, who reigned in the last third of the eighth century before Christ. His reign is not remembered as having been particularly distinguished. He was no great leader.

For Isaiah the definition of a good king, of course, was that the monarch genuinely led the people to God by inspiring them to follow the covenant. Regardless of any other duty, confirming the covenant and requiring submission to its terms were the essential responsibilities of the kings. Nothing else mattered.

Although Ahaz was not spectacular in his role, God still used him as an instrument to bring the people back to fidelity to the covenant. The king served God's purpose to save the people from their own sins by fathering a son. When the king's spouse, a young woman conceived, Isaiah saw in the event a sign of God's caring for the people. What the lackluster Ahaz could not accomplish would be achieved by the son.

Thus, the coming of the new prince was a cause for rejoicing.

As its second reading on this weekend, the Church selects a section from St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans. No Christian today would think of challenging Paul's status as an Apostle. When Paul was alive, however, his credentials were hardly so universally acknowledged. He himself wrote of usurpers who vested themselves with the cloak of being Apostles, and who led the faithful astray.

Here Paul stresses that he indeed is an Apostle, because the Lord called him.

St. Matthew's Gospel is the source of the last reading. This passage recalls the miraculous conception of Jesus. He is the Son of God and the son of the ever-virgin Mary. He entered human history directly as a result of God's love for humanity, fulfilling God's promise to give the fullness of life to the people who were faithful.

The incarnation, as the Church's tradition calls the mystery of the Son of God's conception as a human, is beyond human comprehension. Not even Joseph, holy as he was, could understand it. God's ways are not our ways.

Reflection

Only one week remains in Advent and, given the frenzy usually connected with preparing for Christmas in our society, these remaining days of Advent are apt to be quite busy.

Nevertheless, one week will be enough for any of us to use the opportunity of Advent to allow God to cleanse us of attachments to sin and instead make our souls worthy of receiving the Lord. Christmas can be deeply personal for us, for if we have made ourselves worthy through the help of God's grace, Jesus will come to us on this great feast.

The Church encourages us, therefore, to accept its Advent invitation to come to God. If we have conscientiously observed Advent, then the Church urges us to continue doing so until Christmas. If we have allowed Advent to slip past us, the Church calls us to use the time left.

God wants us to love him as he loves us. Again and again, God has reached out to people to empower them in coming in him. He sent a son to Ahaz, that the nation might have a good king. He sent Jesus to us. Jesus sent us the Apostles. He sent Paul.

God loves us so much. He never leaves us alone or without guidance. He provides for us in ways we cannot understand. Even in one week, we can reach out to God, if we so wish. Time remains. †

My Journey to God

Love Itself

By Paige Hash

Mary, mother of God-in-the-flesh as Jesus—
What was it like to hold the Almighty in the form of a babe, so powerless?

Did you hold and inspect the Great I Am's tiny hand?

Did you caress the soft skin of the Ruler of all the land?

Did you pull the Breath of Life close to breathe in the newborn smell?

Did you just sit and gaze at Yahweh's chest as it rose and fell?

Did you have motherly concern over the Creator's vulnerable state of health?

What was it like?
How did it feel ...
To so love ...
Love Itself?

(Paige Hash is a member of St. Mary Parish in Greensburg. Photo: Mary and the Christ Child are depicted in this 17th-century painting by Il Sassoferrato.) (Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)



Daily Readings

Monday, December 19

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

Tuesday, December 20

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

Wednesday, 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

Thursday, December 22

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

Friday, December 23

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

Saturday, December 24

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

Vigil of the Nativity of the Lord

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

Sunday, December 25

The Nativity of the Lord
Christmas Night
Isaiah 9:1-6
Psalm 96:1-3, 11-13
Titus 2:11-14
Luke 2:1-14

Dawn

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

Day

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

Monday, December 26

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

Tuesday, December 27

St. John, Apostle and Evangelist
1 John 1:1-4
Psalm 97:1-2, 5-6, 11-12
John 20:1a, 2-8

See READINGS, page 19

Question Corner/Fr. Kenneth Doyle

Cremated remains should be treated with reverence, buried or placed in a tomb

(Editor's note: This column by Father Kenneth Doyle was originally published in 2014.)



Q I understand that, as Catholics, if we choose to be cremated our cremated remains are to be treated with dignity and must be buried or entombed.

My husband and I have two family members who have

asked us to arrange to have their ashes scattered. One is a Catholic. One is not. Does our duty to follow Church teaching on this matter override the wishes of our family members (even of the non-Catholic one)?

I am uncomfortable with one day having to carry out their request, but I'm unsure as to how to respond. (Virginia)

A You are correct on the Church's teaching. Although the Vatican in 1963 lifted its previous ban on cremation, the Church specifies that cremated remains are to be treated with the same reverence as the body of a deceased person. This means that the cremated remains are to be placed in a worthy vessel and, following the religious services, to be buried or entombed in consecrated ground.

They are not, for example, to be kept on a mantelpiece or scattered in the deceased's favorite park. Your duty as faithful Catholics overrides the desire of your family members.

I see no philosophical justification for distinguishing between the Catholic relative and the non-Catholic. The Church's reverence for the remains of each of them is equal. (My guess is that you would also buy yourself some extra family trouble if you distinguished.)

I think this is a "teachable opportunity" for you. You should tell each of the two that, as a faithful Catholic, you would feel uncomfortable carrying out their wishes

and then go on to explain to them the reason for the Church's guidelines (i.e., reverence for the cremated remains).

Q What is the proper way of disposing of a wedding ring that is no longer wanted? Many years ago, I was married in a Catholic church, and our rings were blessed as a part of the wedding ceremony. Some years later I was divorced, and the marriage was annulled by the Catholic Church.

Since that time my wedding ring has sat in my jewelry box as I have never been sure what to do with it. Several years after the annulment, I married another woman in a Catholic ceremony, and that union remains to this day. At this point I want to clean out my jewelry box and get rid of the ring from my first wedding. What options do I have? (Location of origin withheld)

A Church law on disposing of blessed objects is not very specific. Number 1171 of the *Code of Canon Law* simply says that "sacred objects, which are designated for divine worship by dedication or blessing, are to be treated reverently" and are not to be used in inappropriate or profane ways.

Church custom through the years has extended that reverence to all articles blessed for devotion, even if not used in a liturgical context. The general practice when disposing of blessed articles such as rosaries, statues or medals has been to burn them or to bury them. However, if an article has been substantially damaged and can no longer be used for the religious purpose intended, it is commonly thought to have lost its blessing.

Since your ring was blessed as a sign of the lasting love between you and your first wife, I would argue that it no longer serves its original religious purpose. (The priest at a wedding ceremony prays that "these rings be a symbol of true faith in each other and always remind them of their love.") My view is that you are free to do what you want with the ring. Perhaps you could donate it to a charity. †

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.

ALLEN, Mary Louise, 102, St. Lawrence, Lawrenceburg, Dec. 3. Mother of Janine Smith, Danny, Jeff and Terry Allen. Grandmother of 10. Great-grandmother of 12. Great-great-grandmother of one.

BLINE, Sharon E., 79, St. Mary, New Albany, Nov. 8. Wife of William Bline. Mother of Cynthia Jacobi, David and William Bline, Jr. Sister of Linda Missi, Rose Scharrer. Grandmother of eight. Great-grandmother of eight.

CLARK-SMITH, Virginia J., 90, St. Martin of Tours, Martinsville, Dec. 4. Mother of Mary and Teresa Goss, Laura Rosenbaum, Carol Schaaf, Brian, David, Paul and Stephen Clark. Grandmother of 28. Great-grandmother of 33.

COX, Bernard K., 92, St. Gabriel, Connorsville, Oct. 27. Father of Connie Meyers and Jennifer Van Ingen. Brother of Gary Cox. Grandfather of four.

CRAIG, Beverly J., 85, St. Mary, New Albany, Nov. 22. Wife of Ronald Craig. Mother of Dr. Kimberly Hartlage, Leslie Henderzahs, Brad and Dr. Eric Craig. Sister of Phyllis Wright. Grandmother of seven.

FORGUITES, Harold N., 95, St. Martin of Tours,

Martinsville, Dec. 1. Father of Candice Forguites. Grandfather of three. Great-grandfather of five.

GALLE, Vernon A., 90, All Saints Parish, Dearborn County, Nov. 30. Father of Charlene Alig, Deborah Neumeister, Dan, James and Marvin Galle. Brother of Margie Rauch, Shirley Robbins and Eugene Galle. Grandfather of 14. Great-grandfather of six.

HARPENAU, Evelyn C., 97, St. Augustine, Leopold, Sept. 19. Mother of Paul Harpenau. Sister of Jean Etienne and Sue Hessig. Grandmother of four. Great-grandmother of 11. Great-great-grandmother of three.

HOLBROOK, James H. F., 41, St. Gabriel, Connorsville, Nov. 14. Father of Lilliana Holbrook. Son of James and Maryann Holbrook. Brother of Mary Eck, Stacy and Matthew Holbrook, Larry Lephart and Jack Messer.

HOLTEGEL, Lynn, 76, St. Lawrence, Lawrenceburg, Dec. 5. Mother of Kim Piche

and Amy Schibi. Sister of Janice Smith and Keith Rozin. Grandmother of one.

RECEVEUR, Rose M., 74, St. Mary of the Knobs, Floyd County, Nov. 29. Mother of Mindy Brockwell, Melanie and Adam Receveur. Grandmother of four.

SAMPLE, Helen R., 90, St. John the Baptist, Starlight, Dec. 4. Mother of Mary Ann Smith. Grandmother of four. Great-grandmother of 10.

SWEENEY, Mary E., 67, St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower), Indianapolis, Nov. 25. Sister of Kathleen Bewsey, Brigid Gedig, Danny, Dennis, Mike and Tim Sweeney. Aunt of several.

YAGER, Kenneth J., 60, St. Mary, Rushville, Dec. 1. Son of Alfred and Eleanor Yager. Brother of Kelly Connolly, Patty Moffett, Nancy Newbold, Sharon Pike, Linda Reed, David, Gary and Steve Yager. Uncle and great-uncle of several. †

Mary Kay Wolford, longtime archdiocesan supporter and leader, dies at 88

Mary Catherine “Mary Kay” Wolford, a member of Holy Family Parish in New Albany, died on Dec. 5 at Baptist Health Floyd in New Albany. She was 88.



Mary Kay Wolford

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Dec. 9 at Holy Family Church in New Albany. Burial followed at St. Mary Cemetery in New Albany.

Born in Louisville, Ky., Wolford was educated in her home city, graduating from the former Loretta High School and earning a bachelor’s degree at Spalding University and a master’s degree at the University of Louisville.

She and her husband Carl, who survives, were married in 1955. They were founding members of Holy Family Parish. Wolford retired from the New Albany-Floyd County School System, serving many years as a teacher at St. Mary of the Knobs School in Floyd County.

Wolford showed her generosity in supporting for decades the ministry of the archdiocese throughout central and southern Indiana and providing leadership through

several archdiocesan committees and initiatives, including the Catholic Community Foundation and St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities in New Albany. She also was a supporter of Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad.

In 2016, the Wolfords received the Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton Award from the National Catholic Educational Association for their longtime support of Catholic schools.

In a video produced earlier this year by the archdiocesan Office of Stewardship and Development, Wolford reflected on the life of stewardship that she and Carl shared for 67 years.

“We have been blessed,” she said. “We don’t do it for that. But you certainly receive more than you give. You just have to try it and trust in the Lord. He takes care of you.”

Wolford is survived by Carl, her sister-in-law Trudy Wolford and numerous nieces and nephews.

Memorial contributions may be sent to Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology, 200 Hill Drive, St. Meinrad, IN 47577, or Holy Family Parish, 129 Daily Lane, New Albany, IN 47150. †

Honoring the Immaculate Conception



Pope Francis walks in front of a Marian statue at the Spanish Steps in Rome on Dec. 8, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The column with the statue of Mary at its top was dedicated on Dec. 8, 1857, the third anniversary of Blessed Pius IX’s defining of the Immaculate Conception as a dogma of the Church. For years, Roman firefighters have placed flowers on the statue on the feast. Popes also traditionally come there to pray on that day. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

GINTHER

continued from page 16

in that region. It played a part in choosing Isaiah 1:12-18.

The reflection and faith sharing texts for 2023 explore these human injustices. They also seek for anyone participating to face them. All are called to “learn to do good,” “seek justice,” “rescue the oppressed” and “defend the orphan and plead for the widow.” In short, the most vulnerable among us are our focus.

The prayer service has a flow similar to past services. After prelude music and the procession of all the ministers, a call to gather and singing takes place. Simple words of welcome are given, and then there is a litany of confession and forgiveness. A Scripture passage, psalm response and Gospel passage are proclaimed. Then there is preaching.

Unique to this service is a tangible focus: stones and rivers (water). These are symbols in Minnesota of cultural genesis and genocide at points in the region’s history.

The service concludes with intercessory prayers, the praying together of the Our Father, followed by a

closing prayer and a sending.

If you are in the Indianapolis area on Jan. 19, please join us at 7 p.m. for the prayer service at Christ Church Episcopal Cathedral on Monument Circle. Episcopal Bishop Jennifer Baskerville-Burrows will preach.

For more details on the upcoming service, go to www.archindy.org/ecumenism. Click on “latest news” to find the WPCU document.

(Father Rick Ginther is director of the archdiocesan Office of Ecumenism and Interreligious Affairs. He is also the pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Indianapolis.) †

Online Lay Ministry Formation

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

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

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



REPORT SEXUAL MISCONDUCT NOW

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

- 1 Ethics Point**
Confidential, Online Reporting
www.archdioceseofindianapolis.ethicspoint.com or 888-393-6810
- 2 Victim Assistance Coordinator**, Archdiocese of Indianapolis
P.O. Box 1410, Indianapolis, IN 46206-1410
317-236-1548 or 800-382-9836, ext. 1548
victimassistance@archindy.org



Merry Christmas, J Dub.
Love you.

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Ukrainians seek blessing for rehab center; pope urges action for peace

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—The mayor of Lviv, Ukraine, and a team of doctors treating those injured in the country's war with Russia gave Pope Francis a cross with an embedded piece of shrapnel removed from the body of a young girl.

"Giving the pope the cross, we hope he will pray each day for the injured children," the mayor, Andriy Sadovy, told reporters on Dec. 7 after meeting the pope at the end of his weekly general audience.

Pope Francis asked everyone at his audience to pray that Mary would comfort every person living under the brutality of war, especially the people of Ukraine.

The pope also noted the commemoration of the 80th anniversary of "Operation Reinhard," the Nazi plan to kill the Jews of German-occupied Poland, a plan that succeeded in murdering some 2 million Jews.

"May the memory of this horrible event arouse in all of us resolutions and actions for peace," the pope said, before adding that "history repeats itself. We see what is happening today in Ukraine. Let us pray for peace."

Dr. Oleh Samchuk, general director of a Lviv hospital, the First Territorial Medical Association, accompanied the mayor and other officials seeking not only Pope Francis' prayers, but also his blessing for the Unbroken National Rehabilitation Center, a facility they hope will bring physical and psychiatric healing to the victims of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"We showed the pope our project, and he blessed it," Sadovy said.

Since Russia launched its war in late February, the mayor said, more than 5 million Ukrainians fleeing the

fighting have come to Lviv, a major city in Western Ukraine. While most continued on to safety in neighboring European countries, Lviv became a major hub for assisting those displaced by war and for organizing aid to cities and towns in need in the East.

The displaced, he said, have included 11,000 injured people, "mostly women and children," who required surgery.

Samchuk's hospital is always full, he said, but staffers keep doing everything possible to heal the injured, including setting up a workshop to make prosthetics.

As of early December, the hospital also had fitted two patients with bionic arms, thanks to the work of a U.S.-Ukrainian company, Esper Bionics, aided by the Netherlands-based Symphony Solutions.



Pope Francis touches a piece of shrapnel removed from a child injured in the Russian-Ukrainian war. The shrapnel was presented by Andriy Sadovy, the mayor of Lviv, Ukraine, at the pope's general audience in the Paul VI hall at the Vatican on Dec. 7. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

The project website—unbroken.org.ua—says, "Our goal is to help Ukrainians remain 'unbroken' and get all the necessary help here, in their own country, near their families." †

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. 16, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. at St. Joseph, Shelbyville

Dec. 20, 6:30-8 p.m. during healing service at St. Nicholas, Ripley County

Additionally, recurring opportunities for reconciliation in the Batesville Deanery are as follows:

Wednesdays 5-6 p.m. at St. Charles Borromeo, Milan

Saturdays following 8:30 a.m. Mass at St. Nicholas, Ripley County; 4-5 p.m. at St. Charles Borromeo, Milan; and after 4 p.m. Mass at St. Maurice, Napoleon

Sundays after 10 a.m. Mass at St. Maurice, Napoleon

Indianapolis North Deanery

Dec. 18, 2 p.m. at St. Lawrence

Dec. 19, 7 p.m. at Immaculate Heart of Mary

Dec. 20, 7 p.m. at St. Simon the Apostle

New Albany Deanery

Dec. 19, 7 p.m. at St. John the Baptist, Starlight

Dec. 20, 7 p.m. at St. Mary, Lanesville

Seymour Deanery

Dec. 20, 4 p.m. at American Martyrs, Scottsburg

Dec. 21, 4 p.m. at St. Patrick, Salem

Terre Haute Deanery

Dec. 16, 9 a.m.-9 p.m., for St. Margaret Mary and St. Patrick, Terre Haute, at St. Margaret Mary

Dec. 19, 7-8:30 p.m. at St. Benedict, Terre Haute †

READINGS

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Wednesday, December 28

The Holy Innocents, martyrs

1 John 1:5-2:2

Psalms 124:2-5, 7b-8

Matthew 2:13-18

Thursday, December 29

Fifth Day within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord

St. Thomas Becket, bishop and martyr

1 John 2:3-11

Psalms 96:1-3, 5-6

Luke 2:22-35

Friday, December 30

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14

or Colossians 3:12-21

or Colossians 3:12-17

Psalms 128:1-5

Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

Saturday, December 31

The Seventh Day within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord

St. Sylvester I, pope

1 John 2:18-21

Psalms 96:1-2, 11-13

John 1:1-18

Sunday, January 1

Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God

Octave Day of the Nativity of the Lord

Numbers 6:22-27

Psalms 67:2-3, 5-6, 8

Galatians 4:4-7

Luke 2:16-21

Monday, January 2

St. Basil the Great, bishop and doctor of the Church

St. Gregory Nazianzen, bishop and doctor of the Church

1 John 2:22-28

Psalms 98:1-4

John 1:19-28

Tuesday, January 3

The Most Holy Name of Jesus

1 John 2:29-3:6

Psalms 98:1, 3c-4, 5-6

John 1:29-34

Wednesday, January 4

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, religious

1 John 3:7-10

Psalms 98:1, 7-9

John 1:35-42

Thursday, January 5

St. John Neumann, bishop

1 John 3:11-21

Psalms 100:1b-5

John 1:43-51

Friday, January 6

St. André Bessette, religious

1 John 5:5-13

Psalms 147:12-15, 19-20

Mark 1:7-11

or Luke 3:23-28

or Luke 3:23, 31-34, 36, 38

Saturday, January 7

St. Raymond of Penyafort, priest

1 John 5:14-21

Psalms 149:1-6a, 9b

John 2:1-11

Sunday, January 8

The Epiphany of the Lord

Isaiah 60:1-6

Psalms 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-13

Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6

Matthew 2:1-12

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