



TODAY'S CATHOLIC

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*For unto you
is born a Savior*

CNS/Bridgeman Images

The Nativity is depicted in this 16th-century painting by Italian artist Lorenzo Lotto. The feast of the Nativity of Christ, a holy day of obligation, is celebrated Dec. 25.

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Bishops say 'ad limina' meeting strengthens their bond with pope

BY CINDY WOODEN

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Inspiring “missionary disciples” rather than church-maintenance workers and building up the unity of the Church in a polarized world were some of the topics on the table when 26 U.S. bishops met Pope Francis Dec. 12.

Even though the pope was running 40 minutes late — and apologized profusely for it — the bishops of Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin spent “two hours and 18 minutes” conversing with him, said Archbishop Jerome E. ListECKI of Milwaukee.

“Here’s one of the most important figures in the world and he gives us two hours and 18 minutes,” the archbishop said. “That says a lot about his pastor’s heart, about his generosity, about the fact that he likes being with bishops and talking about the things that matter to the Church.”

Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana, said that thinking about the meeting, “I could imagine Peter sitting down with the apostles and sharing some of their concerns and challenges, some of their strategies for evangelization, whatever — I kind of felt that.”

Every bishop was free to ask questions or talk about this



CNS photo/Carol Glatz

U.S. bishops from Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin pray at the tomb of St. Paul after concelebrating Mass at the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls 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.

diocese, the bishop said. The pope “would respond with his observations or his counsel, his experiences — that was very neat because he would share his experiences as bishop or other experiences back home in Argentina.”

“I feel a strengthened bond with the Holy Father,” Bishop

Rhoades said, especially after “feeling that care that he has for us. It’s genuine. There was a real sense of solidarity or communion.”

Some Twitter accounts and media reports continue to feed a narrative that the U.S. bishops are divided among themselves

and that Pope Francis and many U.S. bishops aren’t exactly on the same page, but Archbishop ListECKI said, “You couldn’t tell that from the meeting.”

Archbishop ListECKI said the “ad limina” visit gives bishops an opportunity to dialogue with the pope, “understand and affirm him in so many things he has done” and to ask for clarification of things that may be unclear.

Bishop Rhoades said the topic of divisions between the bishops and pope didn’t come up “because it’s not true.”

“The issue of unity did come up; the importance of unity within the Church at large,” he said. “Being instruments of unity is really important,” but that does not mean all bishops have to think alike, but they always must speak with love for one another.

“There is a polarization in our culture and, in my opinion, that seeps into the Church and it is not healthy,” Bishop Rhoades said. “The Lord himself prayed for his disciples that they may be one and we need to continue to pray that prayer and to work for unity.”

The bishops raised questions, concerns, asked advice and, several times, thanked Pope Francis for his teaching and ministry, especially his document on young people, “Christus Vivit,” and the



Pope Francis and Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades shake hands goodbye after concluding their meeting at the Apostolic Palace Dec. 12.

Provided by Mark Hellinger

AD LIMINA, page 3



Provided by Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades

Bishops of the five episcopal regions of Indiana await their meeting with Pope Francis Dec. 12 outside the papal palace. From left are Bishop Timothy L. Doherty, Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana; Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades, Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend; Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, Archdiocese of Indianapolis; retired Bishop Dale J. Melczek, Diocese of Gary; Bishop-designate Robert J. McClory, Diocese of Gary; and Bishop Joseph M. Siegel, Diocese of Evansville.

AD LIMINA, from page 2

message he sent to the National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis.

Bishop Rhoades said that in the meeting, like in the document, Pope Francis emphasized the need to accompany young people, who are always on the move, and “the importance of authenticity.”

Archbishop ListECKI said Pope Francis urged the bishops to draw hope from “seeing the light” that shines forth from Catholics who are living and practicing and sharing the faith.

“Evangelization was a very important issue” and was brought up repeatedly during the meeting, he said. Everyone in the room agreed that bishops, priests and laity all “have to take charge for the mission of the Church and not only remain in a maintenance mode.”

The pope’s teaching during the meeting, he said, “was peppered with his personal experience” as a priest and bishop, so the bishops heard not only what the pope thinks but “what is driving his understanding” of various situations.

The clerical sexual abuse crisis was discussed, Archbishop ListECKI said, but mostly from the point of view of how other priests are hurting because of the crimes of their brothers.

One thing the pope emphasized, he said, was the need for bishops to be a father to their priests, not just their superior or supervisor. They have a right to have a bishop interested and

engaged in their personal well-being.

The abuse crisis and the Church’s need to continue responding vigorously and vigilantly came up repeatedly during the bishops’ meetings at Roman Curia offices, he said.

Pope Francis repeatedly told the bishops, “primo” or first, is prayer, Archbishop ListECKI said. On their “ad limina” visits to Rome, the bishops celebrated Mass at the Basilicas of St. Peter, St. Paul Outside the Walls, St. Mary Major and St. John Lateran.

The bishops of Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin also spoke to the pope about the

Latino communities in their dioceses and were invited to celebrate Mass with Pope Francis Dec. 12 for the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. “That is special to me,” Bishop Rhoades said. “That will be the icing on the cake, so to speak.”

Like any Catholic who makes a pilgrimage to the four basilicas, the bishops can receive a plenary indulgence if they recite the Creed, pray for the intentions of the pope, go to confession and receive the Eucharist. “I’m counting on that — wiping away those sins,” Archbishop ListECKI said.



Pope Francis poses for a group photo with U.S. bishops from Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin making their “ad limina” visits to the Vatican Dec. 12.

CNS photo/Vatican Media



Public schedule of Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades

Sunday, December 22: 8 a.m. Mass, St. Stanislaus Kostka Church, New Carlisle
 Tuesday, December 24: 10:30 p.m. Christmas Eve Mass, Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Fort Wayne



Provided by Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades

As part of an “ad limina” visit, Mass is celebrated at the four major basilicas in Rome and prayers are said afterward at the sites they contain. Above, following Mass in the Basilica of St. Mary Major Dec. 10 are, from left, diocesan seminarian Zane Langenbrunner, seminarian Mark Hellinger, Bishop Rhoades, Father Spenser St. Louis and seminarian Samuel Anderson. The seminarians and Father St. Louis are studying this year at Pontifical North American College in Rome.

Residential maternity homes offer 'room at the inn'

BY BARB SIEMINSKI

On a holy night long ago, Mary, heavy with child but with no place to stay, was given shelter in a crude shed. Her betrothed took care of her as she gave birth and laid the baby in a fresh straw bed, with wondering animals standing sentinel.

Today, homeless and pregnant women are cared for in the loving arms of a few compassionate strangers who have opened maternity homes for those with no other options.

In 2013, Stasia Roth set out to establish A Mother's Hope residential maternity and parenting program. Following much prayer, hard work, assiduous research and community support, A Mother's Hope welcomed its first resident in October 2018.

"Our home allows for eight women and their babies to live here simultaneously," said Roth. "In our first year, we averaged six women and two babies at a time. Thus far, our residents have been as young as 19 and up to 38 in age."

The women remain in the program on average five to six months. The shelter encourages each woman to remain in the program through the birth of her baby and for a brief time after, as she transitions into her own housing, explained Roth.

"A Mother's Hope is fully staffed 24 hours a day and 7 days a week, including holidays," said Roth. "Our trained staff is our most important resource and is available at all hours of the day to offer support and guidance to our residents."

While the mothers who stay in the Fort Wayne maternity home are cared for, they also go through programs to learn how to make healthy choices for themselves and their unborn babies. Once they graduate to the transitional home, they are expected to find work or go to



Provided by Stasia Roth

In honor of the faith of Mary, several organizations in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend offer shelter and other assistance to homeless women who are pregnant. Among them are A Mother's Hope in Fort Wayne, which opened in 2018.

school, find child care and meet with mentoring staff.

Every resident of A Mother's Hope has a unique story to tell, said Roth.

She remembered a young woman named Julie, who was pregnant and very scared.

"Julie had lived with her grandparents due to her mother's ongoing struggle with substance abuse. She walked to us on a very cold day and once here, battled depression and anxiety.

"She prayed to God through writing in a pink journal with Joshua 1:9 on the front: 'Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.'

"Today Julie and her baby are living in a two-bedroom apartment and she is working. She recently wrote this to her baby: 'I thank you for choosing me to

come through me unto life to be a beautiful reflection of his grace. For I know that a gift so great is only one God could create and I'm reminded of that every time I see your face!' We could not be more proud of this young woman!"

The Rose Home is a Christian nonprofit transitional living home in Fort Wayne for women who are recovering from drug and alcohol addictions.

According to Deb Burton, director of Rose Home Inc. – "A Home of Love and Recovery" – in Fort Wayne, their program takes six months to complete. Most of their residents will stay the entire six months or longer, if needed.

"Because of our work with the court system and DCS, our clients must be 18 years of age and older," said Burton. "We offer 10 beds, public transportation, 24/7



Barb Sieminski

Deb Burton, director of Rose Home in Fort Wayne, offers support and stability to women with addictions, some of whom are pregnant.

RESOURCES

Rose Home

Deb Burton, director
260-424-1600
www.therosehome.org

A Mother's Hope

Stasia Roth, executive director
260-444-4975
amotherhopefw.org

Hannah's House

Susan Frucci, executive director
574-254-7271
info@hannahshousemichiana.org

staffing, ISNAP approval and access to agencies to help with employment, counseling and spiritual growth."

Burton recalled a woman referred to Rose Home through a former client. She was battling an addiction to alcohol and drugs. "I accepted her, and we found out she was pregnant," said Burton. "Shortly after admission a longtime friend of hers overdosed and passed away. I was afraid that there were too many stressors and not enough

positives to get this client to the other side of addiction. Not only did she work her way through it, but God saw to it that she had a healthy baby boy. She asked me to be in the delivery room.

"That is the miracle of recovery. Not only for her, but for me as well. They are still a part of our Rose Home family. We see them on a regular basis as they stop by the house for visits."

Hannah's House, a maternity shelter in Mishawaka serves on average about 15 women in a year's time, according to Susan Frucci, director of finance.

The clients of Hannah's House are pregnant and homeless, often couch-surfing, according to Judy Harder, director of residential care. "Many have had drug addictions and have no source of income. Very few are in a relationship with the father of the baby. They are definitely in need of food and shelter."

Harder recalls, in particular, a resident named Linda who sought the services of Hannah's House and "stole everyone's heart."

"Her stay lasted for 11 months in our maternity home. She was supported by her grandma, who lived in an apartment but could not have anyone else live with her, so someone suggested they try Hannah's House. Linda had a part-time job cleaning a few hours each day. Every day she rode the bus to her job and did not complain.

"She ended up losing that job, and we were able to enroll her in a retail program at Goodwill which she completed. While here, her faith grew through Bible studies and devotions. Her time-management skills and household-management skills improved tremendously. She took good care of her baby girl and when asked what she had learned here, she listed talking out her problems, learning to live with other women and that other people's unkind words are not who she is."

"The women who come to Hannah's House are heroines," Harder said. "They often come alone, with no support outside of Hannah's House. We empower pregnant women facing homelessness to begin a transformation of their lives."

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Fort Wayne Museum of Art

Bethlehem family feels the pull of living in the town of Jesus' birth

BY JUDITH SUDILOVSKY

BETHLEHEM, West Bank (CNS) — Brothers Peter and Eli Hosh grew up knowing that their hometown was not only the place where they went to school and ran down to the corner market for their mother, but the town where Jesus was born.

It is a lesson they and their two sisters continue to teach their own children, especially during the Christmas season. "I feel that here there is something great here. We are living in a holy place," said Eli Hosh, who, at 48 is the elder of the two. "Bethlehem is important for our family, and I tell that to my children. Jesus was born here. I always feel the holiness here, this is my city, but the best time in Bethlehem is Christmas."

Unlike many other Christian families in the Bethlehem area, none of the Hosh siblings have moved abroad.

"The most important thing is for the local Christians to stay," said Peter Hosh, 33, the youngest of the siblings. "Year by year we see less Christian (families) here. Why? It is difficult everywhere. We have hard things in life, we know, but we have to stay here and fix that. You leave and you have to start from zero; here we have our family, our work. Everybody knows each other."

Two of Eli Hosh's daughters are studying at universities abroad in Europe.

"Of course they will come back. Bethlehem is important for our whole family, and we know we need to stay," he said.

Together the two brothers, who are Melkite Catholics, run one of Bethlehem's most well-known grilled-meat restaurants, Abu Eli. It was founded in 1999 by their late father, Anton. "Abu Eli" means the father of Eli in Arabic, and traditionally Palestinian men are given the nickname of "father of" after their first-born son. The restaurant is a favorite of local Christians for Christmas Eve dinner, and many tourists visiting over the holiday have also discovered its charms.

This year Peter Hosh said he is able to experience the wonder of Christmas through the eyes of his 3-year-old daughter, Yasmin, who is now beginning to understand the concept of the holiday and that she is living in the place where Jesus was born.

"My mother came over to help us start celebrating and decorating. This season is so special, and my daughter has been asking us to decorate already. We (adults) have a glass of wine, and we enjoy ourselves," he said. "Every time we tell my daughter that the story of Christmas took place here, she begins to sing a song she learned at her nursery school."

They bake ginger cookies and



CNS photo/Debbie Hill

Palestinian Melkite Catholics Eli and Peter Hosh prepare meat in the kitchen of their restaurant, Abu Eli, in Bethlehem, West Bank, Dec. 8,

special Christmas fruit cake, or buy them at one of the local bakeries for seasonal treats, he said.

Katherine Hosh, 70, said she is proud that all her children have remained in the city.

"I don't want anyone of my children to leave," she said. For her, as a Christian in Bethlehem, it is a privilege to be able to go to Mass at St. Catherine Church, adjacent to the Church of the

Nativity. "I pray every Sunday."

Eli and Peter Hosh said they never felt the need to leave Bethlehem for long. Peter Hosh completed all his academic studies, including his B.A. in hotel management, at Bethlehem University.

"I travel abroad, but I can't stay away from Bethlehem for more than a week," he said. "If I am away longer, I don't feel well. I feel more comfortable here than any place in the world. Maybe there is something secret here. Maybe this is a sign that there is something special here. ... I feel this is our city, our town."

Despite the political difficulties, he said, life for him in Bethlehem is good. Everyone knows everyone and greets each other on the street.

Abu Eli welcomes everybody, Peter Hosh said, and he recalled how, before the intifada, the restaurant was full of Jews on Saturdays.

On Christmas Eve, the restaurant serves fukura, a festive

lamb and potato stew that has been cooked for five hours in a covered clay pot on the charcoal flame. The Hoshes put on Christmas music and welcome Christian families celebrating the holiday.

"We feel very happy, you see many people coming here and enjoying themselves and feeling happy. We have known the families for a long time, and you feel like you are a part of their celebration, and you enjoy with them," said Peter Hosh. "It is not just working. When we finish (serving) we sit down and join them and have a drink and talk."

Since Christmas Eve is the busiest day of the year for the restaurant, the Hosh family celebrates Christmas together the following day. They go to Mass at St. Catherine Church and then have lunch, which the Hosh sisters have prepared.

"I like this tradition," said Peter. "We visit the church and pray. It is a special day."



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Mary is loving mother, humble disciple, pope says on Guadalupe feast

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Celebrating the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Pope Francis said she reminds Catholics of her true essence as a woman, a mother and a “mestiza” or person of mixed race. She revealed herself to St. Juan Diego as a “mestiza” to show “that she is everyone’s mother,” and she speaks to everyone as she spoke to this indigenous saint five centuries ago, with tenderness and motherly love, the pope said in his homily during a Mass in St. Peter’s Basilica Dec. 12. Seminarians and priests from Rome’s Pontifical Latin American College alternated singing their traditional guitar-accompanied songs with the Sistine Chapel choir singing parts of the Mass in Gregorian chant. The pope and concelebrating cardinals and bishops processed into the basilica dressed in white. Among the concelebrants were U.S. bishops from Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin who were in Rome as part of their Dec. 9-13 “ad limina” visits to report on the status of their dioceses. Pope Francis stood before a replica of St. Juan Diego’s tilma, which bears the image of Mary, who appeared to the saint in 1531. In his homily, which the pope delivered off-the-cuff in Spanish, he reflected on the way Mary appears in the Gospels and in the apparitions to St. Juan Diego. She is first and foremost a woman who has been given many titles — many which contain the title “Our Lady,” which underlines her womanhood, he said.

Pope marks 50 years as a priest by presenting writings of his spiritual director

ROME (CNS) — As part of the celebrations for his 50th anniversary of priesthood, Pope Francis chose to personally present a multi-volume collection of writings by his longtime spiritual director, the late Jesuit Father Miguel Angel Fiorito. In addition to presenting the Spanish-language collection, “Escritos” (“Writings”), at a conference at the Jesuit headquarters Dec. 13, Pope Francis wrote an introduction to it, saying the publication is “a consolation for those of us who, for many years, were nourished by his teachings. These writings will be a great good for the whole church.” But he started the celebrations much earlier in the day, inviting cardinals living in Rome to join him in the chapel of his residence for morning Mass. The Vatican did not release the text of a homily or photographs, but the Vatican newspaper printed the greetings of Cardinal Angelo Sodano, dean of the College of Cardinals. “On this happy occasion of your 50th

New Jersey church destroyed by fire



CNS photo/Octavio Duran

The bell tower of Most Blessed Sacrament Church in Franklin Lakes, N.J., is seen standing Dec. 12 after a fire destroyed the rest of the church the previous morning. The structure was gutted by the flames. James Mayers, a 26-year-old local resident, was arrested at the scene of the fire that had been set with a cigarette lighter and gasoline. He was charged with first-degree aggravated arson and third-degree burglary, according to a report by NJ.com, digital news content provider and website in New Jersey. The Archdiocese of New Jersey said: “We are moving forward to ensure parish life continues and we are currently identifying alternative sites for Masses, liturgies, and parish activities. We ask everyone to please pray for all who have been affected by this incident.” Parishioners gathered outside the charred remains of the church Dec. 12, remembering the importance the nearly 60-year-old parish had for many of them.

anniversary of priesthood, in the name of all my brother cardinals, I wish you all the best with the deepest thanks for your generous daily service to the holy church of God,” the cardinal said. At the evening book presentation, Pope Francis said he had suggested having one of Father Fiorito’s “disciples” as the main speaker. The editor of *La Civiltà Cattolica*, which published the books, asked the pope who he had in mind. “‘Me,’ I said. And here we are.”

CUA an onsite, online repository for Archbishop Sheen’s archives

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Thanks to television and radio, Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen touched countless Americans using the most advanced technology available to him. Some years ago, The

Catholic University of America in Washington, using the most advanced technology it had available, digitized its archives on Archbishop Sheen, as well as maintaining them on the university campus. Virtually everything the university archives knows it possesses on the host of “The Catholic Hour” and other programs is online, save for the “positio,” or official position paper. The copyrighted, two-volume set on the life and holiness of Archbishop Sheen, which includes his writings, was prepared for review at the Vatican’s Congregation for Saints’ Causes. “They (the positio) are not shared widely while the cause is still proceeding,” said Shane MacDonald, a special collections archivist with Catholic University’s archives office, who added he believes there is no larger online archive of the late archbishop. The university’s archive can be accessed at <https://fulton-sheen.catholic.edu/at-cua/archive.html>.

His sainthood cause was officially opened in 2003. In July, Bishop Daniel R. Jenky of Peoria, Illinois, 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 Dec. 21. But the Vatican announced in early December that the beatification was being postponed.

Adoption offered gift of life; reunion 46 years later an unexpected gift

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (CNS) — Thanks to the courage of a teenage birth mother and the work of Catholic Charities of Tennessee, St. Henry parishioner Matt Davis received the greatest of all gifts: the gift of life, and a loving adop-

tive family. In an interview with the Tennessee Register, newspaper of the Diocese of Nashville, Davis reflected on his journey of being raised by an adoptive family and recently reconnecting with his birth mother. “I’m thankful that a family here opened themselves up to having a child that wasn’t theirs by blood,” he said. “I had a happy home, amazing parents and a great life.” When Davis ponders the brave decision his birth mother made, allowing him to have that life, he just wants her to know “you are a superhero for what you did.” Flashback to Naples, Florida, 1971: Cindi Salyer was an outgoing high school student with a long-term boyfriend. When she got pregnant during her junior year, she was scared and confused, and didn’t even tell her mother until she was six months along and showing. Some family members wanted Salyer to abort the baby to avoid the shame that followed teen mothers at that time. “All along I said I’m not going to abort,” Salyer said. It was quickly decided that she would come to Nashville to stay with her sister until she could give birth to her baby and return home to finish her senior year and graduate from high school. With the help of her sister, Salyer researched adoption agencies and decided on Catholic Charities, trusting they would place her baby in a good home.

Creches tell the Nativity story using materials, symbols of local culture

DAYTON, Ohio (CNS) — Each culture, if not every home, has its own unique rendition of the Nativity. The Christ child may lay on a manger made from materials as diverse as wax, blown glass, yarn, papier-mache and terra cotta. Mary might don the dress of a first-century peasant or Renaissance royalty. The ubiquitous manger scene makes the perfect illustration of enculturation, that is, adapting the principles of faith to a specific cultural setting. The Incarnation, the moment God becomes human, allows the nations to envision Christ as one of their own. “Enculturation is a step further from the Incarnation,” said Marianist Father Johann Roten, a scholar at the University of Dayton and expert on cultural interpretations of the Nativity. “The Incarnation is the son of God becoming human and enculturation will then be, He becomes not only human, but he becomes Afghani or He is Persian or He is German or French,” Father Roten told Catholic News Service. The University of Dayton, which is a Catholic and Marianist institution, has amassed what curators believe is the largest collection of Nativity sets in North America. The archives contain about 3,600 creches from around 100 different countries.

AROUND THE DIOCESE

Young adults initiated at Basilica Mass



Matt Cashore/University of Notre Dame

Thirty young adults were received into the Catholic Church at a Mass with Confirmation and Rite of Reception into Full Communion Sunday, Dec. 15. The Mass was celebrated by Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart, University of Notre Dame.

Celebrating the vigil Mass



Provided by Mary Ann Padberg

Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades celebrates the 4:30 p.m. vigil Mass on Nov. 30 at Sacred Heart Parish near Lakeville. The bishop's visit and the opportunity to have him celebrate the eucharistic liturgy was appreciated by the parishioners and pastor Father John Delaney.

Generous giving to the less fortunate



Provided by Anita Senesac

Religious education students at St. Paul of the Cross, Columbia City, showed a spirit of giving by collecting donations of nearly 800 pounds of nonperishable food for the St. Vincent de Paul Society food pantry earlier this month. Children in grades preschool through eight participated. Above are the seventh and eighth graders with their portion of the collection.

Student 'businesses' support mission school



Provided by Cheryl Meyer

Junior high students at Holy Family School in South Bend give a presentation about a product they conceived of and developed during an immersive experience in business during December. The students formed companies and designed, created and manufactured items that were offered for sale during the school's annual Christmas Around the World open house. Profits from the sales were given to Bethany Miracle Village, Holy Family's sister school in Uganda.

Varsity Catholic: 'life-giving' evangelization

BY BETHANY BEEBE

Fellowship of Catholic University Students has a presence on 159 campuses in the U.S., and on five international campuses, for the purpose of evangelizing to college students. An offshoot of FOCUS called Varsity Catholic touches 77 of those campuses, ministering specifically to college athletes, according to Thomas Wurtz, director of Varsity Catholic.

"I think evangelization is something that we should never take for granted or assume," Wurtz said. "Jesus said, 'Go, make disciples of all nations,' not simply 'hang out and see who shows up.' The love we are called to have in the Christian life as disciples of Jesus Christ is what hopefully compels us to care tremendously for the soul of our neighbor."

Teams of FOCUS missionaries are sent to support existing ministries, integrating themselves into the work the ministries are already doing to further the work of the Church. Hosting small group Bible studies and mentoring students through a process called "Discipleship" are the main preparations for the missionaries.

"Discipleship" is a deepening of preparation of those students going into missions, based on 2 Timothy 2:2. Wurtz cited the passage, "...what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." He said, "In the end, hopefully we can help increase students coming to encounter Jesus

in the sacraments, in retreats offered by the Newman Center or Campus Ministry...." Varsity Catholic missionaries are specifically prepared to reach college athletes, a demographic few programs that existed previously in the Church reached.

Pointing to Pope Paul VI's "Evangelii Nuntiandi," Wurtz said he sees college-age evangelization as especially important because of an increasingly secular society that many times is unwelcoming to Catholic Christianity — all during a time of life when young people are making decisions that will affect the trajectory of their adult lives.

"The reality [is] that the vast majority of Catholic young people stop practicing their faith by the time they leave a college campus," said Wurtz.

For those who do remain in the Church, he sees a domino effect creating future Catholics. "There are an estimated 40 million young people involved in youth sports in the U.S. That's a huge number! All of these athletes have a coach. Many of these coaches are former college athletes. Our work on campus will have a profound impact on millions of young people in addition to the thousands of college athletes as we are raising up a generation of future coaches."

FOCUS has already cultivated fruit for the harvest. God is working through the organization. "I have seen lives completely changed," said Wurtz. "Men find freedom from pornography addiction, couples stop sleeping together and commit to chastity in their relationship, athletes become Catholic through their

Newman Center RCIA program, and the list goes on and on."

On the list of Ball State University's December graduates, is an alumnus of Bishop Luers High School in Fort Wayne, Jacob Burns. Burns is a part-time missionary, leading Bible studies, attending daily Mass, praying a daily holy hour, running events and spreading the Gospel while encouraging other students to do the same.

Upon graduation, he will become a full-time missionary. "I would love to go to a school south or east," he said. "An SEC or Big 10 school would be cool since I'm a varsity athlete and (can) reach out to athletes specifically." Burns played lacrosse for Ball State and his coed Bible study groups consists of student athletes who swim, dive, run track and cross-country and play football, volleyball, soccer and tennis.

"The program is very life-giving for me," said Burns. "FOCUS has been very near and dear to my heart for [the] past three years." Becoming involved when someone introduced him to the community "gave me true friendship."

Burns became a "Commissioned Disciple" in FOCUS last year. His mentor "taught me to pray, pushed me to start a Bible study, was a true friend and taught [me] to present the Gospel to others." He noted how changed his life is because of the program and wondered how it might have been different if he hadn't become involved. "I want to give others the same opportunity."

Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

BY KEVIN KILBANE

Joyous singing and lively Mexican music filled St. Patrick Church beginning at 5 a.m. Dec. 12, as members of the Fort Wayne parish community welcomed the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

"Buenos dias!" Luis Salgado greeted the several hundred people who gathered in the historic church to honor Mary with an hour of songs, serenades and cheers. Mass followed at 6 a.m.

Joining in the festivities, which included a breakfast after Mass of hot chocolate, sweet breads and tamales, was Father Thomas Shoemaker, pastor of St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Fort Wayne, St. Charles parochial vicar Father Dennis DiBenedetto and about six of their parishioners. They attended as part of a growing relationship between the two parishes that has become even more meaningful in these divisive times.

The presence of staff and members of the mostly white, suburban St. Charles parish shows connection with and support for local Latinos, said both Father Nam Vu, SVD, parochial vicar at St. Patrick, and Deacon Victor Sandoval, who was born in Mexico. About 85% of St. Patrick parishioners are of Latino descent, Father Vu said.

The relationship between the two parishes also shows "the whole country is not against us," Deacon Sandoval said. "Our people are happy to see that."

The feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe commemorates Mary's three appearances in December 1531 to Mexican peasant Juan Diego, who later was canonized.

She appeared to him as a mixed race woman standing on a crescent and in front of the sun, both symbolic in the Aztec culture. Millions of native people in what is now Latin America converted to Catholicism after her appearances.

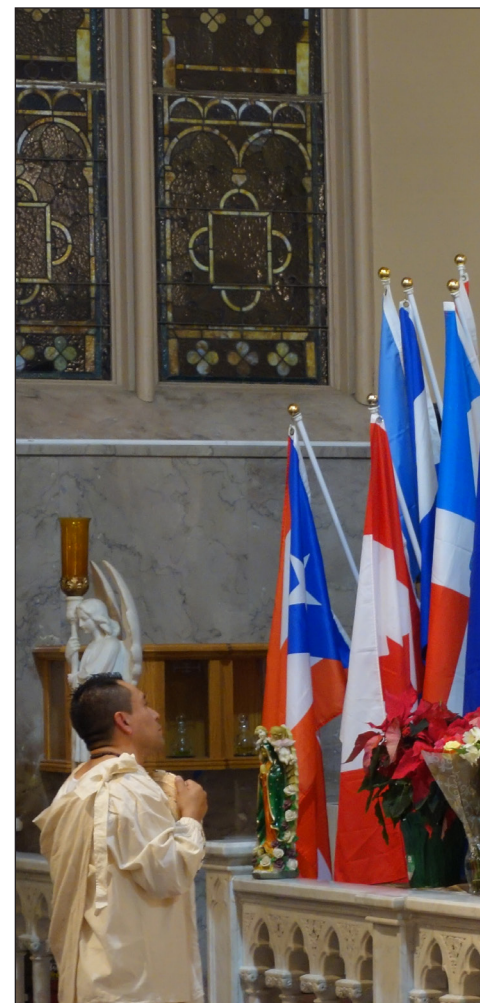
She serves as a model and mother for all and points people toward her son, Christ the King, Deacon Sandoval said.

St. Patrick parishioners reenacted the apparitions during a celebration before Mass began. Young ladies of the parish, who dressed in Aztec-style costumes and wore large headdresses of peacock and other feathers, then performed native dances, a traditional part of Our Lady of Guadalupe observances in Mexico, Deacon Sandoval said.

Father Vu celebrated the Mass in Spanish, so St. Charles parishioners mostly observed. Father DiBenedetto, who speaks Spanish, assisted Father Vu and Deacon Sandoval on the altar.

Father Vu gave his homily first in English and then in Spanish.

"Dear brothers and sisters, it



Members of St. Patrick Parish in Fort Wayne participate in the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, which commemorates the story of Mary's appearances in 1531 to Juan Diego. St. Patrick, which serves a large Latino community, is celebrating the feast with St. Charles parishioners.

is a great joy to have you among us," he said to the St. Charles visitors and other non-Spanish speakers, before continuing in Spanish with the Mass.

The relationship between the parishes dates back decades. When St. Charles was founded in 1957, pastor Father Edward Hession faced challenges in raising money to build a church. Father Hession, who later would become a monsignor, had served for the previous 16 years as a parochial vicar at St. Patrick, where he was "beloved," Father Shoemaker said.

Because of that connection, the people of St. Patrick Parish donated \$11,000 to buy pews for St. Charles' first church. The church suffered severe damage in a 1963 fire, but it was rebuilt before the growing parish moved to its current, larger church in 1975.

St. Patrick parishioners also donated a chalice for Father Hession for use at St. Charles, something Father Shoemaker discovered when he looked at the bottom of the chalice he has used at Mass.

In the decades since, St. Charles grew into one of the largest parishes in the diocese. St. Patrick declined in membership but since has become a hub for ministry to Fort Wayne's Latino and Vietnamese Catholic communities.

Some years ago, St. Charles began "twinning" with St.



Provided by Jacob Burns

A Varsity Catholic Bible study group started by Fort Wayne native and Ball State student Jacob Burns offers spiritual support and catechesis to fellow student-athletes.

Guadalupe brings parishes of different cultures together



Photos by Kevin Kilbane

Portray St. Juan Diego, left, and Our Lady of Guadalupe, upper right, as they act out the story of the apparition to Juan Diego, a peasant in Mexico. The portrayal took place during feast day festivities at St. Patrick's Church in Fort Wayne. The flags in the background represent the many countries and cultures of St. Patrick's parish.



Young women and girls in Aztec-style costumes prepare to walk toward the altar for a native dance during Mass on the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe Dec. 12 at St. Patrick Church in Fort Wayne. The dance is a tradition in Mexico, where Mary appeared to Juan Diego in 1531.



Father Thomas Shoemaker, right, pastor of St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Fort Wayne, and other representatives of the parish attended the Our Lady of Guadalupe festivities and Mass. St. Charles and St. Patrick have been building stronger connections among their members.

Patrick to provide financial support to the parish that had once helped it so much. St. Charles members also collect items for the food pantry operated by St. Patrick, including about 4,500 pounds of goods during a recent drive, Father Shoemaker said.

Father Shoemaker, who became St. Charles' pastor in October 2016, also thought it would be helpful to develop a more personal connection between his parish and St. Patrick.

"Our goal is not just financial things going back and forth between the parishes, but that we get to know each other," he said.

St. Charles members benefit from exposure to the Latin and Vietnamese Catholic culture of St. Patrick's families, he added. Father Shoemaker has traveled to many areas of the world.

"I think it opened a lot of people's eyes that we are a way-bigger Catholic Church than what is here on the corner of Trier and Reed (roads)."

He also hopes St. Patrick parishioners feel they are part of a much larger Catholic Church and community than their cultural groups.

"It has been like brothers," Deacon Sandoval said of the connection between the parishes.

The two churches started by reaching out to both parish councils and arranging for them to meet for dinner, Father

Shoemaker said. St. Patrick parishioners invited St. Charles members to attend their annual celebrations for the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe on Dec. 12 and for the Tet Vietnamese New Year, which this winter will take place on Jan. 25.

Last year, St. Charles invited the St. Patrick parishioners who act out the Lord's Passion on Good Friday morning to present their ministry in the afternoon at St. Charles. The authentic presentation was very emotional and moving, Father Shoemaker said.

"As Jesus was carrying the cross, they were whipping him constantly," said Bob Carroll, St. Charles business administrator, who attended the presentation. "It made you feel to an extent you were there and it (Jesus' suffering) really was worse than we thought it was."

Carroll also joined about a dozen St. Charles members who attended the Tet celebration two years ago at St. Patrick. The St. Charles group missed last year but hopes to return this year.

The experiences with St. Patrick parishioners broadens his perspective and enhances his faith, said Carroll.

"It kind of makes you feel good to see it's not the U.S., it's all over the world — this is Catholicism. This is the kind of stuff that brings us all together."



People pray the Lord's Prayer during Mass, which began at 5 a.m. About 85% of St. Patrick parishioners are Latino.

Focus on accommodation allows 'profound' faith experiences

BY JENNIFER BARTON

In the Gospel of Luke, when John the Baptist sent messengers to ask Jesus if He was the long-awaited Messiah, Jesus pointed to works of healing He had performed — curing the blind, the lame and deaf — and instructed them to give this testimony.

The healings performed by Jesus and, in His name, by the Apostles, document Jesus' compassion for people with disabilities. Still today, the disciples of Christ are called to the same compassion and to try to meet the physical and spiritual needs of their brothers and sisters with physical and mental limitations.

In recent years, St. John the Baptist Parish in Fort Wayne has made strides to ensure that all feel a sense of belonging in the Church.

To pastor Father Andrew Budzinski, "belonging" means that his parishioners, including those with disabilities, "see themselves as valued members of the family in this portion of the vineyard (that) God calls St. John the Baptist."

Disabilities can take many different forms and meeting various accessibility needs can be challenging. But through a collaboration with the Diocesan Ministry with Persons with Disabilities, St. John has set about tackling several of these needs in the past several years.

Some accommodations were relatively small. For lector Christopher Hickey, who uses a wheelchair due to multiple sclerosis, it was a simple matter to provide him a handheld microphone so he could lector from the front of the worship area.

Another minister, Fran Clinger, also lives with mobility issues. She felt called to become an extraordinary minister of holy Communion but was unable to navigate the sanctuary steps to receive the chalice. Accommodatingly, another extraordinary minister lends her a helping hand to balance herself and often will return the chalice for her after Communion.

Clinger feels "humbled and honored to contribute as a member ... and I will continue to work until God calls me home."

Hickey had additional mobility issues getting from his car to the church. He uses a power chair, so bumps in the sidewalk were ground down and new sidewalks were placed where needed. There was also a distinct lack of accessible parking spaces near the church. Fellow parishioner Allison Sturm, who works in Ministry with Persons With Disabilities for the diocese, researched city of Fort Wayne policies and attained signage designating more accessible parking spaces on the street outside St. John's — at minimal cost to the parish.



Photos by Jennifer Barton

A new wheelchair ramp for the Mother Theodore Guerin Adoration Chapel at St. John the Baptist Parish, Fort Wayne, will be open for use soon. A parish survey illuminated the need for the ramp.

"Physical disabilities should not stop you from being involved," Hickey said. "Not only is St. John's accommodating to me and my family, but we feel welcome and happy to be able to be active members of the church community. I feel St. John the Baptist Church is taking responsibility for spreading God's love to all of His people, even with disabilities."

The changes at St. John have been a parishwide effort. When Father Budzinski noticed that the only seating available for those using wheelchairs and power chairs was in the back of the sanctuary, two front pews were reconfigured to accommodate them. Two parishioners who were skilled in woodworking cut the pews and shortened them: Now worshippers who use wheelchairs are able to sit in the front, and there's enough pew space beside them for their families to join them.

Other accommodations required more effort and were more costly. A parish survey revealed an issue with the Mother Guerin Adoration Chapel: There was no way for people using wheelchairs to access the building to spend quiet time adoring Jesus. Work on an access ramp began after Father Budzinski and the Building and Grounds Committee collaborated to rectify the oversight. The ramp is now complete and will be ready to use soon.

Another accommodation St. John has recently installed is the Loop Assisted Listening System, which enables those who are hard of hearing to more fully

participate during Mass. Part of a recent parish Capital Campaign Fund was earmarked to cover this cost.

In addition to making the building itself more accessible, St. John the Baptist Parish also has made the sacraments more available to those with cognitive disabilities. Hugh Baldus expressed his gratitude to the parish and diocese for helping his 17-year-old son Griffin, who has autism, receive the sacraments that had been put "on hold after baptism." Griffin was confirmed in September at a bilingual, low-sensory Mass in Warsaw.

Of the Mass, Baldus said, "The experience was profound and we know that our son was deeply affected, even if he was unable to communicate it to us verbally." The Baldus family is now planning for Griffin's first Communion as well.

Kelley Nebosky has a wheat allergy that she thought prevented her from receiving Communion. As the source and summit of her faith, she desperately missed the Eucharist. "It was a huge loss. I still felt God's presence in my life, but missed the tangible experience of Communion," she said.

In accordance with the instruction of the Church, St. John designated a separate chalice for Nebosky to prevent cross-contamination so she can receive Communion in the form of the Precious Blood.

It is a joyful moment for her. "It is very moving to receive the Precious Blood after such a long absence. Each time I receive it,



Lector Christopher Hickey utilizes a shortened front pew to reflect on the Scripture readings prior to Mass Dec. 8.

I am more aware of how God is working in my life and His purpose for me."

By seeing the needs of those around them, the people of St. John came together to serve as Jesus served by supporting those with disabilities. In the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend there are resources available to parishes who yearn to make similar accommodations. In addition, there are individuals from different parishes who make up a group known as "Belonging"

that assist this work of the diocese. Its members are a driving force in bringing important issues to consider on a diocesan level, as well as being instrumental in working with their own pastors and parish communities to make a difference.

For more information visit www.diocesefwsb.org/disabilities or contact Sturm at 260-399-1452 or asturm@diocesefwsb.org.

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Pay It Forward Scholarship awarded to young volunteer

BY JENNIFER BARTON

Receiving a four-year, full-ride scholarship to a Catholic university was unexpected for a young woman whose greatest desire is not to receive, but to give.

The University of Saint Francis, Fort Wayne, honored local student María Solis Dec. 12 as the winner of its Pay It Forward Scholarship to the school. A generous giver herself, Solis was stunned to be given such a large gift in return.

Following the surprise announcement at Bishop Luers High School, Solis said all her life she had been taught that "God will reward you more. I truly believe that is true, because I don't need anything. I love to give what I give and I don't expect anything ever. That's why I didn't really expect this."

The hope of earning a scholarship was not why Solis began her life of service, however. In an essay she submitted earlier in the school year, Solis wrote about volunteering for the last two years at Community Harvest Food Bank in Fort Wayne as a way to give back to the organization that had served her family when Solis was a young girl. After being a client of the food bank she later visited it on school trips, and as soon as she was able to drive herself, she initiated the long-term commitment.

Her community involvement began even earlier, though. "What am I not involved in?" Solis asked with a laugh. She

is an extraordinary minister of holy Communion at Bishop Luers and one of the leaders of the World Culture Club, which brings "a little bit of everything to school." She enjoys learning about people and other cultures. At her home parish of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Fort Wayne, Solis is involved in, among other things, the Fidelis program, whose purpose is to help young women grow in lives of virtue.

Solis plans to study nursing at Saint Francis, hoping one day to serve the needs of those in poverty-stricken nations around the world.

"I get my inspiration from Mother Teresa. She went to the lowly and helped them get back up. I really hope I get the opportunity to travel to poor areas so I can be with those people that have nothing."

Her passion to work with the poor deepened in part through school presentations that showed the poverty experienced in underdeveloped nations, she said, along with witnessing the generous and hardworking nature of her parents.

"I love my parents. I've always seen that they work so hard, extremely hard, to get me where I'm at and to get me to the schools where I want to be." Solis went through the process to become a legal U.S. citizen as a child.



MARÍA SOLIS



Jennifer Barton

Bishop Luers High School student María Solis is surprised by University of Saint Francis president Sister M. Elise Kriss, right, with a four-year, full tuition scholarship to the school after Mass Dec. 12.

Because of the cost of Catholic education, after Solis' graduation from St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School in Fort Wayne her parents wanted to transfer her to a public high school, but Solis liked the Catholic school atmosphere in which she had grown up. She worked with her parents and Bishop Luers so that she could attend the school.

She also cites the faith she learned at home, through family prayer and lessons from her parents about generosity for her selflessness. The oldest of five children, she is a role model for her younger siblings. Over the summer, she and her younger sister spent a week at the Beauty Will Save the World

retreat at Saint Francis, and both young ladies plan to attend the Diocesan World Youth Day as well.

Solis, her mother and sister share the first name of María, so at home Solis is called by her middle name of Lupe, short for Guadalupe. And it was on Dec. 12, after Mass celebrating the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, that Sister M. Elise Kriss, president of the University of Saint Francis, presented María Guadalupe Solis with the check for her education.

"I think, this is crazy, but I think this is my little miracle from God because I prayed so many times, 'God, please show me where You want me to be,'"

said Solis. She had been interested in the Pay It Forward Scholarship, she said, but was told it would be unavailable this year due to lack of funds. About a month later, however, she learned that it would be available after all and immediately applied for it. "People cannot tell me there's not a God, because I know there is."

The response to seeing Solis on a big screen at Bishop Luers Dec. 12, and the announcement by WANE-TV anchor Terra Brantley of the award, was met with overwhelming applause and a standing ovation from an assembly of the student body. Solis was embraced by friends and teachers, all congratulating her on the blessing. Solis could find few words to express her extreme gratitude.

Lois Widner, principal of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School, attended the surprise announcement in order to support her former student. She recalled how involved Solis was throughout her time at the school. "All her teachers would say the same thing. I think she will go further and become whatever she wants to become: She will help a lot of people."

Solis wants to make a difference in the world, help others, and let the love of God shine through her life.

"I'm a people person," she said. "I think we're all made to love each other and help each other, no matter the race, culture and what you believe in or not. We have to show love to another person."

Glory to God in the highest heaven,

and on Earth peace among those He favors.

Luke 2:14

Wishing you a blessed Christmas Season.



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Finding reason to hope amid the pessimism

My father-in-law, Joseph, was a wonderful guy. An immigrant who passionately loved America, he was hardworking, honest and thrifty. He had a laborer's hands but a poet's mind. Joseph had seen enough of life, however, to make him a bit jaundiced about human nature.

My wife recently found a page of a magazine he had clipped many years ago. It had a series of "quotable quotes," but only one he underlined. It was attributed to George Will: "The nice part about being a pessimist is that you are constantly being either proven right or pleasantly surprised."

It feels a little bit like what being a Catholic is like these days. There are lots of opportunities for pessimism in all the headlines, and we may feel like we are too rarely being "pleasantly surprised."

That there are grounds for pessimism there is no denying. One may fervently believe that God will not desert His Church and still feel utterly dismayed at what seems like an endless series of revelations and headlines. Looking at the past 20 years, it seems like most of our surprises have been unpleasant.

The problem with pessimism is that it can become its own addiction, its own crutch protecting us from caring too much. We start looking for reasons to validate it, and then we risk becoming anti-Pollyannas, actively seeking out the bad news. Do this long enough, and we'll all

become journalists!

Nobody's made much money selling good news stories, but it might be useful if we stop looking at the forest once a while and gaze on the trees. All around us are terrific people doing yeomen's work for the Lord without publicity or acclaim.

I'll bet that if you had to think of someone in your parish who is selfless and admirable, holy in a rolled-up-sleeves sort of way, you could think of a person who fits that description in a nanosecond. Maybe you are one of those people.

I recently connected with an old friend, Paul Wilkes. Our friendship began when I wrote a review criticizing a book of his. He initiated contact, and over time we grew to respect our differences and appreciate what we held in common. In recent years, however, we had drifted apart, and I only recently found out what he has been up to.

About 14 years ago, during a "trip of a lifetime" to India, providence led Paul to a Salesian orphanage, where he met a little girl who had been intentionally blinded with a darning needle to make her a "better beggar." His encounter with her and many other young girls seeking shelter in this orphanage from a cruel world outside moved him to get involved.

Back in the States, his career path changed radically. He began raising funds to build for those girls what he would call a "Home of Hope."

One good deed beget another.



GREG ERLANDSON

AMID THE FRAY

Return trips to India made it clear that "there are millions of girls on the streets, orphans, abandoned, sex trafficked, disabled." So he kept going. He spoke at parishes, raised money and has helped to build 16 more Homes of Hope sheltering more than a thousand girls. He and his donors are providing schools as well.

If you look at the millions, you can become a pessimist. When you look at one, the surprise is that you find reason to hope. It's not a bad reminder this Christmas season. There are a lot of children out there waiting for their Magi. They might be waiting for you.

If you'd like to learn more, visit homeofhopeindia.org/about-us/.

Greg Erlandson, director and editor-in-chief of Catholic News Service, can be reached at gerlandson@catholicnews.com.

'The Crown' and the primacy of grace

Spoiler alert

Like, I daresay, most of the English-speaking world, these past couple of years I've been watching episodes of "The Crown," the beautifully filmed, marvelously written program on the life and times of Queen Elizabeth II. The series deals with the psychological dynamics within the royal family as well as with the cultural changes and political challenges that the Queen has faced in the course of her long reign.

But what has been, at least to me, most surprising has been the insightful and sympathetic way in which it has addressed issues of faith. Especially in the first season, we saw the fairly frequent conflicts between Elizabeth's devotion to her family and her role as head of the Church of England. In season two, there was a deeply affecting episode on the visit of Billy Graham to the UK in the mid-1950s. We saw that, despite reticence regarding the American evangelist on the part of some in the British establishment, the Queen found his preaching illuminating and uplifting.

But in season three, the religious theme has emerged with particular and surprising clarity, especially in connection with the figure who, for my money, is the most fascinating supporting character in the series — namely, Prince Philip's mother, Princess Alice. An heiress related to most of the royal families of Europe, a first-class eccentric



WORD ON FIRE

BISHOP ROBERT BARRON

(possibly schizophrenic), a mystic, and toward the end of her life, a Greek Orthodox nun dedicated to the poor, Alice could certainly be the star of her own feature film. After political unrest in Greece, the princess-nun is spirited to Buckingham Palace for her own safety, and there she beguiles and/or confounds most of those around her.

When Philip comes to see her, it seems for the first time in quite a while, she inquires as to the Prince's well-being. At the end of their brief conversation, she wonders about his faith. After he gives a diffident response, she looks at him and says, "You must find your faith; it will help you." But then, realizing immediately the inadequacy of her characterization, she looks wistfully into the middle distance and insists, "No, it doesn't just help. It's everything."

I cannot think of a better way to express the all-determining, all-embracing quality of authentic religious belief. Though modern etiquette dictates that

BARRON, page 13

God asks for our honest, total love this Advent



THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

MSGR. OWEN F. CAMPION

Fourth Sunday of Advent Matthew 1:18-24

This weekend the Church celebrates the fourth and last Sunday of Advent 2019.

For its first reading, this weekend's liturgy offers a reading from the first section of the Book of Isaiah. The reading refers to King Ahaz of the southern Hebrew kingdom of Judah.

Ahaz reigned in the last third of the eighth century before Christ. To be kind, he is not regarded as having been a remarkably successful king. Prompting Isaiah's interest

in Ahaz, or in any king, was not necessarily the monarch's obvious power and renown, but rather the fact that the king first and foremost was, or should be, the servant of God.

Urged to be loyal and devoted, Ahaz was promised a sign of God's favor. It was the birth of a son, whose mother was Ahaz's young bride, a virgin.

St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans provides the second reading. Introducing himself, Paul firmly states that he is an Apostle, called by the Lord to proclaim the Gospel. Above and beyond everything, he insisted, he was God's servant.

For its last reading, the Church presents a section from the Gospel of Matthew. Only two of the four Gospels, both of them Synoptics, recount the birth of Jesus. Matthew is one of these Gospels. Luke is the other.

This weekend's reading recalls the conception of Jesus. It says clearly, as Luke states, that Jesus had no earthly father, but the Lord was the son of Mary, a human being.

In this story, Joseph is concerned, to say the least. He first, understandably, wonders if his betrothed has been unfaithful to him. How else could Mary have become pregnant? An angel, Gabriel, one of God's messengers, relieves Joseph's mind by revealing that the unborn child is in fact the Son of God.

It is more than simply a chronicle of the conception and birth of Jesus, divine though these events may have been. The coming of the Messiah is a sign, perfect and penultimate, of God's everlasting love for humankind. God never fails, is never absent from people.

Reflection

This weekend the Church calls us to observe the last Sunday of Advent. The season of Advent is the careful and focused period preceding Christmas. In our culture, it is a time to prepare gifts to present to those whom we love.

The custom of gift-giving

has religious origins. It mimics the Magi, who brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to the baby Jesus. We give gifts to others, in whom we see Jesus, precious because the Lord died for them. Love, the very essence of God, impels us. Advent calls us to give ourselves to God.

An old European legend has a message. Once, in a great city, at Christmas, the people presented gifts before the Nativity scene in the cathedral. The rich and mighty vied with each other to offer the most expensive gift.

A poor orphan boy dreamed of offering a gift, but he had nothing. One day, he found an old gold button on the street. He took it, scrubbed it and laboriously polished it. Tiny, bent and broken, it nevertheless gleamed with his unquestioning love.

Christmas came. In full view of the whole congregation, the "important" people paraded to the crib and placed their gaudy gifts before it.

This cathedral had great bells in its tower. At times, without

cause, they suddenly would ring. People said that they rang when God was pleased

Ashamed of his paltry gift, the boy knelt in the shadows until Mass ended. Then, with no one watching, he laid his little button before the image of the Christ Child. The bells rang out in a melody more beautiful than anyone could remember.

God asks for our honest, total love, nothing more, nothing less.

READINGS

Sunday: Is 7:10-14 Ps 24:1-6 Rom 1:1-7 Mt 1:18-24

Monday: Mal 3:1-4, 23-24 Ps 25:4bc-5ab, 8-10, 14 Lk 1:57-66

Tuesday: 2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16 Ps 89:2-5, 27, 29 Lk 1:67-79

Wednesday: Day: Is 52:7-10 Ps 98:1-6, Heb 1:1-6 Jn 1:1-18

Thursday: Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59 Ps 31:3cd-4, 6, 8ab, 16bc-17 Mt 10:17-22

Friday: 1 Jn 1:1-4 Ps 97:1-2, 5-6, 11-12 Jn 20:1a, 2-8

Saturday: 1 Jn 1:5—2:2 Ps 124:2-5, 7c-8 Mt 2:13-18

Books for Christmas – 2019

Resist the twitterization of thought — give books for Christmas! The following titles will delight, instruct, edify or all of the above:

“Churchill: Walking with Destiny” by Andrew Roberts (Viking)

There seems to be no end to the making of books about Winston Churchill. I own 17 and have no hesitation in saying this is the best Churchill biography ever, written with a narrative drive that sustains your interest through even the familiar bits. It’s also a treasure-trove of witticisms, including this rapier-quick Churchillian riposte to Charlie Chaplin’s announcement at a Chartwell dinner party that his next movie role would be Jesus Christ: “Have you cleared the rights?”

“In Oceans Deep: Redemptive Suffering and the Crucified God” by Eduardo Echeverria (Lectio Publishing)

A powerful reflection on the mystery of evil from a fine theologian and insightful commentator on matters ecclesiastical, written while he was mourning the death of a 2-year-old granddaughter.

“Land of Hope: An Invitation to the Great American Story” by Wilfred M. McClay (Encounter Books)

The antidote to the damage caused by Howard Zinn’s

wretched “People’s History of the United States.” Give it to every millennial on your Christmas list.

“Appeasement: Chamberlain, Hitler, Churchill, and the Road to War” by Tim Bouverie (Tim Duggan Books)

“1941: The Year Germany Lost the War” by Andrew Nagorski (Simon & Schuster)

Two powerful reminders that pretending totalitarians don’t mean what they say makes matters worse.

“The Day Is Now Far Spent” by Robert Cardinal Sarah, in conversation with Nicolas Diat (Ignatius Press)

Cardinal Sarah is a radically converted Christian disciple whose love for Christ impels him to speak without euphemism about Catholicism’s contemporary challenges. Some may find the cardinal’s reading of the signs of the times apocalyptic; the same people would likely say the same thing about St. Augustine.

“The Guarded Gate: Bigotry, Eugenics, and the Law That Kept Two Generations of Jews, Italians, and Other European Immigrants Out of America” by Daniel Okrent (Scribner)

A chilling exploration of how WASP prejudice married to crackpot “science” warped American politics and law — and a preview of how the same cocktail of



THE CATHOLIC DIFFERENCE

GEORGE WEIGEL

nonsense (and some of the same people) helped advance the abortion license.

“Last Testament” by Benedict XVI with Peter Seewald (Bloomsbury Continuum)

Forty-five minutes with the pope emeritus in October easily rank among my most bracing conversations of 2019. This interview-style memoir ought to (but likely won’t) clear up some misconceptions about a brilliant and holy man, as it ought to (but certainly won’t) put a stop to lurid speculations about the reason for his abdication.

And, if I may:

“The Irony of Modern Catholic History: How the Church Rediscovered Itself and Challenged the World to Reform” (Basic Books)

George Weigel is Distinguished Senior Fellow of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C.

BARRON, from page 12

faith be one feature of a person’s private life, the great masters of the spiritual tradition know that such a compartmentalized religion is no religion at all. It’s everything, or it’s a waste of time.

Now, two episodes later, the series flashes forward a few years to 1969. Princess Alice has just died, and her son, the Prince, finds himself in a midlife funk: depressed, convinced that his royal activities are trivial, utterly dismissive of religion. At the same time, he’s preoccupied with the exploits of the American Apollo astronauts — Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin and Michael Collins — making their way that summer to the moon.

They strike Philip, himself an accomplished pilot, as models of healthy activity, scientific ingenuity and courage. He begins to feel that somehow associating himself with them and their kind of heroism will restore him to psychological health, peace of soul.

As the Apollo 11 mission is underway, Philip is invited to visit a group of Anglican clergymen, who are experiencing burnout and depression in their ministry. Joining their circle of discussion, he hears tales of woe, hopelessness and unrealized dreams. Showing not an ounce of sympathy, he launches into a purely Pelagian exhortation, urging these sad men to be like “Armstrong, Aldrin, and Collins,” finding their pur-

pose through achievement and self-determination and to stop wasting their time with morbid introspection. To the utter consternation of these suffering clergymen, the prince then leaves their company in a huff of pitiless condescension.

After the moon landing, the Apollo astronauts pay a formal visit to Buckingham Palace and, more than a little starstruck, the prince asks to see them privately. Face to face with his heroes, he asks not about the technicalities of flying, but about meaning, vision and what they learned — in the deepest sense of that term — when they were on the moon. Surely these paragons of achievement will give him what he wants. Instead, they tell Philip that they just didn’t have time to muse on such matters — at which point they commence, with childlike enthusiasm, to inquire about the perks and privileges of the royal life.

With that, something shifted in the prince — something gave way. He seemed to realize that his program of vigorous activity and self-assertion, which he had boldly advocated to the suffering clergymen, would never in fact answer the questions that had welled up in his own soul. In a remarkably moving scene, the prince subsequently returns to the circle of priests in crisis, whom he had previously mocked and chastised, and makes a kind of confession — and then humbly asks for their help.

There is so much more going

on here than mere psychological insight or development — and God bless the writers of “The Crown” for presenting it.

Throughout this episode, Prince Philip was standing on one of the great fault lines in Christianity — namely, the divide between auto-salvation and salvation through grace. In referring above to the “Pelagian” quality of his speech to the priests, I was referencing the fifth-century theologian Pelagius, who opined that we can save ourselves through a heroic exercise of the free will.

St. Augustine spent the last years of his life opposing Pelagianism and insisting that peace of soul, happiness, salvation — call it what you want — comes not through self-striving but precisely through a surrender that takes place at the limit of all possible achievement. It comes, as Prince Philip rather slowly and painfully realized, not through strenuous effort, but as his mother clearly knew, through faith — a surrender to what can only be called grace. The primacy of grace, it has been argued, is the central teaching of the Bible. How wonderful that it’s also a key lesson in an episode of one of the most popular television programs of our time.

Bishop Robert Barron is an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and the founder of Word on Fire Catholic Ministries.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH®

Gospel for December 22, 2019

Matthew 1:18-24

Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for the Fourth Sunday of Advent, Cycle A: Joseph and the angel. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

THE BIRTH OF WITH CHILD SHAME A DREAM CONCEIVED PEOPLE VIRGIN	JESUS CHRIST SPIRIT ANGEL AFRAID BEAR A SON SINS EMMANUEL	JOSEPH HUSBAND LORD WIFE NAME FULFILL AWOKE
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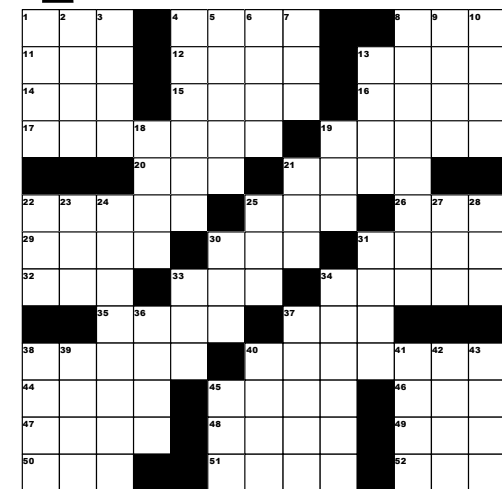
YOUR WIFE

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

The Cross Word

December 22 and 29, 2019



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Sunday readings: Is 7:10-14; Rom 1:1-7; Mt 1:18-24 and Sir 3:2-6, 12-14; Col 3:12-17; Mt 2:13-15, 19-23

ACROSS

- 1 Christ has ___ natures
- 4 Persia in Bible
- 8 Common fish
- 11 In possession of
- 12 Type of lily
- 13 Away
- 14 Used for anointing
- 15 Sour
- 16 Ancient S. American
- 17 Ideal
- 19 Bowed
- 20 Listen in on
- 21 Control (your heart)

- 22 Embarrass
- 25 Brainwave chart (abbr.)
- 26 Tax Department
- 29 "In ___ or in deed"
- 30 Woeful
- 31 Egg-shaped
- 32 Pride
- 33 Danish *kroner* (abbr.)
- 34 Tough
- 35 Christ's mother
- 37 Thai
- 38 To wear out God
- 40 "To all the ___ of God"
- 44 Dislike
- 45 False bible god

- 46 All did with 5 loaves
- 47 Mary's sword flower
- 48 Otherwise
- 49 No room here
- 50 Tender loving care
- 51 "In word or in ___"
- 52 Negative

DOWN

- 1 Blessed art ___
- 2 ___ on tables
- 3 Norway city
- 4 Advent OT prophet
- 5 Review
- 6 "Against"
- 7 "Land of ___"
- 8 Become pregnant
- 9 "___ upon a time"
- 10 Resurrection from the ___
- 13 Woman
- 18 Stress disorder
- 19 Assumption month
- 21 Martyr color
- 22 Veneration
- 23 Fen
- 24 Incense is
- 25 Hearing part
- 27 Uncooked
- 28 Slick
- 30 "As high as the ___"
- 31 American river
- 33 Parch
- 34 Set apart
- 36 Greek god of war
- 37 Banter
- 38 Bit
- 39 Royalty
- 40 Bundle
- 41 Of no value
- 42 Bunsen burner
- 43 Peter did to Jesus
- 45 Mattress

Answer key can be found on page 15

Bishop Conley of Lincoln, Neb., to take medical leave of absence

LINCOLN, Neb. (CNS) — The Diocese of Lincoln announced Dec. 13 that Bishop James D. Conley will take a medical leave of absence, effective immediately.

Due to serious medical issues, Bishop Conley formally requested a temporary leave of absence from Pope Francis, and the request was accepted.

Pope Francis has appointed Archbishop George J. Lucas of Omaha to serve as apostolic administrator during Bishop Conley's temporary leave of absence.

In a letter to the faithful of the Diocese of Lincoln, Bishop Conley announced that he has been medically diagnosed with depression and anxiety, along with insomnia and tinnitus.

"My doctors have directed me to take a leave of absence for medical and psychological treatment, and to get some much-needed rest. After prayer, and seeking the counsel of my spiritual director, my brother bishops, and my family, I have accepted the medical necessity of a temporary leave of absence," Bishop Conley wrote.

The bishop announced his plans to "undergo the best psychological and medical treatment available to me," before returning to his ministry as diocesan bishop.

He said he will be at a diocesan retreat facility in the Diocese of Phoenix, "thanks to the kind invitation of Bishop Thomas J. Olmsted, while I undergo the



CNS/Paul Haring

best psychological and medical treatment available to me."

"Jesus Christ is the Divine Physician, who offers us the grace of healing. I entrust myself to the healing power of Christ, and the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary," Bishop Conley added. "I am grateful to be your bishop, and I love the Diocese of Lincoln. It will be difficult to be away. Please pray for me, as I pray for you."

Archbishop Lucas said in a statement: "I offer my full support to Bishop Conley as he steps away from the Diocese of Lincoln to focus on his personal health and well-being."

"As a brother bishop, I know the demands of being a diocesan pastor," he said. "As a friend, I want Bishop Conley to avail himself of the time and the setting that will help him to return to full health and strength. I look forward to welcoming him back when he is ready to return."

"In the meantime," Archbishop Lucas added, "I am eager to work with the priests and lay faithful of the Diocese of Lincoln, to further the mission of Jesus Christ in the parishes, schools and apostolates of the diocese. I know that all will join me in praying for health and peace for Bishop Conley."

Bishop James D. Conley of Lincoln, Neb., is pictured in a 2012 photo. The Diocese of Lincoln announced Dec. 13 that Bishop Conley will take a medical leave of absence, effective immediately due to serious medical issues.

Pope tells his elderly peers the prayers of the old are powerful

BY CINDY WOODEN

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — On the eve of his 83rd birthday, Pope Francis met with a group of his peers — although many were a few years younger — and told them that "old age is a time of grace."

"Grandparents, who have received the blessing of seeing their children's children, are entrusted with a great task: transmitting the experience of life and the history of the family, the community, the people," the pope said Dec. 16 during an audience with members of the Italian National Association of Senior Workers.

The association represents workers with at least 20 years of seniority in a company, defending the rights of older workers and promoting volunteer service by older people.

Pope Francis, who was born Dec. 17, 1936, told association members that one's later years should be a "season of dialogue," because "the future of a people naturally presupposes a dialogue and encounter between the old and young to build a society that is more just, more beautiful, has more solidarity and is more Christian."

As one grows older, he said, "the Lord renews his call to us. He calls us to preserve and hand on the faith; He calls us to pray, espe-

cially to intercede; He calls us to be alongside those who are in need."

"The elderly, grandparents, have a unique and special ability to understand the most problematic situations," the pope continued. "And when they pray for these situations, their prayer is strong, it's potent."

By living one's senior years as a gift and a time for dialogue, he said, the elderly show the lie of "the traditional stereotype of the elderly: ill, handicapped, dependent, isolated, besieged by fear, left out, having a weak identity after losing their social role."

Active seniors, he said, also fight a system that focuses more on "costs and risks" than on "resources and potential."

"The future — and this is not an exaggeration — will be found in dialogue between the young and the old," he said.

"We are all called to fight this poisonous throwaway culture. With tenacity we are called to build a different society, one that is more welcoming, more human, more inclusive," and one where the young aren't ignored because they aren't working yet and the old aren't ignored because people think their financially productive years are over.

"Remember," the pope told them, "talk to young people, not to clobber them, no. To listen to them, to sow something. This dialogue is the future."

"Talk to young people ...

To listen to them, to sow

something.

This dialogue is the future."

POPE FRANCIS

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Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters
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Huntington, IN, 46750
or e-mail to ksands@olvm.org.

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

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.

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

Masses interpreted for the deaf
SOUTH BEND — Masses interpreted for the deaf are on the second and fourth Sundays of the month at 11 a.m. at St. Matthew Cathedral, 1701 Miami St. Christmas day Mass at 9 a.m. and Solemnity of Mary Mass at 10 a.m. on Jan. 1, will also be interpreted. A Mass interpreted for the deaf will also be celebrated on the second Sunday of each month at the 11:30 a.m. Mass at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in downtown Fort Wayne. The Christmas day 11:30 a.m. Mass will also be interpreted.

preted. Contact Allison Sturm at asturm@diocesefwsb.org or at 260-399-1452 for information.

Christmas concert
FORT WAYNE — Most Precious Blood Church, 1515 Barthold St., will have a Christmas concert on Sunday, Dec. 29, at 7 p.m. in the church. Music will be presented by Jim Didier, choir director and Kathy Schall, bell choir director. Admission is free.

St. Stanislaus trivia night — TV sitcoms
SOUTH BEND — St. Stanislaus Parish will offer a Trivia Night Saturday, Jan. 18, from 6-11 p.m. at MR Falcon Hall, 3212 Keller St., and will test participants knowledge of TV sitcoms from the 1950s through today. Tickets are \$10 each or \$80-100 to reserve a table. Beverages will be sold, bring snacks to share. Doors open at 6 p.m. Contact Nancy Bakos at 574-273-3067 or nancy.studioone@gmail.com.

Bishop Rhoades to celebrate Christmas Mass
FORT WAYNE — Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades will celebrate the 10:30 p.m. Christmas Eve Mass on Tuesday, Dec. 24 at Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, 1122 S. Clinton St., in Fort Wayne.

The CrossWord

December 22 and 29, 2019



REST IN PEACE

Bremen
 Ginette L. Rethlake, 81, St. Dominic

Decatur
 Blas G. Mendez, 94, St. Mary of the Assumption

Fort Wayne
 D. James Kessler, Jr., 67, St. Vincent de Paul

Yiordana Quandt, 64, St. Charles Borromeo
 Charlotte Selby, 95, St. Charles Borromeo

Granger
 Henry Stypczynski, 90, St. Pius X

Mishawaka
 Vicki Bennett, 80, Queen of Peace

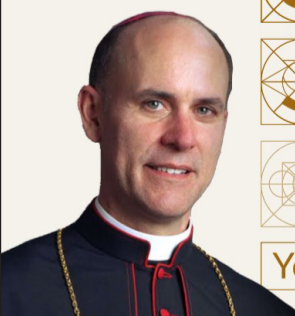
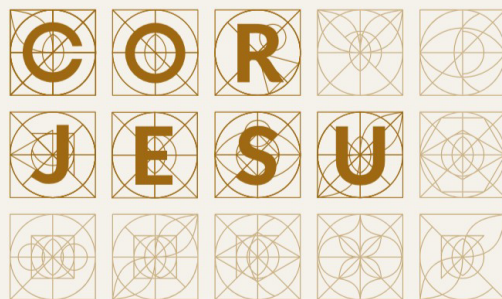
South Bend
 Helen O'Malley, 91, St. Matthew Cathedral

Irene Suth, 100, St. Matthew Cathedral

Patricia Welling, 75, Christ the King

Ann M. Woofter, 93, Christ the King

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Young Adult Mass + Adoration

JOIN BISHOP KEVIN C. RHOADES
January 8, 2020

6:30p | Adoration, Confession, Praise
 7:30p | Mass
 8:00p | Fellowship in Providence House

St. John the Baptist | 4502 Fairfield Ave, Fort Wayne IN 46807
 Questions? Contact Anne Therese: atsihm@yahoo.com

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Responsible for the development, oversight and support in the area of Human Resources for diocesan offices, parishes and schools. Related tasks include employee recruitment, compensation, benefits, staff development, resources and labor relations. Compensation is commensurate with experience.

Email resume to mgurtner@diocesefwsb.org
 Or mail to: Very Reverend Mark Gurtner
 P.O. Box 390, Fort Wayne, IN 46801

CHRISTMAS DAY TELEVISED MASS TIMES

WNDU South Bend
 4:30 a.m. & 12 p.m.

WFFT 55 Fort Wayne
 7:30 a.m.

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Items used by early bishops on loan to Diocesan Museum

BY JODI MARLIN

A request by Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades to the U.S. Province of the Congregation of the Holy Cross has resulted in a loan to Diocesan Museum, Fort Wayne, of several never-before-exhibited items used by former Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend bishops.

Notable among the historic pieces is a mitre once used by Bishop John H. Luers, first bishop of the diocese. The mitre, which is a bishop's headgear worn during certain liturgies, is embroidered with the detailed image of a pelican striking its breast to draw blood — a symbol for Jesus and the Eucharist.

In times of drought or food scarcity, if a mother pelican is unable to find food for her chicks, she will use her beak to poke holes in her breast, causing blood to run out that will nourish them. The mother dies and the chicks survive, imagery that reminds Christians of Jesus' love and His great sacrifice.

Bishop Luers' red cloth buskins accompany the mitre. The two items are the only belongings of the first shepherd of the diocese to ever be displayed by the museum.

Buskins, also called pontifical shoes and sometimes referred to as sandals or slippers, are ceremonial footwear formerly worn by a bishop when offering what was called a "pontifical Mass" prior to the Second Vatican Council. Their hue varied according to the liturgical color of the given day.

Although it's not certain, it is possible that the buskins and mitre were the same ones given to Bishop Luers on the day of his ordination as bishop of what was then known as the Diocese of Fort Wayne.

According to "Worthy of the Gospel of Christ," a history of the diocese written by Joseph M. White on the occasion of its 150th anniversary: "... diocesan life in an active sense began in Cincinnati's graceful St. Peter in Chains Cathedral on January 10, 1858, as Archbishop John B. Purcell — with Bishops Maurice de St. Palais of Vincennes and George Carrell, S.J., of Covington assisting — presided at the episcopal ordination of his young protégé, John Henry Luers, as first bishop of Fort Wayne. The elaborate ordination liturgy included the cathedral choir's rendition of a Haydn Mass Julian Benoit, vicar general, and Joseph Weutz, pastor of St. Mary's, Fort Wayne, represented the new diocese. In the evening, at nearby St. Joseph Church, Luers' parishioners hosted a reception for their longtime pastor. On this occasion, they presented him with a mitre, crosier, pectoral cross, bishop's cassock,

ambry with episcopal seal, three pairs of pontifical shoes, and \$1,200."

Bishop Luers' mitre and slippers will be shared with the students of his namesake high school in Fort Wayne Jan. 15, when Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades makes a pastoral visit to the school.

The buskins of two other former bishops, Joseph G. Dwenger, second bishop of the diocese, and Joseph Rademacher, its third bishop, keep companionship with those of Bishop Luers in the temporary display. Another treasured item is an ornate, jewel-decorated crosier, or staff, belonging to Bishop Herman J. Alerding, the fourth bishop of Fort Wayne.

Alerding served as bishop of the diocese from 1900 to 1924, a period of time during which the United States, including northern Indiana experienced, according to White, "a high tide of European immigration, with northern Indiana receiving a substantial share — especially Catholics from southern and eastern Europe." The newcomers, White continues, greatly expanded the Catholic presence from South Bend to Fort Wayne, "resulting in the founding of more Catholic churches and schools."

Accompanying the pelican mitre used by Bishop Luers is a precious mitre, so called due to a design that incorporates inlaid precious stones, or jewels. It was used by the fifth bishop of the diocese, Archbishop John Francis Noll. The precious mitre and several other episcopal items owned by the diocese and used by various bishops, including Bishop Leo Pursley, round out the special exhibit.

In another area of the museum, now through Jan. 6, the viewing of a large, carved creche, painted with rich color, may lend peace to the Advent and Christmas seasons. After the creche is taken down, examples of some of the beautiful and historic eucharistic canopies used within the diocese at events such as Corpus Christi processions, will be erected.

The special exhibit of items from Bishops Luers, Dwenger, Alerding and Rademacher will be on display at the museum for four years, until 2024. Diocesan Museum is located next door to the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception at 1103 S. Calhoun St. in Fort Wayne. Hours are 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. Admission and parking are free. The museum is handicapped-accessible.

For more information about the museum call 260-424-1485, ext. 401 or 402, or visit www.diocesefwsb.org/museum.



Photos by Jodi Marlin

A new exhibit at Diocesan Museum, 1103 S. Calhoun St., Fort Wayne, includes items owned by former bishops of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. The items were requested by Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades to be loaned from the U.S. Province of the Congregation of the Holy Cross through 2024.



If you go

Discover the connection between the University of Notre Dame and the crosier used by Bishop Alerding.

