

TODAY'S CATHOLIC

Volume 93 No. 42

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TODAYSCATHOLIC.org

St. Nicholas, bishop of Myra



Joshua Schipper

St. Nicholas, a fourth-century bishop of the Turkish town named Myra, was famously dedicated to works of generosity and charity. He is the patron saint of children and sailors, among others: His feast day is Dec. 6. At the end of the first week of Advent, Dec. 7, Good Shepherd Books and Gifts in Fort Wayne offered the opportunity to meet "St. Nick."

SAINT MARY'S
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TODAY'S CATHOLIC

(ISSN 0891-1533)
(USPS 403630)

Official newspaper of the
Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend
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Fort Wayne, IN 46856

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Published weekly except for the last Sunday in December; and every other week from third Sunday in May through fourth Sunday in August, by the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, 915 S. Clinton St., P.O. Box 390, Fort Wayne, IN 46801. Periodicals postage paid at Fort Wayne, IN, and additional mailing office.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Today's Catholic, P.O. Box 11169, Fort Wayne, IN 46856-1169 or email: circulation@diocesefwsb.org

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BUREAU OFFICE: 1328 Dragoon Trail, Mishawaka, IN 46544. Telephone 260-456-2824. Fax 260-744-1473.

News deadline is 10 days prior to publication date. Advertising deadline is nine days before publication date.

Today's Catholic may be reached at:
Today's Catholic,
P.O. Box 11169, Fort Wayne, IN
46856-1169; or email:
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March for Life theme borrows page from suffragist centennial

BY MARK PATTISON

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The March for Life, the annual march in Washington to protest legalized abortion in the United States, is tying itself in 2020 to the women's suffrage movement for the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, which gave women the right to vote.

The theme of the march is "Life Empowers: Pro-Life Is Pro-Woman." Jeanne Mancini, head of the March for Life, remarked how two noted suffragists of their day, Alice Paul and Susan B. Anthony, were themselves staunchly against abortion. A video made to support the upcoming march, to be held Jan. 24, said the women called abortion "the ultimate exploitation of women."

An unnamed woman speaking in the video said 30 million female babies had been aborted since the twin 1973 Supreme Court rulings in *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton* that legalized abortion virtually on demand.

Mancini said speakers lined up for the pre-march gathering include Louisiana State Sen. Katrina Jackson, a pro-life Democrat who authored a bill in 2014 to require abortion doctors to have admitting privileges at nearby hospitals. It was ruled unconstitutional in 2017, but that ruling in *June Medical Services v. Gee* was reversed by the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. The U.S. Supreme Court said in October it would take up the case, its first abortion-related case since the death of Antonin Scalia and the retirement of Anthony Kennedy.

Also on the speakers' list is U.S. Rep. Christopher Smith, R-New Jersey, long a pro-life advocate, who has sponsored the Born-Alive Survivors Protection Act, which would bar the killing of any baby who survives an abortion. Two such survivors will speak as well, according to Mancini.

The 2020 march will be the 47th such march. "We march regardless," Mancini said during a Dec. 3 news briefing in Washington about the march. In 2016, "we had 'Blizzard-geddon,'" she added. An even stronger blizzard in 1982 that crippled the Washington region and its transportation network did not deter those hardy but few marchers who had already made it to the nation's capital.

The 2019 march was "the first one we marched during a government shutdown," Mancini added. She said she is working with the U.S. Park Service to assure that there would be no complications to conducting the march should the government be



CNS photo/Leslie E. Kossoff

A young woman joins other pro-life advocates outside the U.S. Supreme Court Jan. 27, 2017, during the annual March for Life in Washington. The theme for the Jan. 24, 2020, March for Life is "Life Empowered: Pro-Life is Pro-Woman."

shut down again.

The March for Life now bills itself as "the world's largest human rights demonstration" and "the world's largest pro-life event." Mancini, during the news briefing, called it "the single unifying pro-life event" bringing together people from all points on the pro-life spectrum.

Mancini said more legislation

on the abortion front is being advanced at the state level, and that the March for Life would be replicated elsewhere, including Virginia, Connecticut and Chicago.

While the march promotes legislation reflecting pro-life interests, it also aims to "change hearts and minds," Mancini said.

Tom McClusky, president of

March for Life Action, which is the sister organization of the March for Life Education and Defense Fund headed by Mancini, also spoke at the briefing. "If *Roe v. Wade* is overturned or weakened," he said, "there will be even more action in the states."

'Ad limina' visit takes on Marian flavor for Region VII bishops

BY CINDY WOODEN

ROME (CNS) — As the bishops of Wisconsin, Illinois and Indiana began celebrating an early morning Mass at the Basilica of St. Mary Major, the church was abuzz with activity and repeated banging on a bass drum.

In Rome for their visits "ad limina apostolorum" — to the threshold of the apostles — the bishops celebrated Mass Dec. 9 at the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls and in a chapel of St. Mary Major Dec. 10, the feast of Our Lady of Loreto.

Pope Francis has declared a special jubilee to mark the 100th anniversary of Our Lady of Loreto being named patron of aviators and air travelers.

As the U.S. bishops prayed in the Marian chapel, workers moved chairs and pews and decorated the railing around the basilica's main altar with pine boughs, poinsettias and other flowers. And the orchestra of the Italian air force, which claims Our Lady of Loreto as their patron, began tuning their instruments.

The rumble from all that activity carried into the chapel.

Bishop David L. Ricken of Green Bay, Wisconsin, the principal celebrant and homilist, noted how the bishops' "ad limina" week in Rome had a very Marian flavor: the transferred feast of the Immaculate Conception Dec. 9, the day's Loreto feast and the celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe Dec. 12.

"We have been truly blessed to walk these days with our Blessed Mother," he said.

"The world is in need of her intervention, her prayers, her grace and this is a time when she is reaching out to save souls and bring them to her son, Jesus."

The day's first reading, from Isaiah 40, began, "Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God."

Many, many people need comfort — not the comfort of material goods, he said, "but the comfort of true and genuine peace that comes only from God."

"Often, my brother bishops, we are called to give comfort to our people, to listen to their trials and tribulations, sometimes their anger, sometimes their hostility," he said, "and we are called to walk with them, to accompany them in their sorrow, their sense of betrayal, their sense of need-



CNS photo/Paul Haring

Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend, front, and other U.S. bishops from Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin arrive in procession to celebrate Mass at the Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome Dec. 10. The bishops were making their "ad limina" visits to the Vatican to report on the status of their dioceses to the pope and Vatican officials.

ing God.

"And thank God they're still coming to us for consolation, some comfort," he added.

Bishops also are called to offer solace, affirmation and consolation to their priests and seminarians. "The challenges of being a priest today," Bishop Ricken said, "are more than anything I remember in my


almost-40 years of priesthood, 20 years of being a bishop."

The Isaiah reading also spoke about being a "herald of good news" and not being afraid to share the glad tidings of salvation. "Courage is needed today to engage in a mission we've all been called to, a mission

that seems defeated at this point, but we know in hope and confidence that this is God's Church and the world needs the Church now, perhaps more than ever," the bishop said.

During the "ad limina" visits, Bishop Ricken said, the bishops should renew their "disponibilita' — radical availability" to serve God, serve God's people and proclaim the Gospel.

Cardinal James M. Harvey, a native of Milwaukee and archpriest of the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, was invited



Public schedule of Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades

Sunday, December 15: 11:45 a.m. — Mass with Confirmation and Rite of Reception into Full Communion, Basilica of the Sacred Heart, University of Notre Dame

Monday, December 16: 11 a.m. — Mass and Luncheon for Diocesan Employees of South Bend Area, St. Francis Convent, Mishawaka

Friday, December 20: 11 a.m. — Mass and Luncheon for Diocesan Employees of Fort Wayne Area, Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Fort Wayne

Saturday, December 21: 11 a.m. — Mass and Lunch for Seminarians, their Families and Father Solanus Vocation Society, St. Patrick Church, Arcola

the tomb, the readings for the Mass were those for the feast of the Immaculate Conception.

The cardinal quoted William Wordsworth's poem, "The Virgin," which includes the lines: "Woman! above all women glorified, our tainted nature's solitary boast."

"We do boast about Mary," Cardinal Harvey said. "We boast when we say, 'See what the power of God has done for a member of our human race.' And herein lies our hope. If the power of God is great enough to preserve from sin a human person like ourselves, Mary, then it is great enough to cure us of the effects of sin."

Celebrating the Immaculate

Conception during Advent, he said, helps Catholics "recognize with humility that we are not worthy of Emmanuel — God with us — and yet God never fails to want us" because as St. Paul said, "God chose us in Christ, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless in His sight."

Praying at St. Paul's tomb, the cardinal said, the bishops pray for a renewal of their "zeal to be missionary disciples, first and foremost by living up to our calling as those chosen in Christ be holy and blameless in God's sight."

Contributing to this story was Carol Glatz in Rome.

"We have been truly blessed to walk these days with our Blessed Mother."

BISHOP DAVID L. RICKEN



Provided by Mike Krokos/The Criterion

The bishops of U.S. Region 7, including Indiana's five dioceses, are in Rome for their quinquennial meetings. Pictured from left, in the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Wall, Dec. 9, are Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades, Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend; retired Bishop Dale J. Melczek, Diocese of Gary; Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, Archdiocese of Indianapolis; Bishop-designate Robert J. McClory, Diocese of Gary; Bishop Timothy L. Doherty, Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana; and Bishop Joseph M. Siegel, Diocese of Evansville.

US brother beatified on fields of Guatemalan school he served

BY DAVID AGREN

HUEHUETENANGO, Guatemala (CNS) — Christian Brother James Miller taught students and served as a vice principal at the La Sallian Christian Brothers school in this impoverished pocket of rural Guatemala. He also helped oversee a boarding home for male students from the surrounding indigenous communities.

He was beatified Dec. 7 with a celebration on the soccer fields of the same school he once served. It continues to educate students from across Guatemala's western highlands, a mountainous region of Mayan villages rife with outward migration and suffering high rates of poverty and child malnutrition.

Blessed Miller was remembered as a martyr for education, whose commitment to teaching, mentoring and protecting the young Mayan men in his care — amid the atrocities of Guatemala's civil war — cost him his life.

"The project and work of Hermano Santiago," as Blessed Miller was known, "is a point of reference, as much for the La Sallian community as it is for all Christian educators, regarding the truthfulness and relevance of Catholic education," said Cardinal Jose Luis Lacunza Maestrojuan of David, Panama, celebrant at the beatification Mass.

"Catholic education belongs to the evangelizing mission of the Church," he added in his homily.

"The pastoral work of Hermano Santiago so consumed him to the point of him being murdered. There is nothing that makes authoritarians uncomfortable — be it on the left or the right, be it from yesterday or today — than education. That is why they were so adamant to suppress the freedom to teach, and to suppress education itself,



CNS photo/David Agren

A woman attends the the Dec. 7 beatification Mass of Blessed James Miller in Huehuetenango, Guatemala.

even if they had to deny a basic human right like a parent's right to choose the education they want for their children."

Christian Brothers in their black habits, high school students in jeans and T-shirts and indigenous women in colorful embroidered skirts and blouses clutched photos of the boyish-looking Blessed Miller, who spent barely 13 months in Huehuetenango, but left a legacy of service to the poor and indigenous.

Blessed Miller's life and legacy served as a reminder to maintain "the option that motivated his coming to Guatemala, the option in favor of the poor

and indigenous," Cardinal Alvaro Ramazzini Imeri of Huehuetenango told Catholic News Service.

"He came here to give himself to this mission. So that option continues being urgent and is a priority in this diocese because, in spite of all these years, poverty has increased. That's the reality."

Blessed Miller's work in Huehuetenango highlighted the plight of poor and indigenous Guatemalans, who often live in isolated and marginalized communities without access to education or basic services.

He mentored the young men in his care and, according to col-

leagues, he hoped to turn them into leaders, who would return to their communities as professionals and promote a transformation among a population excluded from the broader society.

"There isn't a people ... more able to be manipulated than a people lacking awareness, lacking discernment and lacking values," Cardinal Lacunza said. "Brother Santiago, through his pastoral work to indigenous peoples and the poorest of the poor, was aware of their dignity and their rights and of responsibilities, because he challenged the authoritarian and abusive system of those who thought only of themselves."

Blessed Miller was born into a farming family in Stevens Point, Wisconsin, in 1944. He joined the De La Salle Christian Brothers, graduated from St. Mary's College, Winona, Minnesota, and became drawn to Central America.

He served most of the 1970s on Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast, where he directed a Lasallian Christian Brothers school. He deftly navigated the dictatorial regime of Anastasio Somoza, necessary as the school received public funds, but risky as the Sandinistas, who took power in 1979, saw him as an adversary.

He left Nicaragua for his own safety and eventually arrived in Huehuetenango in 1981, during the depths of a civil war, in which death squads razed Mayan villages and soldiers forcibly recruited young men.

Blessed Miller knew the risks. He wrote home in a 1981 Christmas letter: "The level of personal violence is reaching appalling proportions (murders, tortures, kidnappings, threats, etc.), and the Catholic Church is being persecuted because of its option for the poor."

The letter continued: "God knows why he continues to call me to Guatemala, when some friends and relatives encourage me to pull out for comfort and safety. ... I place my life in his providence; I place my trust in Him."

News of a threat arrived shortly thereafter: Members of a military death squad were searching for a deputy director of the school. Blessed Miller and his colleagues had increasingly come into conflict with soldiers as they would demand the release of indigenous men living in the Christian Brothers' "Casa Indigena" boarding home, who had been forced into military service.

On Feb. 13, 1982, while many of the young men in the Casa Indigena were attending a Valentine's Day picnic, Blessed Miller was shot in broad daylight by three assailants while he was up on a ladder, fixing the boarding home's exterior wall.

The La Sallian Christian Brothers and Diocese of Huehuetenango started pushing for the beatification of Blessed Miller, along with other Catholic martyrs from Guatemala's 1960-96 civil war.

Christian Brother Benjamin Rivas, who helped advance the beatification of Blessed James, said the diocese had hoped to include causes of four indigenous catechists slain in the civil war along with Blessed Miller, but many witnesses were fearful of speaking.

"This beatification (of Blessed Miller) is also to not forget the blood of these people, of all the people who died," in the civil war, Brother Rivas said. "It's to recognize the innocent blood spilled in this time of conflict."

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Beatification for Archbishop Sheen postponed

PEORIA, Ill. (CNS) — Bishop Daniel R. Jenky of Peoria said Dec. 3 Vatican officials have told him that the upcoming beatification of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen has been postponed.

A news release from the Diocese of Peoria said it was informed Dec. 2 that the Vatican had decided to postpone the Dec. 21 ceremony “at the request of a few members” of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The diocese added, “In our current climate it is important for the faithful to know that there has never been, nor is there now, any allegation against (Archbishop) Sheen involving the abuse of a minor.”

However, a Dec. 5 statement from the Diocese of Rochester, New York, said it had “expressed concern about advancing the cause for the beatification of Archbishop Sheen at this time without a further review of his role in priests’ assignments.”

The statement said the Rochester diocese, prior to the Vatican announcement Nov. 18 that Pope Francis approved the beatification, had provided documentation expressing its concern to the Diocese of Peoria and the Congregation for Saints’ Causes via the apostolic nunciature in Washington.

Archbishop Sheen was bishop of Rochester from October 1966 until his retirement in October 1969. He received the title of archbishop at retirement.

The statement from the Rochester diocese said, “Other prelates shared these concerns and expressed them,” adding that “there are no complaints against Archbishop Sheen engaging in any personal inappropriate conduct nor were any insinuations made in this regard.”

“The Diocese of Rochester did its due diligence in this matter and believed that, while not casting suspicion, it was prudent that Archbishop Sheen’s



CNS

Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, the famed media evangelist, is pictured in an undated photo. The Diocese of Peoria, Ill., announced Dec. 3 that it was informed Dec. 2 the Vatican has decided to postpone his Dec. 21 beatification.

cause receive further study and deliberation, while also acknowledging the competency of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints to render its decision. The Holy See ultimately decided to postpone the beatification,” the statement continued.

The Rochester diocese added it would have no other comment.

Calling the delay “unfortunate,” the Peoria diocese’s Dec. 3 release outlined some of the activities for which Archbishop Sheen was especially known, including “his personal dedication” a Holy Hour of daily prayer before the Blessed Sacrament and “courage in confronting the challenges in our society.”

“Drawing strength from his personal prayer life and deep devotion to Our Lord, Fulton Sheen consistently demonstrated tremendous courage in confronting the challenges in our society,” the statement said. “He was well known for his boldness in preaching the Gospel on radio and on television in the face of

our secular culture. This same spirit of courage and boldness guided him as a bishop to preach the truth, to defend the faith and to safeguard the church.”

The Peoria diocese also said “there continue to be many miracles reported” through the archbishop’s intercession. The diocese said there have been “several” miracles reported since the pope’s announcement of the beatification ceremony.

“The Diocese of Peoria remains confident that Archbishop Sheen’s virtuous conduct will only be further demonstrated,” the statement said. “Bishop Jenky has every confidence that any additional examinations will only further prove Fulton Sheen’s worthiness of beatification and canonization.”

“The Diocese of Peoria has no doubt that Fulton Sheen, who brought so many souls to Jesus Christ in his lifetime, will be recognized as a model of holiness and virtue,” the statement added.

The diocese said Bishop Jenky was “deeply saddened” by the Vatican’s decision.

“In particular, Bishop Jenky is even more concerned for the many faithful who are devoted to Sheen and who will be affected by this news,” the diocese said. “He is firmly convinced of the great holiness of the venerable servant of God and remains confident that Sheen will be beatified. Bishop Jenky has every intention of continuing the cause, but no further date for beatification has been discussed.”

The Diocese of Peoria said it

will offer no further comment “at this time.”

Fulton J. Sheen, a native of El Paso, Illinois, was ordained Sept. 20, 1919, at St. Mary’s Cathedral in Peoria. He went on to teach at The Catholic University of America in Washington and lead the Society of the Propagation of the Faith. Perhaps he is best remembered for his popular television show, “Life Is Worth Living.”

He died in 1979 at age 84. His sainthood cause was officially opened in 2003. The church declared his heroic virtues and he was given the title

“Venerable” in 2012 by Pope Benedict XVI.

In July, Bishop Jenky announced Pope Francis had approved a miracle attributed to the intercession of Archbishop Sheen, which led the way to the announcement he would be beatified.

The miracle concerns the healing of James Fulton Engstrom of Washington, Illinois, who was considered stillborn when he was delivered during a planned home birth Sept. 16, 2010. His parents, Bonnie and Travis Engstrom, immediately invoked the prayers of Archbishop Sheen and encouraged others to seek his intercession after the baby was taken to OSF HealthCare St. Francis Medical Center in Peoria for emergency treatment.

In general, two miracles must be accepted by the Church as having occurred through the intercession of a prospective saint, one before beatification and the other before canonization.

The diocese said Bishop Jenky was “deeply saddened” by the Vatican’s decision.

Catholics pledged to have Masses said in support of Sheen

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The Dec. 3 announcement by the Diocese of Peoria, Illinois, that the Vatican has decided to postpone the beatification of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen led to a grassroots effort to have Masses said all over the world to pray his beatification will go forward. Organizers of the effort hoped to have “a million” Masses celebrated Dec. 9, the 40th anniversary of the prelate’s death. “We decided to respond in the most positive and prayerful way possible (to) the disappointing news that the Vatican has paused the beatification of Archbishop Sheen,” Lo Anne Mayer, a New Jersey Catholic, told Catholic News Service Dec. 5. “The clergy who offer these Masses and the laity who attend the Masses will storm heaven for an end to this unfortunate situation.” The beatification ceremony for Archbishop Sheen was planned for Dec. 21 in Peoria at St. Mary’s Cathedral. The Peoria diocese announced it was informed Dec. 2 of the postponement. “Millions of people knew and loved Archbishop Sheen and remember his devotion to the good Lord and to the Holy Father,” said Mayer, who is among those who knew the archbishop and greatly admire him.

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NEWS BRIEFS

Immaculate Conception is feast of hope for sinners, pope says

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Mary, conceived without sin, is a “masterpiece” who reflects “the beauty of God who is all love, grace and self-giving,” Pope Francis said on the feast of the Immaculate Conception. Reciting the Angelus prayer with visitors in St. Peter's Square Dec. 8, Pope Francis focused on the feast day that celebrates how Mary was conceived in the womb of St. Ann without original sin. Several hours after the noon prayer, the pope joined thousands of people near the Spanish Steps in central Rome to pay homage to the Immaculate Conception at a Marian statue atop a tall column. The statue was erected in 1857 to commemorate Pope Pius IX's declaration three years earlier of the dogma that Mary was conceived without sin. Early in the morning each Dec. 8, Rome firefighters using a truck and tall ladder, hang a ring of flowers from the statue's outstretched arm. Throughout the day, individuals and organizations leave flowers at the base of the statue. As is his custom, Pope Francis did not read a speech by the statue but recited a prayer he wrote for the occasion.

Pope demands action for failing fight against climate change

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Despite growing recognition of climate change as a legitimate and looming threat, current commitments to mitigate its effects and alter human behavior fall short of those needed to resolve the crisis in time, Pope Francis said. “We must admit that this awareness is still rather weak, unable to respond adequately to that strong sense of urgency for rapid action called for by the scientific data at our disposal,” the pope said in a message to the U.N. Climate Change Conference, COP25. The conference was being held in Madrid Dec. 2-13, and the Vatican released a copy of the pope's message Dec. 4. The conference aimed to take crucial steps in the U.N. climate change process and to identify effective strategies for implementing the Paris Agreement, a framework of action against climate change adopted by the U.N. Dec. 12, 2015. However, studies by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change “demonstrate how far words are from concrete actions,” the pope said.

Mexican diocese suspends evening Masses due to insecurity

CUERNAVACA, Mexico (CNS) — The Diocese of Cuernavaca has suspended evening Masses

Wisconsin live Nativity



CNS photo/Sam Lucero, The Compass

The breath of Mary, who was depicted by Dr. Alexa Gavaga, is captured in the cold night air during a live Nativity scene in Oconto Falls, Wis., Dec. 5. Employees of HSHS St. Clare Memorial Hospital in Oconto Falls presented the live Nativity scene as part of the community's holiday celebration. Seven members of the Catholic hospital staff dressed as Mary, Joseph, the Three Wise Men, a shepherd and an angel for two hours in the subfreezing night. The live Nativity also included two sheep and two donkeys.

due to insecurity in the city and surrounding state of Morelos, a reflection of the violence raging in parts of Mexico and its impact on the Catholic Church. Bishop Ramon Castro Castro of Cuernavaca said church services would not be celebrated after dark because people in the region just south of Mexico City did not want to venture out of their homes after dark. “These are situations where people are scared. It's a fear that paralyzes them,” Bishop Castro told local media Dec. 4, according to the newspaper *El Universal*. “There are many people I know who have nothing to do with organized crime, but find themselves affected by this violence and have changed their lifestyle,” he said, adding church attendance is the southern and eastern parts of Morelos — a small state that borders the national capital — has dropped due to insecurity. The bishop also said he had registered four cases

of extortion committed against women religious in the diocese. Mexico has had high rates of violence and homicide over the past 13 years as the country launched a crackdown on drug cartels and organized crime.

Florida bishop calls mass shooting at naval station ‘truly heartbreaking’

PENSACOLA, Fla. (CNS) — Reacting to “the horrific mass shooting” that took place early Dec. 6 at Naval Air Station Pensacola, Bishop William A. Wack of Pensacola-Tallahassee said the “tragedy in our diocese is truly heartbreaking.” Three people were shot dead and many others were injured in the shooting and the suspected gunman was a trainee with the Saudi Air Force, according to Florida Gov. Ron

DeSantis. At a news conference, law enforcement officials said eight people were taken to local hospitals; one of those injured died. Two officers who responded to the shooting were among those injured. The gunman died in the shooting, said Escambia County Sheriff David Morgan, adding that a county officer “negated the threat” after responding to the scene. The motive for the shooting was still unknown. “Our sympathy and prayers go out to those whose lives were taken, as well as for their families, military service members and first responders, and those who were injured,” Bishop Wack said in a statement, adding: “We ask for God's peace and mercy on our community. Please join me in prayer during this time of mourning.”

Pope, council of cardinals discuss greater role for lay men and women

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis and his international Council of Cardinals reviewed aspects of the draft of the apostolic constitution that would govern the Roman Curia, including a greater role for lay men and women. The Vatican press office issued a statement Dec. 4 saying the council also discussed the relationship between the Curia — the Church's central administrative offices — and the bishops' conferences around the world. “The activity of the council was aimed at deepening two aspects of importance pertaining to the draft of the new apostolic constitution,” the Vatican said. It included, “the relations between the Curia and the episcopal conferences and the presence of the lay faithful, men and women, in decision-making roles in the offices of the Curia and in other bodies of the Church, and to study the theological-pastoral basis of these aspects.” The council members met Dec. 2-4, and Pope Francis was present except when he had a scheduling conflict.

Michigan priest asks judge in same-sex marriage not to receive Communion

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (CNS) — The Diocese of Grand Rapids said it supports the decision by one of its pastors to request a Michigan judge not to present herself for Communion at Mass because she is in same-sex marriage. Judge Sara Smolenski, the chief judge of Michigan's 63rd District Court, told local CNN affiliate WOOD-TV 8 that she received a call Nov. 23 from Father Scott Nolan, pastor of St. Stephen Parish in Grand Rapids, in late November and asked her not to go to Communion. Smolenski, 62, and her partner of over 30 years, Linda Burpee, married in March 2016, about a year after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled the U.S. Constitution provides same-sex couples the same right to marry as heterosexual couples. The marriage was publicized not by the couple's choice but because Smolenski is a public official. In the Dec. 1 TV interview, the judge said Father Nolan told her he was glad to see her in church the previous Sunday but added: “Because you and Linda are married in the state of Michigan, I'd like you to respect the Church and not come to Communion.” In its statement, the diocese said: “We appreciate Judge Sara Smolenski's service to the community. We are grateful for her past generosity. These facts are not at issue in this matter.” Smolenski has donated to what has been her parish for all of her 62 years; in June 2017 she gave \$7,000 for the renovation of St. Stephen.

Sports, Saints programs strengthen faith, virtues in Catholic high school students

BY KEVIN KILBANE

Bishop Dwenger High School senior Ben Schreck recalls having less confidence when he was younger. Now, the varsity basketball player offers guidance to freshmen players and volunteers as a peer mentor in the school's New Saints program.

He attributes some of his personal growth to the SportsLeader program started this fall at Bishop Dwenger.

"It helped me become a better leader," said Schreck, who also plays baseball for the Saints.

SportsLeader has been in use for more than two years at Bishop Luers High School in Fort Wayne. The program also has been adopted by St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louis Academy elementary and secondary schools in the Fort Wayne area. Saint Joseph High School in South Bend and Marian High School in Mishawaka also are considering using it.

Driven by the motto "Virtue equals Strength," SportsLeader uses sports as a tool to evangelize, build students' Catholic identity and help them get to heaven, national director Lou Judd said during a telephone interview.

"There is nothing else at any school that has the reach of sports, outside of the classroom," said Judd, who lives in Park Hills, Kentucky.

Many student leaders at schools also are athletes, he added. "If they love God, it influences their peers."

SportsLeader currently works with about 130 Catholic schools nationally, including several in Indiana. The program rests on four pillars: virtue, mentoring, Catholic identity and ceremony.

Athletes on all Bishop Dwenger sports teams, the cheerleaders and members of the Pom Squad dance group participate in the program, said Chris Svarczkopf, an assistant principal who serves as dean of freshmen and director of the New Saints and SportsLeader programs. About 40% of Bishop Dwenger's more than 1,000 students participate in sports.

Each week, SportsLeader provides schools with a character virtue to work on with students. Those virtues include traits such as charity, humility, courage, respect, sacrifice, perseverance and accountability.

Morning announcements mention the virtue of the week, Svarczkopf said. Coaches then take time during practices or pre-game to work with their teams on the virtue through discussions, Scripture readings, attending a team Mass, video clips or other activities, Svarczkopf said.



SportsLeader also recommends asking opposing teams to join together in prayer before or after the game.

Winning isn't mentioned.

"The goal is we get our student athletes to heaven," noted Svarczkopf. However, building students' character also can lead to better team results.

Despite diverting some practice time to SportsLeader activities, Saints' teams thrived this fall. Senior cross-country runner Erin Strzelecki won the state meet, the girls' soccer team advanced to the state championship game and the football team lost a close game at semi-state.

Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades and the diocesan Catholic Schools Office suggested the SportsLeader program to Bishop



Dwenger leaders, Svarczkopf said. School officials also had heard good reports about the program's impact at crosstown rival Bishop Luers, which began using the program with the 2017-18 school year.

"It's been well-received," said

Kevin Godfroy, Bishop Luers' athletic director.

All 16 sports the school offers use SportsLeader, and that affects about 350 athletes each year. Some students try a sport and don't continue it for all four years, Godfroy said, so over time the program probably reaches about 75% of the approximately 510 students at the school.

Coaches like the program, noted Godfroy. SportsLeader ceremonies involving athletes and their parents also have increased parent involvement and unity. Bishop Luers' sportsmanship grade from the Indiana High School Athletic Association also has "improved tremendously," since implementing the program, Godfroy said.

Along with starting the SportsLeader program this fall, Bishop Dwenger also rolled out a similar virtues program, New Saints, for all freshmen and students of any grade who are new to the school. Svarczkopf said the program grew out of a school strategic plan survey from a few years ago, which found concerns about an increased lack of respect, accountability and responsibility among students.

Starting school at Bishop Dwenger can be a big adjustment for many students, Svarczkopf explained. The school offers a rigorous, college-preparatory academic program. Students may also encounter more rules than they had previously, such as a dress code.

The New Saints program "kind of just puts everybody on the same page," he said. "Hopefully, on the same line on the same page. We already can see some major improvement," he added.

Bishop Dwenger uses the SportsLeader virtue of the week as the weekly virtue for the New Saints program. Every other week, New Saints students also attend a special character development lesson. More than 100 upperclass peer mentors, such as Schreck, also work with New Saints students in small groups for about 10-15 minutes once a week during lunch period.

"We are trying to instill the virtues in them so they mature and, when they are seniors, they become good leaders of the school," said Schreck.

Students in the New Saints program and their peer mentors also complete a community service project.

"Service is the way to actually live your faith," noted Svarczkopf.

They now are collecting items for Christmas gift boxes that will be given to the 100 residents of a nursing home in New Haven.

Bishop Dwenger administrators hope the character traits and values instilled through the SportsLeader and New Saints programs will give students the strength to get through difficult situations they may face in life, said Svarczkopf.

So far, feedback from students and coaches has been positive.

"I can sense a difference in the building — a more positive attitude among students as far as caring about others," he said.



John Martin

Nick Gray of Redeemer Radio holds the microphone as Father David Huneck, co-chaplain of Bishop Dwenger High School, Fort Wayne, prays with Dwenger and crosstown rival Bishop Luers High School football players before a game this fall. Developing leaders who are confident in their faith is the goal of the SportsLeader program utilized at both schools.

First women's college in region observes

BY JENNIFER BARTON

“**A**ve Crux Spes Unica” is the motto of Saint Mary's College. In Latin, it means “Hail to the Cross, our only hope.” This phrase remembers the school's Holy Cross roots and the sacrifices made by its early founders, who came to the growing area of north-central Indiana with little more than a vision of a school for girls.

This year marks the 175th anniversary of Saint Mary's College in Notre Dame, Indiana. The decades have brought changes, yet Saint Mary's has remained steadfast in the Holy Cross sisters' mission of educating young women and aiding them along their spiritual journeys.

The campus has grown both in numbers and in degree programs offered. Approximately 1,600 students are currently enrolled and more than 30 degree programs are offered.

The successes of the school's past and present prompted a yearlong celebration of events to commemorate this milestone.

Saint Mary's College history

In 1844, Holy Cross Father Edward Sorin requested that religious sisters be sent to the Indiana wilderness to possibly start a girls' school of higher education that would complement the newly founded, all-male Notre Dame College. Four brave sisters responded, making a 40-day journey from France to northern Indiana and establishing a school in Bertrand, Michigan. The school was moved to Notre Dame in 1855 and named Saint Mary's Academy. It was the first female college in the Great Lakes region. For over 100 years, the college continued to be run by the Sisters of the Holy Cross.

Though she was not the first president nor the longest-tenured, Sister Madeleva Wolff left a lasting impact on the college, one that is felt to this day. She was known as a poet as well as a proponent of education. It has been 85 years since she took office as president and more than 30 years since the inception of the lecture series in her honor. Also during her time as president, Sister Madeleva established the School of Sacred Theology, the Department of Nursing Education and the Moreau Center for the Arts.

In 1943, when the School of Sacred Theology was founded, it was the first college in the nation to offer a graduate program in theology to women. From this program came some of the first female theologians in the United States.

Saint Mary's today

Three graduate degrees were introduced in 2015: a Doctorate of nursing practice, Master of Science in data science and Master of Science in speech pathology. Since then, a Master of autism studies has been added as well, to respond to a growing need in that field.



Saint Mary's College students are shown canoeing in this historic photo, circa 1900.

Saint Mary's has maintained its status as a women's college, even when proposals were made in the 1970s to merge with Notre Dame. Instead, Saint Mary's continues to focus on empowering women and encouraging their growth as individuals, as well as building a strong connection with other alumnae. There are multiple opportunities for coed social activities with the University of Notre Dame, however, and male students are admitted to the Saint Mary's College master's and doctorate programs.

Looking to the future

Interim President Dr. Nancy Nekvasil has laid out her vision for the future of Saint Mary's. It includes remaining true to the school's Holy Cross roots while focusing on the needs of 21st century students. The school intends to remain a Catholic, liberal arts, residential women's college. According to the Saint Mary's Strategic Priorities document, some of its efforts in the near future will be to “identify and recruit a broader spectrum of students who will excel in the undergraduate and graduate programs,” help students find ways to afford their tuition, and break down barriers to education and study-abroad programs. It's also looking to improve retention rates and increase “student-faculty scholarly and creative activity and research.”

Saint Mary's continues to provide a welcoming environment for a diverse student population and is committed to supporting students in times of need.



Photos provided by Art Wagner

Saint Mary's College students take selfies with “Mother Angela Gillespie,” the first directress of the college, at the kickoff event for its 175th anniversary. Sister M. Veronique Wiedower, CSC, president of the Sisters of the Holy Cross, dressed in the habit of the Sisters of the Holy Cross during the 1850s.



Members of the Saint Mary's community make cards for the Sisters of the Holy Cross at Saint Mary's Serves, a community service initiative, as part of the 175th celebration.



Four choirs and an ensemble orchestra perform at 7 p.m., at the Church of Our Lady of

s 175th anniversary



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Special guest Adriana Trigiani, New York Times bestselling author, speaks with other writers and students at the school's literary festival in September.



tra will perform at the annual "Lessons and Carols" celebration in the Dec. 15, Loretto, bringing the 175th anniversary to a beautiful close.

Anniversary year events

Judith Fean, vice president for mission, and Shari Rodriguez, vice president for college relations, co-chaired the 175th Anniversary Committee. The annual Lessons and Carols on Dec. 15 will bring these festivities to a close.

The kickoff took place Jan. 20, incorporating three yearly Saint Mary's events: Saint Mary's Serves, the Blessed Basil Moreau Mass and the Moreau Dinner. All of the events were well-attended by students and faculty.

As Saint Mary's is strongly committed to the greater good of the community and the world, the yearly Saint Mary's Serves marked the beginning of celebration. The communitywide event that takes place on campus brings together students, staff and their families, along with local residents to perform acts of service. This year, 32 memory books were created for the Sisters of the Holy Cross for dementia and Alzheimer's patients; more than 40 fleece blankets and 120 scarves were made for the Sister Maura Brannick Health Center and St. Margaret's House, both of which serve the health and material needs of the poor in South Bend; and 50 hygiene kits were put together for La Casa de Amistad clients.

The Mass is celebrated each year on Blessed Moreau's feast day, because he founded the Holy Cross congregations and sent Father Edward Sorin to South Bend to found Notre Dame. It was followed by the dinner.

On March 25, the School of Sacred Theology, celebrating its 35th anniversary as well as the school's 175th, hosted a dinner and special lecture. During the dinner, Dr. Keith J. Egan was honored as founding director of the center and Sister Mary Ellen Vaughn gave a testimony about her experience as a student. The guest speaker for the evening was Dr. Sandra Yocum, former associate professor at Saint Mary's and now associate professor of religious studies at the University of Dayton. Her talk was titled "A School of Their Own: Saint Mary's Graduate School of Sacred Theology: 1943-1969."

Sept. 8 saw a one-time ecumenical festival of hymns honoring Mary titled "Mary, Bearer of the Eternal Word." It featured Marian hymns from different Christian denominations and reflections on Mary's importance in salvation history as the Christ-bearer. As namesake of the college, this festival explored the role of Mary in an interdenominational way, combining the honor Catholics give to her with the Protestant hymn festival. "In that way, it celebrated ecumenical unity and a vision for the next 175 years," said Regina Wilson, director of campus ministry.

During the "Walk in Time" tour later in September, participants were invited to enjoy the beautiful 100 acres of campus while learning about its rich history. Intended as a pilgrimage, groups of participants stopped at several stations around campus, including the Chapel of Loretto and Our Lady of Peace Cemetery, to hear presentations. They also stopped at Bertrand Hall, the first home of the school and other locations. Sister Madeleva herself had found joy in such walks, often cutting and carrying walking sticks she found around campus.

A national literary festival took place in November, hosted by alumna and best-selling author Adriana Trigiani. It brought 11 authors to campus. The two-day event also attracted approximately 350 attendees, who had the opportunity to listen to and engage with the writers of various genres. The inspiration for the event was to honor Sister Madeleva's commitment to bringing artists and writers to the college.



1844 • 2019

The festivities will end Dec. 15 with "Lessons and Carols," combining sacred song and Scripture focused on the Advent season. Four choirs will perform at the Church of Our Lady of Loretto on that evening: Saint Mary's Women's Choir, the Collegiate Choir, the Loretto Choir and the Liturgical Choir, along with the Moreau Chamber Ensemble. While "Lessons and Carols" is an annual event, this year it will include a Christmas poem written by Sister Madeleva titled "The Dark is Shattered," which will be sung by the Saint Mary's College choir. It has been set to music by Andrea Ramsey, guest conductor from Kansas City. David Eicher of the Saint Mary's music department said the choir is very enthusiastic about this beautiful composition.

The evening, which begins at 7 p.m. also will feature readings from various periods in Saint Mary's history, as well as two poems in the spirit of the season written by alumnae. Besides the choral performances there will be carols for all to sing; and rounding out the evening, "Silent Night" will be sung by candlelight.

This year, "Lessons and Carols" will serve as a bridge between the history and the future of Saint Mary's. A reception will follow, in honor of the anniversary.

"Advent invites us to enter time in which the past, the present and the future all come together and are presented to us as eternal time, as time where God is and has always been present revealing God's self as time-less..." said Fean. "We do not go forward alone, but with all those who have been part of Saint Mary's College, in all times. It seems only appropriate to celebrate the closing of Saint Mary's yearlong celebration of our 175th during this holy season of Advent, to continue to prepare us for the times ahead."



STAY WITH US

Convenient grace

Profiles in the CCD/Religious Education setting

BY TAMI DELUCENAY

There are a plethora of readings and booklets that can help a person enter into the Advent season. One particular meditation, titled, "Give Me a Joyful Faith," comes from "Praying through Advent with the Saints," edited by All Saints Press.

"Lord, let my faith be joyful and give peace and gladness to my spirit, and dispose it for prayer with God and conversation with others, so that the inner bliss of its fortunate possession may shine forth in sacred and secular conversations, Amen." It is attributed to Pope St. Paul VI.

This quote exudes the goals that Angela Bean, third grade catechist at Sacred Heart in Warsaw, has for her students. "I have two main goals I desire for them; to see the joy that having a relationship with Jesus brings to their lives and to see God's love for them pouring out through me. If they can grasp these two things, I feel their desire to know Jesus in a personal way will grow," she said.

Bean and her husband, Taylor, have been married for nine years and have three children, Nora, age 6, and 3-year-old twins, Aubrey and Leah. She received her bachelor's degree in social work from Ball State University and taught at an alternative school for several years.

"I grew up at Sacred Heart," said Angela. "I've known our religious education director, Cathy Smith, since I was 6 years old. When she was look-



Tami DeLucenay

Angela Bean, third grade catechist at Sacred Heart in Warsaw, endeavors to teach and demonstrate to her students that having a relationship with Jesus brings great joy.

ing for a catechist five years ago and asked if I would like to teach, I said yes. I was eager to get back in the classroom, and of course I couldn't say no to Cathy!"

"I enjoy teaching the third grade; they are excited to be in class and eager to learn," she said. "To keep them engaged for our hour-and-10-minute class on Sundays, I assign jobs. We have a prayer leader, board eraser, cross-off-agenda person, door person, pass-out-papers-and-supplies person, and of course a treat-pass-out person. I found by assigning classroom

duties, the behavior expectations are met without resistance," explained Angela.

Each week, Angela's 19 students come eager to learn Bible stories and lessons from their textbooks. "Often, the students think they are too little to do God's work. But through the Bible stories they discover that even doing small things helps build up the kingdom."

When Angela first started teaching, her then-3-year-old daughter Nora would come to class with her and sit quietly in the back of the room — unless Mom was giving a quiz or ask-

ing questions. Then "she would blur out the answers," said Angela.

"When the twins came along, I was asked if I was going to stop teaching. I said, 'Of course not, this is a special time for me to share my faith with my students.' I also feel that if people see that I can teach with having three little ones, perhaps they might be willing to give of their time."

Angela takes time daily to nourish her own faith journey as well. "I like to read reflections from Bishop (Robert) Barron, especially during the

Advent season. Earlier in the year, I also participated in a Cursillo weekend, and it changed my life. The time I continue to spend with these women help me focus on my piety and making decisions with God's plan in mind, not my own whims of the day.

"I recognize the Holy Spirit more in my life and feel on fire for God. I to know it spills over in my classroom, especially during this time of the year. It's exciting to share the joy and anticipation of the Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord with my students."

THEOTOKOS

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Look for Our Lady of Guadalupe coverage in the Dec. 22 issue.

Christmas in the Castle continues Bass family tradition of hospitality, St. Francis' love of the newborn Savior

BY KEVIN KILBANE

Early Fort Wayne industrialist John H. Bass and his wife, Laura, cared about their employees at the Bass Foundry and Machine Works and other businesses.

"He took intimate care of his employees — provided meals," said Kimberly Brinneman of the University of Saint Francis. "He took them in as family."

During the season of Advent, when Mary and Joseph found no room at the inn and Jesus Christ was born in a stable, the university continues the Bass family's tradition of hospitality with an annual Christmas in the Castle event.

Every year during the event, the public can tour the Bass family's former Brookside mansion — now part of the USF campus — to gaze upon the Christmas decorations brightening nearly every room of the three-story, castlelike home.

"We just want to share the beauty with people," said Brinneman, the university's Christmas at USF coordinator. "It is a wonderful, wonderful place."

The event and other Christmas activities at USF also grew out of the university's connection with St. Francis, said Sister M. Elise Kriss, president. St. Francis felt deep love for Jesus Christ taking human form and created the first living Nativity scene in Greccio, Italy.

"That's really why at Saint Francis, it (Christmas) is a big deal," said Sister Elise.



Photos by Kevin Kilbane

The University of Saint Francis' Christmas in the Castle event welcomes people each Advent to enjoy holiday decorations inside and out at the Brookside mansion on the university's Spring Street campus in Fort Wayne.

Completed in 1903, the 24,000-square-foot Brookside at 2701 Spring St. replaced a previous home on the site that burned down in 1902, according to Brinneman. Both houses initially served as a summer home for the Bass family, which had another house in downtown Fort Wayne. One example of the care with

which the Basses treated employees was a Christmas reception held in 1890 at the original summer home, said Brinneman. The crowd of 500 people included many Bass employees.

John Bass died in 1922 and Laura in 1935. The Basses' daughter sold Brookside and surrounding land in 1944 to the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration, the founders of what is now the University of Saint Francis.

The mansion initially served as the college after the sisters relocated to Fort Wayne from Lafayette, where they founded the school in 1890. Brookside continued to house the USF library until 2006. After extensive restoration and renovation was completed in 2010, the house became home to the university's administrative offices.

The mansion features some of the best craftsmanship of its era, with a sculpted sandstone exterior, inlaid wood floors, and ornate staircases, fireplace mantels and wood trim. Christmas decorations just enhance the beauty.

One of the Sisters of St. Francis had done limited Christmas decorating at Brookside before the renovations and that became an early form of Christmas in the Castle. USF began the current event in 2011, said Brinneman.

This year, 23 elaborately adorned Christmas trees graced the rooms of Brookside. At least 82 Nativity scenes of all sizes and designs shared the Christmas story on trees, mantels, bookcases, window-sills and tables throughout the house. They included a detailed Hummel set donated to the university and first displayed last year.

Along with USF staff, volunteer decorators included local florists and designers as well representatives from Bishop Luers and Bishop Dwenger high schools. Bishop Dwenger, participating for the second year, decorated the third-floor billiard room largely in white with a Nativity theme. Bishop Luers, which took part for the first time, filled the large, third-floor ballroom with bright red decorations and a sleighload of tree ornaments handmade by students.

While Brookside is decorated, the university also uses it for student, alumni and donor events, said Brinneman. In addition, USF rents it out on a limited basis for holiday events held by organizations, companies and parishes.

USF depends on volunteers to help welcome the public to the house. University staff, faculty and students and people from the community filled about 185 volunteer slots during the five-day event.



Nearly every room of Brookside mansion was adorned in holiday trim for the Christmas in the Castle event Dec. 6-10.



Volunteers from Bishop Luers High School in Fort Wayne participated for the first time this year. Luers' decorations included numerous ornaments handmade by students.

See related story on page 16.

God is not an insurance policy

You know the commercials: “15 minutes could save you 15% or more.” “Like a good neighbor...” “You’re in good hands...”

In this land of plenty, we like to protect our stuff with insurance policies. The more we have, the more we have to insure. The thought of having something that could simply be destroyed or damaged without remuneration is absurd to the modern mind. And certainly, there is a natural sense of justice involved with this notion. If the deductibles are paid, the policy should cover whatever was damaged. Simple enough. On the other hand, if the coverage doesn’t cover what it should, then we move on to find a new policy. After all, it might only take 15 minutes.

Our relationship with God, however, should not be a kind of eternal insurance policy. It’s possible to slip into this mindset frequently, though. For example, if I say my prayers, check off my obligation for Mass on Sundays and holy days and maybe throw a few bucks in the collection plate, then God should cover me. He should make sure my life is fairly pain-free, relatively happy, and He should ultimately make sure we all get to heaven. In other words, if I pay my deductible by doing what is required, then God should cover the rest.

Unfortunately, this notion of God as the divine insurer could not be further from the reality revealed by Jesus. After all, Jesus’ life was filled with the most horrific suffering and death, even after living in total fidelity to the will of His father. So if God is

not the great adjuster, then who is He?

God is Father. He is a divine person who lives in relationship with the Son and the Holy Spirit. And through His Son, He has fully revealed Himself to us. More than that, through His Son taking on human flesh in Jesus, He has invited us into the same eternal communion of love that is the Trinity. In other words, instead of offering a coverage policy in return for meeting our religious duties, God offers His very self — totally, completely and unreservedly.

In fact, this is precisely what the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus reveals — that there is not a single moment of human existence in which God does not accompany each and every member of His Church. Think about it. God became an embryo, developed into a man, died and entered into the grave. The work of Jesus, more than simply being a ministry of justice to repair the damage of sin, inaugurated a covenant in which our weak, frail and broken humanity is exchanged for the all-powerful, eternally strong and perfect Son of God.

In a most jarring way, this is precisely what takes place during holy Communion at each and every Mass. Instead of Christ becoming part of our own bodies, it is our entire humanity that becomes united to Him. In the Eucharist, there is no change in Christ. We are the ones who become conformed to Him. In the most profound way, it is during this act of holy Communion that we enter into the very life of



A VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS

BRIAN ISENBARGER

heaven now.

So, why do we go to Mass on Sunday and holy days? It’s not to insure our future or to win the divine comprehensive coverage package. After all, God is not into profits or in need of anything from us mere mortals. Instead, we go to Mass to exchange our very selves for Him. We go to Mass because we are members of the very bride of Christ, the Church. We go to Mass because we’ve been invited to the eternal wedding feast of the lamb — heaven.

In a word, our relationship with God is not like an insurance policy. It’s much more like a marriage, a marriage that is not built on keeping score and counting points but rather on self-giving love and covenantal fidelity. At every Mass, God gives His very self. In every tabernacle, He waits for our company.

Most simply, He wants our friendship, not our deductible.

Brian Isenbarger is a seminarian of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. He is studying at Mount St. Mary’s Seminary in Emmitsburg, Maryland.

Rudolph to the rescue: the triumph of an under-deer

Robert May was painfully aware of the distance between his dreams and his reality.

The 34-year-old Dartmouth graduate had long fantasized about writing the great American novel. Instead, he was working a mediocre job as an ad man for Montgomery Ward, cranking out forgettable copy about silk sheets and white shirts. He lived in a tiny apartment with his ill wife and young daughter.

One day in 1939, May’s boss tapped him for an unexpected assignment. For years, Montgomery Ward had bought coloring books and distributed them at stores as a Christmas giveaway. This time around, executives decided to save money by creating their own booklet — and asked May to write it.

His thoughts turned to the Lincoln Park Zoo. When he took his 4-year-old, Barbara, she was drawn to the deer.

He also channeled his own childhood insecurities that remained poignant; he’d been teased as a small, shy boy. An underdog story like the Ugly



TWENTY SOMETHING

CHRISTINA CAPECCHI

Duckling appealed to him.

Then, looking out onto the flickering street lights one foggy winter night, came the

inspiration: “A nose! A bright red nose that would shine through fog like a floodlight,” he said.

May wanted an alliterative name for his reindeer and considered Reginald — too British — and Rollo, which sounded too jolly for a misfit. Rudolph was still

colorful but more sympathetic.

The tale had a decidedly plaintive, Depression-era tone, describing an outcast who “wept” at his peers’ taunting.

May delved into the psychology of his characters, penning a more dramatic narrative arc than we find in

CAPECCHI, page 13

The sweetness of Rudolph’s

redemption is spooned out so

liberally it reveals May’s

lingering boyhood wounds.

The coming of the Lord is at hand



THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

MSGR. OWEN F. CAMPION

Third Sunday of Advent Matthew 11:2-11

The Book of Isaiah is the source of this weekend’s first reading. Isaiah was between a rock and a hard place, so to speak. He realized that unwise alliances and behavior that forgot God put the Hebrews’ kingdom of Judah at great risk. The prophet was convinced that if the nation did not return to God in genuine obedience and piety, then the whirlwind eventually would sweep away life as he and his contemporaries knew it.

He met dispute and outrage. It must have been frustrating, but despite the angry reaction to what he said on the part of many

of his contemporaries, Isaiah unflinchingly called the people back to God.

It was not as if God would bring a terrible punishment upon the kingdom. Rather, the people, by their impiety, would create a nightmare for themselves.

The Epistle to James supplies the second reading. This epistle rarely appears in the liturgy. The identity of the author is unclear, and it leads to another question. The New Testament mentions four men with this name. Which, if any, wrote this epistle?

Some insist that James, the foster brother of the Lord, was the author. This begets the other question: Did Mary have other children?

Ancient Christian writers surmised that James, in this reference, was a son from a previous marriage of Joseph, the eventual spouse of Mary. They reasoned that this must have been the case because they believed, as the Church does today, that Mary had only one child, namely Jesus.

Regardless, this reading sol-

idly establishes the author’s faith that Jesus will be victorious. No power can exceed the power of the Lord. After all, the Lord is the Son of God.

However, while final victory undoubtedly will come, it will not necessarily come at a time that humans predict, and certainly it will not come at their bidding. But it will come. So the epistle urges strong faith, but also forbearance.

The third reading, from St. Matthew’s Gospel, centers on John the Baptist, whose denunciations of sin in high places led to his arrest. In time, they would lead to his death.

Despising the Roman occupation of the land, pious Jews at this time yearned for a Messiah who would rid the Holy Land of the pagan intruders. John gave another description of the Redeemer. He saw the Savior not as a warrior, commanding armies to slaughter the enemies of the One God of Israel, but the compassionate, truly holy, leader and guide of the pious.

Jesus met this description,

healing the sick, giving hope and restoring life, lovingly coming to earth as God.

In the last verses, Jesus affirms that John is a prophet. In fact, John insists, Jesus is the greatest prophet.

Reflection

Ancient cultures often found the dawn awe-inspiring and also reassuring. As the sun creeps over the horizon, the sky presents a marvelous sight. It is not a sudden transition from utter darkness to bright light. Instead, everything changes to a gentle rose.

In the spectrum of color, rose is the blending of red and yellow. Pink is different. It combines red and white. Traditionally, priests wear rose-colored vestments on this weekend — never pink — to remind us that the bright light of Christ is about to burst upon the horizon of our world. It is overwhelming to consider. God so loved the world that He sent His Son to us to give us life.

As in days of old, when

the reappearance of the sun showed that all would be good, so Christians are reassured that they are secure. Jesus lives. He is with them.

Each of us sins. Each is imperfect. Advent is the opportunity to create a dawn within our hearts, and we invite Christ to come to brighten our lives.

READINGS

Sunday: Is 35:1-6a, 10 Ps 146:6-10
Jas 5:7-10 Mt 11:2-11

Monday: Nm 24:2-7, 15-17a Ps 25:4-9
Mt 21:23-27

Tuesday: Gn 49:2, 8-10 Ps 72:1-4, 7-8,
17 Mt 1:1-17

Wednesday: Jer 23:5-8 Ps 72:1-2,
12-13, 18-19 Mt 1:18-25

Thursday: Jgs 13:2-7, 24-25a Ps
71:3-6, 16-17 Lk 1:5-25

Friday: Is 7:10-14 Ps 24:1-6
Lk 1:26-38

Saturday: Sg 2:8-14 Ps 33:2-3,
11-12, 20-21 Lk 1:39-45

Christmas is proof that God believes in us

Recently, a friend recounted all of the activities ahead of her to get ready for the Christmas season: shopping, baking, decorating, getting cards out and spending extra hours at the food pantry.

As I was about to offer my sympathy for the jam-packed to-do list, she offered, "I actually welcome all this work as it allows me to escape all the craziness in the world. I just do not know what I can count on anymore."

Another friend, generally irrepressibly upbeat, wrote a desolate message. He had retired early to devote the past 10-plus years to educating himself and others about climate warming and the actions that can be taken.

A recent U.N. report has just been released and projects a bleak scenario if the global community does not accelerate our responses. On its heel, a statement from a high-level Church official declares that climate change is important but not urgent. Futility and powerlessness underlined his every sentence.

Christmas offers a great reason and opportunity to turn toward festive activities: stringing up lights that twinkle brightly, filling our homes with the smell of spices, singing the angels' chorus and warming our hearts with rich memories from those handmade ornaments.

These are perfect antidotes to the dreary gray of winter, the cutting wind and the disappoint-

ment in a world that lurches from crises to bigger crises, mean words to condemnations and indifference to exploitation.

But the last thing that Christmas should invite is escape from the world. It would be ironic, wouldn't it, as Christmas celebrates Christ coming into the world. Not only does God enter into our world, God does it specifically for us: "For unto you, a savior is born."

"You" is all of us, as Jesus was so lowborn that not one of us can think we lack the privileges to take our place in His circle. There is also no character screening: No visitors need to submit a moral history. Jesus' world, like ours, had its share of strife. Yet, emphatically, the birth of Christ brings glad tidings!

What glad tidings? Clearly, a scan of the nightly news provides evidence that the glad tidings do not eliminate darkness, suffering, violence, exploitation. The glad tidings point to a light in the darkness that shows the path to the kingdom of God here and now. This kingdom is built not just with God's love, but ours also.

The essence of Christmas is, as this popular quote from St. Athanasius reminds us, "He became what we are that he might make us what he is."

God enlists and relies on us, with all our failings, in this kingdom project: us as both bricks and bricklayers. God works with us, for us, in us, through us and multiplies our efforts. God sees us with divine sight that spar-



CAROLYN WOO

OUR GLOBAL FAMILY

kles delight, consolation, pride and beckoning.

We may let fear shrink us into small beings, but we know deep down that we are made for more than fear's captive; we are made for and by God: holy and beloved.

Our imagination will not grasp the way that God works; our impatience may demand numbers and results; our faith may falter against the hardness of life. Christmas is the call to yield those thoughts to the wonder, largeness, consolation and power of God with us.

Christmas gives proof that God claims us and casts His lot with and in us. God believes in us. There is no need for escape, for despair. Let us not give up on ourselves, on each other.

Woo is distinguished president's fellow for global development at Purdue University and served as CEO and president of Catholic Relief Services from 2012 to 2016.

Carolyn Woo is the distinguished president's fellow for global development at Purdue University.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH®

Gospel for December 15, 2019

Matthew 11:2-11

Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for the Third Sunday of Advent, Cycle A: Jesus' answer for John's disciples. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

CHRIST SIGHT BLESSSED REED A PROPHET PREPARE BAPTIST	TELL JOHN LEPERS NO OFFENSE BY THE WIND BEHOLD BEFORE YOU LEAST	BLIND POOR SPEAK GO OUT MY MESSENGER BORN KINGDOM
--	---	---

ARE YOU HE?

B G A U O Y E R O F E B
A O P C C S R E P E L Y
P O R N H O J L L E T T
T U O N O L W K S R S H
I T P P O M M S I A A E
S D H N A O E D G P E W
T L E N A D F G H E L I
O O T J N G F F T R E N
D H U I G N M M E P J D
E E L T S I R H C N J F
E B I L Y K K A E P S D
R E G N E S S E M Y M E

Saint of the Week

Mary di Rosa

1813-1855
Feast December 15

Paula di Rosa left school at 17 to keep house for her father, an Italian textile-mill owner. She also took on the welfare of the factory girls, and she and the widowed Gabriela Echenos-Bornati nursed the sick during a cholera epidemic. Paula later set up a house for poor, abandoned girls and a military hospital. These charitable works evolved into the Congregation of the Handmaids of Charity, which was approved by the Vatican in 1850. Paula made her vows as Mary of the Crucified in 1852. She established convents in Dalmatia and near Verona, and died at home in Brescia after collapsing from physical exhaustion. She was canonized in 1954.

CAPECCHI, from page 12

the famous 1949 song recorded by Gene Autry and the beloved 1964 stop-action TV special narrated by Burl Ives.

Readers see Santa's fog-induced struggles: "He tangled in tree-tops again and again..." We also see his diplomacy, recruiting Rudolph by praising his "wonderful forehead" and proving "extra-polite."

The sweetness of Rudolph's redemption is spooned out so liberally it reveals May's lingering boyhood wounds. "It was his opinion of himself that gave rise to Rudolph," his daughter, Barbara, later said.

Where Autry simply sings "then all the reindeer loved him," May offers more detail: "The funny-faced fellow they always called names and practically never allowed in their games was now to be envied by all, far and near. For no greater honor can come to a deer..."

If that's not enough, he lets Rudolph land his Christmas-night flight right in front of "his handsomer playmates," noting that "those bad deer who used to do nothing but tease him would now have done anything...only to please him!"

Even more: "They felt even sorer they had been bad when Santa said: 'Rudolph, I never have had a deer quite so brave or so brilliant as you...'"

He is promptly declared

"Commander-In-Chief," a title May types in capital letters.

May took great care with each stanza, running them by Barbara. When his wife died in July, his boss told him to stop working on the booklet.

May refused to quit.

"I needed Rudolph more than ever," he wrote.

In late August, he finished the story. Ward seized it as a lesson for his clerks, celebrating in an in-house memo Rudolph's "service, the right attitude and a desire to do his best."

The book was a huge hit, and the retailer printed more than 2 million copies that Christmas season 80 years ago.

May was eventually given all rights to Rudolph, which provided a good livelihood. He experienced a dramatic arc of his own with profound spiritual underpinnings: remarrying a devout Catholic, converting to Catholicism and having five more children, one of whom became a nun.

His biography can encourage anyone who feels crippled by the gap between hopes and reality. It reminds us to trust in the bigger picture, in God, the one who isn't done writing your story.

Christina Capecci is a freelance writer from Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota.



Knights host St. Nicholas



Provided by Steve Ludwiski

Knights of Columbus Council 16065 at St. Jude Parish, Fort Wayne, had a special guest at its monthly breakfast Dec. 7. More than 300 parishioners had breakfast with St. Nicholas, visited with him and had their picture taken.

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WHAT'S HAPPENING carries announcements about upcoming events in the diocese. View more Catholic events and submit new ones at www.todayscatholic.org/event. For additional listings of that event, please call the advertising sales staff at 260-399-1449 to purchase space.

Quiet evening of prayer
SOUTH BEND — St. Joseph Church, 226 N. Hill St., will be open from 5-9 p.m. Monday, Dec. 16, for all to spend a little quiet time with the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. Come for five minutes or come for an hour; all are welcome. The Knights of Columbus will lead a rosary beginning at 7:30 p.m.

priest vs. seminarian basketball game. This year, the event will be at Marian High School for the first time.

New Year's Eve Trivia Night
FORT WAYNE — St. Vincent de Paul Parish, 1502 E Wallen Rd., will host a New Year's Eve trivia night Tuesday, Dec. 31, at 9 p.m. in the St. Vincent Msgr. John Kuzmich Life Center. Trivia, food and a midnight toast for \$10 per person. Costumes are optional. Register before Dec. 15 by calling the office at 260-489-3537 ext. 3.

Sixth annual Cupertino Classic
MISHAWAKA — The Cupertino Classic will be Friday, Dec. 27, at Marian High School, 1311 S. Logan St., Mishawaka, from 6:30-9 p.m. It is the annual

Live Nativity
ELKHART — St. Thomas the Apostle Church and school, 1405 N. Main St., will have a live Nativity Saturday, Dec. 14, at 5:30 p.m., following the 4:30 p.m. vigil Mass. Join at the church for the Nativity and live music. Live animals will be outside, and afterward refreshments will be available in the school.

REST IN PEACE

Arcola
Mary Lou Gruettert, 83, St. Patrick

Frederick H. Jordan, 80, St. Vincent de Paul

DeWayne Merckx, 80, Queen of Peace

Decatur
Joseph M. Goebel, 67, St. Mary of the Assumption

Louis Mohlman, 89, St. Vincent de Paul

Daniel Robinson, 73, St. Bavo

Fort Wayne
Donald F. Dager, 90, Our Lady of Good Hope

Granger
Peggy Makielski, 93, St. Pius X

New Haven
Gilbert Coonrod, 95, St. Louis, Besancon

Helen Gochenour, 92, St. Charles Borromeo

Huntington
Cynthia A. Sailors, 59, SS. Peter and Paul

South Bend
Roberta Langner, 88, Christ the King

Virginia Hannum, 106, Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception

Mishawaka
Robert Lytle, 85, St. Bavo

Tamara Szigeti-Clark, 59, Christ the King

Waterloo
Mildred M. Miller, 93, St. Michael the Archangel

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Outgoing USF president loves to join in the decorating

BY KEVIN KILBANE

Sister M. Elise Kriss loves decorating for Christmas. The president of the University of Saint Francis in Fort Wayne remembers as a girl how her family always had a Christmas tree and stockings hung from the fireplace.

"I always enjoyed decorating the tree, redecorating the tree and moving things around," recalled Sister Elise, who grew up in North Judson in northwest Indiana.

She has continued that tradition as an adult, decorating her office or other rooms for USF's annual Christmas in the Castle event at Brookside, the 1903 mansion on its Spring Street campus that now serves as the administration building. USF staff, faculty, students and community volunteers decorate Brookside for Christmas and then the university opens it for public tours.

"I think it is a nice event for the community, and I want them to have an enjoyable experience," Sister Elise said.

While she typically decorates

her own office, this year she let her sister, Cathy Minor of Fort Wayne, transform her space. Sister Elise, who describes her love of Christmas decorating as a hobby, worked instead on the sitting room next to her office and the neighboring office of Matt Smith, vice president for institutional advancement.

The change is one of many this year for Sister Elise, who will leave her president's job June 30, after serving 27 years in that role.

She plans to take a sabbatical of up to a year. "Then I will come back and hopefully find another role or find another way to be helpful," she said of rejoining other members of the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration religious order serving at the campus. The Sisters of St. Francis founded the university in 1890 in Lafayette and moved it in 1944 to Fort Wayne.

Sister Elise said she and her sister "like decorating for Christmas and we like gardening." Her sister has volunteered for several years to decorate Brookside for Christmas in the Castle, which resumed in 2011 after the renovation of Brookside.



Photos by Kevin Kilbane

Sister M. Elise Kriss, president of the University of Saint Francis in Fort Wayne, stands with some of the holiday decorations she hung to prepare a colleague's office for the Christmas in the Castle event at USF's Brookside mansion.

This year, the Christmas tree, fireplace mantel and other decorations in Sister Elise's office use hues of white, silver and blue as well as lots of glitter and sparkle to create a theme of snow, ice and crystals, she said. The display also includes a few Nativity scenes, including a large one at the base of the tree.

Sister Elise prefers vintage and Victorian-era styles, which she used in the rooms she decorated.

The sitting room features a small Christmas tree decorated with Victorian-style ornaments and candles. Vintage-looking Christmas stockings in pink and purple hang from a bookcase and display case. A cloak and children's clothing from the Bass family, the original owners of the house, hang on a chair and coat rack.

In Smith's office, red and evergreen colors reign.

"He likes red," Sister Elise said.

Vintage-looking Christmas stockings hang from the room's fireplace. Decorated artificial evergreen garland runs along the fireplace mantel and up and over the top of the mirror behind it. A large Nativity scene stands on an adjacent table. Red decorations adorn the Christmas tree near Smith's desk.

Sister Elise said she often decides a year in advance on the visual theme for the room or rooms she will decorate for Christmas in the Castle. She's also known for her forward thinking at USF, which has grown in enrollment, increased academic and other programs, and added a downtown campus during her leadership.

She and other Christmas in the Castle volunteers start their decorating in early November. They assemble holiday decor

items from a vast collection of Christmas decorations kept in Brookside's basement, she said. If she sees decor items on sale after Christmas that may be useful in future years, she may buy them herself.

"I like to hold onto the vintage, traditional things," she said. "It kind of fits the theme of the house."

She also likes to peruse the decor items that didn't get used during the current year and ponder how she may be able to work them in the next year.

Whether Sister Elise will be present to decorate for next year's Christmas in the Castle is uncertain. But there's no question about her willingness.

"If I happen to be around when they are decorating for Christmas," she said with a smile, "I will be happy to help."



Snow, ice and crystals create the theme for the Christmas tree in the office of Sister Elise.