

# TODAY'S CATHOLIC

Volume 95 No. 1

TODAYSCATHOLIC.org



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Jodi Marlin

**Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades incenses the creche at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Fort Wayne, on Christmas Eve. Assisting at the midnight Mass were deacons Paolo Degasperi, back, and Augustine Onuoha, front.**

BY JODI MARLIN

**O**n a dark and below-freezing Christmas Eve midnight Mass at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Fort Wayne, Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades encouraged solidarity among all men and encouraged Catholics to walk in the light of Christ during moments of spiritual darkness.

At the liturgy — which began at 10:30 p.m. and was con-

celebrated by the cathedral's rector, Father Jacob Runyon, and parochial vicar Father Peter Dee De, with the assistance of deacons Paolo Degasperi and Augustine Onuoha — the bishop also entrusted the spiritual fortitude and well-being of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend to St. Joseph, asking that he defend the faithful and protect them from temptation and sin in the new year.

Pope Francis proclaimed the year 2021, the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary

of St. Joseph being declared patron of the universal Church, to be a yearlong celebration dedicated to St. Joseph, "an intercessor, a support and a guide in times of trouble." The proclamation was made in an apostolic letter published Dec. 8.

In his Christmas Eve homily, the bishop expressed gratitude that the Christmas Eve Mass could take place. During the flu epidemic in 1918, he noted, midnight Mass was not celebrated in the cathedral. Churches had been

closed the previous couple of months by government order and public Masses suspended. The ban had been lifted by December, but the government enjoined churches to have shorter services.

"There was no Midnight Mass, I presume, because too large a crowd would have congregated. At Masses on Christmas Day in Fort Wayne in 1918, there was no music. Like

**CHRISTMAS EVE, page 16**



## TODAY'S CATHOLIC

(ISSN 0891-1533)  
(USPS 403630)

Official newspaper of the  
Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend  
P.O. Box 11169  
Fort Wayne, IN 46856

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260-456-2824

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](mailto:circulation@diocesefwsb.org)

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

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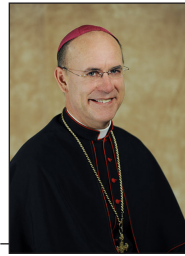
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# Mary: Daughter of Israel, Mother of God, Queen of Peace



## IN TRUTH AND CHARITY

BISHOP KEVIN C. RHOADES

*The following is the text of Bishop Rhoades' homily on New Year's Eve at St. Louis, Besancon Parish.*

January 1st is the eighth day of the Octave of Christmas. For eight days, we celebrate with joyful solemnity the Nativity of the Lord. The only other time of the liturgical year we observe an Octave is for the Solemnity of the Resurrection of the Lord, the Octave of Easter. I am happy to celebrate this last day of the Octave of Christmas with you here at St. Louis Parish.

It was on the eighth day after His birth that Our Lord was circumcised and officially given the name "Jesus," as we just heard in the Gospel. St. Luke tells us that the name was "given him by the angel before he was conceived in the womb." Gabriel told Mary at the Annunciation that she was to give her son this name Yeshua (Aramaic), Joshua (Hebrew), Jesus (English). In Gabriel's annunciation later to Joseph in a dream, he also told Joseph that Mary's son was to be named Yeshua. On this day of the infant's circumcision, they did as God's messenger asked them.

The very name of God is contained in the name Yeshua. In Hebrew, The name Jesus means "Yahweh saves." This name expresses Jesus' identity as God and also His mission as Savior. It is the divine name that brings salvation, redemption from sin. In the Acts of the Apostles, St. Peter made the extraordinary statement that "there is no other name under heaven given to the human race by which we are to be saved."

Jesus, the Son of God, in becoming man, entered human history as a member of the people of God, the people of Israel. According to the law of Moses, eight days after birth, baby boys were to be circumcised and then given their name. By being circumcised, Jesus was incorporated into Abraham's descendants, into the people of the covenant. This was God's plan. He chose Israel to be His people centuries before Jesus was born. He chose this particular people and set them apart from other peoples and nations. Circumcision was the sign that Israel had been set apart from other people and nations for a particular purpose. Israel was the means by which God would reveal Himself to the world in an extraordinary way. How would He do so? By becoming an Israelite Himself.

God sent His Son born of a woman, St. Paul writes. That woman chosen by God was a daughter of Israel. His earthly father was a son of Israel. Mary and Joseph were faithful Jews and obeyed the law to have their son circumcised. Jesus was born under the law. As we heard in the second reading from St. Paul's letter to the Galatians: "When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons." Jesus' circumcision was part of His mission to redeem us, a foreshadowing of his bloody sacrifice on the cross, which brought us into the new and eternal covenant in His blood.



Wikimedia Commons

"The Circumcision of Jesus" is a painting by Italian artist Fra Angelico, who lived 1395-1455.

Today the Church celebrates in a special way that Daughter of Israel whom God chose to be the Mother of His Son. The first day of the new year is the Solemnity of the Mother of God. The child whom she bore looked like any other child. He was circumcised like every Jewish baby boy. The name He was given, Yeshua, was a pretty common Jewish name. But Jesus was unlike any other Jewish child, unlike any child ever born on this earth. He was one of the Divine Persons, the Son of God. And so the Church has given her the title *Theotokos*, or Mother of God. This is Mary's greatest and most important title. God sent His Son into the womb of this Daughter of Israel to bear His Son. She is truly "blessed among women," as Elizabeth proclaimed at the Visitation. She gave birth to the king of heaven and earth, the Savior of the world.

Mary was present when Jesus' blood was shed at the circumcision and when His blood was shed on Calvary. It was from the cross that Jesus entrusted us to her maternal care. We begin the new year honoring the Mother of God whom He gave us as our mother. She is with us, at our side, in all the joys and sorrows of our life. On our journey of faith in this new year, let us turn to her as our support and our guide, as we also turn to St. Joseph as our guardian and protector.

Let us begin this new year with confidence and hope. We've been through a lot of trials this past year with the Covid pandemic, and those trials continue. Amid these trials, we must remember that we have a mother. We are not spiritual orphans. It was heart-breaking this past summer to see on TV the last minutes of George Floyd's life. He was unable to breathe as a police officer knelt on his neck for 8 minutes. In his fear and pain, what did Mr. Floyd do? He called out for his mother. That's so natural. Children always

seek their mother's help in times of need. As children, we all sought our mother's tender embrace. In the journey of life and at the end of that journey, we need a mother and God provides. From the cross, Jesus gave us His mother to be our mother, to comfort us, to embrace us with her love, and to lead us along the right path, the path of goodness. Mothers also teach their children. Mary is our teacher. She teaches us to have faith in her Son and to follow Him on the path of love.

Finally, January 1st, the Octave of Christmas and the Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God, is also the World Day of Peace. We can think of the interior peace of Mary. The Gospel today says that "Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart." It was from prayer that Mary received interior peace amid all that was happening. She teaches us not to be agitated, fearful, quick-tempered, or overwhelmed by difficult events. She teaches us to turn to her Son, to ponder, to reflect in our hearts. This is prayer. If we're thinking about New Year's resolutions, this might be a good one: to pray more.

On this World Day of Peace, the Church encourages us to pray for peace. Let us implore the intercession of the Mother of God that the Lord may grant peace in our day: peace in our hearts, peace in our families, peace in our community, peace in our nation, and peace in the world. Peace is the gift of Christmas, a gift that must be accepted with humble docility and constantly invoked with prayerful trust in Jesus, the Prince of Peace. Peace is also a task, the task of being instruments of peace. We pray with St. Francis: "Make me a channel of your peace." In this New Year, may Mary, the Queen of Peace, help us to be peacemakers, witnesses of her Son, the Prince of Peace!



# Vatican: Without alternatives, COVID-19 vaccines morally acceptable

BY CAROL GLATZ

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The Vatican's doctrinal office said that when alternative vaccines are not available, it is morally acceptable to receive COVID-19 vaccines developed or tested using cell lines originating from aborted fetuses.

However, "the licit use of such vaccines does not and should not in any way imply that there is a moral endorsement of the use of cell lines proceeding from aborted fetuses," said the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

"Both pharmaceutical companies and governmental health agencies are therefore encouraged to produce, approve, distribute and offer ethically acceptable vaccines that do not create problems of conscience for either health care providers or the people to be vaccinated," it added in a note published Dec. 21.

The note "on the morality of using some anti-COVID-19 vaccines" had been reviewed by Pope Francis Dec. 17 and he ordered its publication, the doctrinal office said.

As vaccines against the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19 are being distributed in some parts of the world, the doctrinal office said it has been receiving requests for guidance regarding the use of vaccines which, "in the course of research and production, employed cell lines drawn from tissue obtained from two abortions that occurred in the last century."

The "diverse and sometimes conflicting pronouncements in the mass media by bishops, Catholic associations, and experts have raised questions about the morality of the use of these vaccines," the congregation said.

Even though there are already some notes and instructions by the doctrinal office and the Pontifical Academy for Life regarding vaccines prepared from such cell lines, it said, "this congregation desires to offer some indications for clarification of this matter."

The Catholic Church teaches that there are differing degrees of responsibility of cooperation with evil. That means that the responsibility of those who make the decision to use cell lines of illicit origin is not the same as those "who have no voice in such a decision," the doctrinal office said, quoting from its 2008 instruction, "Dignitas Personae."

"When ethically irreplaceable COVID-19 vaccines are not available — e.g. in countries where vaccines without ethical problems are not made available to physicians and patients or where their distribution is more difficult due to special storage



CNS photo/Ammar Awad, Reuters

**A health care worker vaccinates an elderly man against COVID-19 in Jerusalem Dec. 21. The Vatican's doctrinal office said it is morally acceptable to receive COVID-19 vaccines using cell lines originating from aborted fetuses when alternative vaccines are not made available.**

and transport conditions or when various types of vaccines are distributed in the same country but health authorities do not allow citizens to choose the vaccine with which to be inoculated — it is morally acceptable to receive COVID-19 vaccines that have used cell lines from aborted fetuses in their research and production process," the doctrinal congregation wrote in the new note.

Using these vaccines is morally licit when the "passive material cooperation" with the evil of an abortion "from which these cell lines originate is, on the part of those making use of the resulting vaccines, remote."

"The moral duty to avoid such passive material cooperation is not obligatory if there is a grave danger, such as the otherwise uncontrollable spread of a serious pathological agent — in this case, the pandemic spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19," it said.

Therefore, in such a case, "all vaccinations recognized as clinically safe and effective can be used in good conscience with the certain knowledge that the use of such vaccines does not constitute formal cooperation with the abortion," it said.

However, the doctrinal congregation emphasized that "the morally licit use of these types of vaccines, in the particular conditions that make it so, does not in itself constitute a legitimation, even indirect, of the practice of abortion, and necessarily assumes the opposition to this practice by those who make use of these vaccines."

The congregation repeated the Vatican's call on pharmaceutical companies and governmental

agencies to produce, approve and distribute ethically acceptable vaccines, that is, without using morally compromised cell lines at all.

The doctrinal office also said that "vaccination is not, as a rule, a moral obligation and that, therefore, it must be voluntary."

From an ethical point of view, "the morality of vaccination depends not only on the duty to protect one's own health, but also on the duty to pursue the common good," it added.

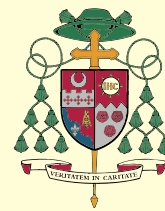
If there are no other means to stop or prevent an epidemic, the congregation said, "the common good may recommend vaccination, especially to protect the weakest and most exposed."

Those who wish, for "reasons of conscience," to refuse vaccines produced with cell lines from aborted fetuses, "must do their utmost to avoid, by other prophylactic means and appropriate behavior, becoming vehicles for the transmission" of the virus.

They must avoid putting at risk the health of those who cannot be vaccinated for medical or other reasons and who are the most vulnerable, it said.

Lastly, the congregation said it is "a moral imperative for the pharmaceutical industry, governments and international organizations to ensure that vaccines, which are effective and safe from a medical point of view, as well as ethically acceptable, are also accessible to the poorest countries in a manner that is not costly for them."

Otherwise, this lack of access would become yet another sign of discrimination and injustice "that condemns poor countries to continue living in health, economic and social poverty."



## Public schedule of Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades

# Diocese honors employees for years of service

BY JENNIFER BARTON

On Monday, Dec. 21, Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades honored several employees for their years of service at a Mass for those who work for the diocese celebrated at St. Mary, Mother of God Church in downtown Fort Wayne.

More than 20 employees were honored for their years of work, in five-year increments, up to 35. This was the first such recognition, though Bishop Rhoades said he intends to make it a yearly tradition.

"I am blessed to have a staff that has served the diocese and our parishes for so many years," he said. He also noted that 40% of the curia has more than 10 years of experience at their jobs.

Several different offices within the diocese were represented at the socially distant Mass by at least one employee. The business office, however, saw extensive representation. Nearly every employee in the small office has served the diocese for 20 or more years.

Cathy Bracht has been with the diocese the longest — 35 years and counting. She handles employee benefits, including retirement plans. Her father was formerly the associate business administrator and in 1985, he asked her to work with him, assisting with correcting pension information that she said "was a mess." Her father had vowed not to retire until the problem was fixed.

When her father retired from his position, Bracht stayed on. The flexibility of the job was one aspect that kept her coming to work every morning. She feels privileged to have been able to work full-time and not have to miss ballgames and milestones in her two sons' lives. "If I was sitting in a doctor's office behind a desk, I couldn't leave. It was nice to have that flexibility."

Everything she learned about her job came through experience. Service has been ingrained in her from her youth — from watching her parents serve their parish community of St. Mary in Huntington — and that continued into her job. "I enjoy what I'm doing and just being able to help the teachers or other employees," particularly those approaching

retirement, she said. She has had retired teachers call to thank her for her assistance in preparing them for their next phase of life. "Those are the kinds of things that mean a lot."

There is a certain sense of fellowship among employees as well as the relationships between the employees and churches and schools throughout the diocese that makes diocesan employees want to stay, they say. Debra Gase has 25 years under her belt in accounting as well and said the variety that her job brings in her day-to-day tasks help her stay engaged and interested.

"Most of it is the core; working with the people I'm working with and those on the other floors. It's the camaraderie and the help."

She is grateful for willingness of others to jump in and assist whenever they need to. "I never had that in the few places I worked before. ... I never hate getting up to come in to work."

Many of those in the business department credit the direct supervisor for his leadership and guidance over the years. Chief financial officer Joseph Ryan has been a diocesan employee for over 20 years himself. Like many of his colleagues, he was not looking for a new job when Bishop John M. D'Arcy invited him to a meeting after the ordination of his cousin, Father George Gabet.

"Then I got a call from Msgr. (J. William) Lester several days later. He wanted to meet at the chancery." Apparently, it was harder for Ryan to refuse a job from Msgr. Lester, and he began working for the diocese the following Monday.

"I stay because of the people," Ryan said. He credits both Bishop D'Arcy and Bishop Rhoades for their "exemplary" service to the faithful of the diocese, as well as the priests of the diocese who "are probably the most intelligent, compassionate, hardworking group of individuals you will find in any company." His great honor has been to serve them. He recalls a time when Bishop D'Arcy asked him to help "warm him up" before he threw out the first pitch at a TinCaps game, as well as the loving support the bishop offered



# Pope: Share hope, promote peace, give vaccine to all

BY CINDY WOODEN

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — On a Christmas like no other, Pope Francis prayed for people who could not be with their families because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but he urged everyone to recognize and help those who are suffering even more.

From inside the Hall of Blessings — a long, gold-hued room above the atrium of St. Peter's Basilica lined on the east with enormous windows and balconies facing St. Peter's Square — Pope Francis delivered his Christmas message and his blessing "urbi et orbi" (to the city and the world).

As announced by Cardinal Angelo Comastri, archpriest of St. Peter's Basilica, the solemn blessing included a plenary indulgence for everyone watching on television, listening by radio or following by computer.

Because of Italy's renewed lockdown to slow the spread of the virus, the pope read his message in the presence of a representative group of about 50 people. The tens of thousands of people who usually would throng the square for the midday appointment Dec. 25 were all ordered to be at home, and St. Peter's Square was closed to the public.

"My thoughts at this moment turn to families: to those who cannot come together today and to those forced to remain at home," the pope said. "May Christmas be an opportunity for all of us to rediscover the family as a cradle of life and faith, a place of acceptance and love, dialogue, forgiveness, fraternal solidarity and shared joy, a source of peace for all humanity."

In a last-minute addition to his text, Pope Francis called for "vaccines for all," especially the world's most vulnerable people.

"At Christmas, we celebrate

the light of Christ that comes into the world, and he comes for all, not just for some," the pope said. "Today, at this time of darkness and uncertainty because of the pandemic, there appear different lights of hope, such as the discovery of vaccines."

"But so these lights may illuminate and bring light to the whole world, they must be available to all," he said. "I cannot put myself before others, placing the laws of the market and of patents above the law of love and the health of humanity."

Pope Francis pleaded with the leaders of governments, pharmaceutical companies and international agencies "to promote cooperation and not competition" in ensuring the widespread availability of the vaccines.

Peace and family — in the sense that all people are brothers and sisters — were the central themes of the pope's message, echoing the teaching in his encyclical "Fratelli Tutti, on Fraternity and Social Friendship."

"A birth is always a source of hope; it is life that blossoms, a promise of the future," he said. But Jesus' birth is even more powerful since he was born "to us" — an 'us' without any borders, privileges or exclusions. The child born of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem was born for everyone: he is the 'son' that God has given to the entire human family."

"Thanks to this child, we can all call one another brothers and sisters, for so we truly are," the pope said. "We come from every continent, from every language and culture, with our own identities and differences, yet we are all brothers and sisters."

Recognizing that connection, he said, is even more important "at this moment in history, marked by the ecological crisis and grave economic and social



CNS photo/Vatican Media

**Pope Francis wears a mask at his Christmas message and blessing "urbi et orbi" (to the city and the world), delivered from the Hall of Blessings at the Vatican Dec. 25.**

imbalances only worsened by the coronavirus pandemic."

As children of God and brothers and sisters to one another, the pope said, the kinship existing between everyone is not sentimental, but is "grounded in genuine love, making it possible for me to encounter others different from myself, feeling compassion for their sufferings, drawing near to them and caring for them even though they do not belong to my family, my ethnic group or my religion."

"For all their differences, they are still my brothers and sisters," he said "The same thing is true of relationships between peoples and nations."

Pope Francis prayed that the newborn Jesus would help everyone "be generous, supportive and helpful, especially toward those who are vulnerable — the

sick, those unemployed or experiencing hardship due to the economic effects of the pandemic, and women who have suffered domestic violence during these months of lockdown."

Migrants, refugees and the innocent victims of wars around the world were also on the pope's mind as he celebrated the birth of the Prince of Peace.

The faces of the suffering children in Syria, Iraq and Yemen, he said, should touch people's consciences and make them pray and work for peace.

"May the Babe of Bethlehem grant the gift of fraternity to the land that witnessed his birth," the pope said. "May Israelis and Palestinians regain mutual trust and seek a just and lasting peace through a direct dialogue capable of ending violence and overcoming endemic grievances,

and thus bear witness before the world to the beauty of fraternity."

Pope Francis also made specific pleas for reconciliation and an end to conflicts in eastern Ukraine, Nagorno-Karabakh, Ethiopia, northern Mozambique, South Sudan, Nigeria and Cameroon.

"May the Eternal Word of the Father be a source of hope for the American continent, particularly affected by the coronavirus, which has intensified its many sufferings, frequently aggravated by the effects of corruption and drug trafficking," he prayed. "May he help to ease the recent social tensions in Chile and end the sufferings of the people of Venezuela."

Praising those who "work to bring hope, comfort and help to those who suffer and those who are alone," the pope insisted that Jesus' birth "tells us that pain and evil are not the final word. To become resigned to violence and injustice would be to reject the joy and hope of Christmas."

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# Pope announces yearlong reflection on family, 'Amoris Laetitia'

BY JUNNO AROCHO ESTEVES

As the fifth anniversary of his apostolic exhortation "Amoris Laetitia" approaches, Pope Francis announced that the Catholic Church will dedicate more than a year to focusing on the family and conjugal love.

During his Sunday Angelus address Dec. 27, the pope commemorated the feast of the Holy Family and said that it served as a reminder "of the example of evangelizing with the family" as highlighted in his exhortation.

Beginning March 19, he said, the year of reflection on "Amoris Laetitia" will be an opportunity "to focus more closely on the contents of the document."

"I invite everyone to take part in the initiatives that will be promoted during the year and that will be coordinated by the Dicastery for Laity, the Family and Life," he added. "Let us entrust this journey, with families all over the world, to the Holy Family of Nazareth, in particular to St. Joseph, the devoted spouse and father."

According to the dicastery's website, the "Amoris Laetitia Family" year "aims to reach every family around the world

through several spiritual, pastoral and cultural proposals that can be implemented within parishes, dioceses, universities, ecclesial movements and family associations."

The dicastery said that the goals of the celebration include sharing the contents of the apostolic exhortation more widely, proclaiming the gift of the sacrament of marriage and enabling families to "become active agents of the family apostolate."

The "Amoris Laetitia Family" year will include forums, symposiums, video projects and catechesis as well as providing resources for family spirituality, pastoral formation and marriage preparation.

The commemoration will conclude June 26, 2022, "on the occasion of the World Meeting of Families in Rome," the dicastery said.

Pope Francis already had declared a year of St. Joseph, which began Dec. 8 and ends Dec. 8, 2021.

In his Angelus talk, the pope said that the Holy Family is a model in which "all families of the world can find their sure point of reference and sure inspiration."

Through them, he said, "we are called to rediscover the edu-



CNS photo/Mihoko Owada, Catholic Standard

**A family prays during a June Mass at St. Peter Church in Waldorf, Md., after Washington-area churches reopened with strict coronavirus safety protocols, including mandatory mask wearing.**

cational value of the family unit; it must be founded on the love that always regenerates relationships, opening up horizons of hope."

Families can experience sincere communion when they live in prayer, when forgiveness prevails over discord and "when the daily harshness of life is softened by mutual tenderness and serene adherence to God's will," he added.

"I would like to say something to you: If you quarrel with-

in the family, do not end the day without making peace," the pope said. "And do you know why? Because cold war, day after day, is extremely dangerous. It does not help."

Pope Francis also reflected on the theme of forgiveness during

his Angelus address on the feast of St. Stephen Dec. 26.

Recalling St. Stephen's martyrdom, the pope said that although it may seem that his death was in vain, among those who witnessed and consented to his stoning was St. Paul, who eventually became "the greatest missionary in history."

St. Stephen's example "was the seed" of St. Paul's conversion, he said. "This is the proof that loving actions change history: even the ones that are small, hidden, every day."

Christians, he added, can become witnesses of Christ through their everyday actions, "even just by fleeing the shadow of gossip" or refusing to speak ill of others.

"When an argument starts at home, instead of trying to win it, let's try to diffuse it," and forgive one another, Pope Francis said. Small efforts and gestures, he said, "change history because they open the door, they open the window to Jesus's light."

## SERVICE, from page 3

when his parents passed away.

Of course, his co-workers are also a large part of Ryan's reasons for remaining. "I always tell new hires to contribute to your 403(b). And you'll never have a better work environment in any workplace that you have been in before, or that you'll go to in the future, than at our diocese."

That's what brought Elisa Smith back to the diocese after a stint working for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. "This is home," she said.

Data processing employee Sheryl Lee echoed the sentiment. "My favorite part is talking and working with the business managers and keeping the employees happy," Lee said.

The first face that visitors see at the Noll Building in Fort Wayne has not changed for the last 20 years either. Mary Ellen Moss has sat at the reception desk since 2000, greeting visitors, answering phones and directing people to the proper departments, all with a cheerful smile. Moss is technically part of the business office as well and handles some paperwork aspects for them.

Her husband is an Air Force retiree and the couple moved back to Moss's native Fort Wayne after his retirement. After working at other jobs, Moss stated that, "This was where I landed, the reception area, and I never left."

Part of the reason she remains is the simple fact that she enjoys her job. She enjoys working for



Jennifer Barton

**Cathy Bracht is honored by Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades for many years of service during a Mass Dec. 23 at St. Mary, Mother of God Church in Fort Wayne. Bracht has been with the diocese for 35 years as benefits coordinator. A number of longtime diocesan employees were recognized at the Mass.**

Ryan and being in a Catholic environment. Most of all, her favorite aspect is "meeting people and trying to get them to the right office."

Moss recalls how the diocese used to have offices in the chancery building, which now hosts the diocesan museum. Additional locations included the old Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception school building and the campuses of both Bishop Dwenger and Bishop Luers high

schools.

While memories of friendships, old times and good deeds swirl around them, most of these workers are not yet ready to leave their workstations. Bracht reiterated, "We're here to serve. That was always Bishop D'Arcy's motto; we're here to serve." So she, along with her coworkers, say they will continue to serve the diocese with integrity and love for those around them.

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# NEWS BRIEFS

## Week of prayer focuses on reconciliation among Christians

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The 2021 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity should help Christians see that the closer they draw to Christ, the closer they will be to one another, said materials for the week published by the Vatican. “Divisions among Christians — moving away from one another — are a scandal because it is also moving further away from God,” the material said. “Christ’s prayer for unity is an invitation to turn back to him and so come closer to one another, rejoicing in the richness of our diversity.” The resource material for the Jan. 18-25 octave of prayer, published on the website of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, was prepared by the Monastic Community of Grandchamp, an ecumenical religious community of women based in Switzerland. “The theme that was chosen, ‘Abide in my love and you shall bear much fruit,’ is based on John 15:1-17 and expresses the Grandchamp Community’s vocation to prayer, reconciliation and unity in the church and the human family,” the pontifical council said.

## Maryland Catholic Conference urges Trump to stop a federal execution

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Eight Catholic bishops serving Maryland dioceses urged President Donald Trump Dec. 22 to stop the planned federal execution of Dustin Higgs, a Maryland man on death row in Indiana. The bishops, including Cardinal Wilton D. Gregory of Washington, Baltimore Archbishop William E. Lori and Bishop W. Francis Malooly of Wilmington, Delaware, also wrote to Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan seeking his support in fighting this execution, which is scheduled to take place Jan. 15. In their letter to Trump, the bishops wrote: “Alternative sentences, such as life without parole, are punishments through which society can be kept safe. The death penalty does not create a path to justice. Rather, it contributes to the growing disrespect for human life and perpetuates a cycle of violence in our society.” They also quoted Pope Francis, who said: “Human justice is imperfect, and the failure to recognize its fallibility can transform it into a source of injustice.” In a letter to Hogan, a Republican, the bishops said they were proud of the state’s leadership in ending the death penalty and urged him to “intervene with the Trump administration to ask that this execution be stopped.”

## Christmas explosion



CNS photo/Andrew Nelles, Tennessean.com, USA TODAY NETWORK via Reuters

A vehicle in Nashville, Tenn., burns near the site of an explosion Dec. 25. The blast damaged more than 40 buildings in the downtown area and injured three people.

## Church leaders stress need for Christmas hope after challenging year

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Christmas messages shared by U.S. Catholic leaders stressed the need to keep hope and faith alive this season particularly in the midst of the challenging pandemic year. “As 2020 comes to an

end, we know that sadly the trials and challenges caused by the coronavirus pandemic will not,” said Los Angeles Archbishop José H. Gomez, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. “For me, and I know for many of you, this long year has brought us face-to-face with basic facts: that life is fragile and uncertain, that powers beyond our control can suddenly disrupt our plans and hopes, that sickness and

death can come into our lives at any time,” he wrote in a Dec. 22 column for *Angelus*, the online news outlet of the Los Angeles archdiocese. He said the experience of the past year is a chance to “deepen our awareness of our dependence on God” and calls people back “to the truth that what matters is seeking God’s will for our lives, following his commands, fixing our hearts on heaven.” And that is why believ-

ers “approach Christmas this year with renewed hope,” he added. He also reminded Catholics that Pope Francis has announced a “Year of St. Joseph, from Dec. 8 of this year to Dec. 8, 2021.”

## Church’s pandemic help, disaster response lauded by Vietnamese leaders

HO CHI MINH CITY, Vietnam (CNS) — High-ranking Vietnamese government officials have praised the country’s Catholics for their contributions in addressing the coronavirus pandemic and returned confiscated Church buildings as Christmas gifts during visits with Church leaders. Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan, National Assembly chairwoman, and other national and local officials offered Christmas and New Year flowers and greetings to Archbishop Joseph Nguyen Chi Linh of Hue at his residence Dec. 22, *ucanews.com* reported. State-run media said Ngan applauded local Catholics’ efforts to control the deadly coronavirus pandemic and respond to recent natural disasters. Vietnam, which is among only a few countries that can call 2020 a success in response to the pandemic, has gained achievements in socioeconomic development during the year despite great difficulties posed by COVID-19, the illness caused by the coronavirus. The Southeast Asia country of 97 million has recorded 1,420 coronavirus infections and 35 deaths through Dec. 23, according to the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center.

## Canadian bishops seek to stop expansion of legally assisted suicide

OTTAWA, Ontario (CNS) — Canada’s Catholic bishops said it is “not too late to reconsider” and stop the expansion of legally assisted suicide in Canada. They called on all Catholics and Canadians opposed to expanding the country’s medical assistance in dying system to speak out against the proposed legislation after the federal government was given until Feb. 26 to bring federal law in line with a 2019 Quebec court decision. A Quebec court Dec. 17 granted additional time for the government to consider proposed changes to the legislation, known as Bill C-7. The bishops are hoping the extended deadline will provide greater opportunity to persuade elected officials to pull back from making it easier for Canadians to participate in physician-assisted suicide. In a strongly worded statement released Dec. 18, the executive committee of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops called on Canadian politicians to reconsider changes to the medical assistance in dying system that Church officials and others have argued are being rushed.



## March for Life Chicago coming to Fort Wayne

CHICAGO — Since it's a bit harder this year to travel to the National March for Life, March for Life Chicago is coming to Indiana.

All pro-life supporters are invited to the Moving the Midwest tour stop in Fort Wayne Jan. 16, sponsored by the March for Life Chicago and co-hosted by Lutheran Church Missouri Synod and Right to Life of Northeast Indiana. Participants will advocate for the right to life for the unborn, especially as the anniversary of Roe v. Wade approaches.

A drive-in rally and diaper drive to benefit Compassion Pregnancy Center, Life and Family Services, A Mother's Hope, A Hope Center, and The Hope Clinic will begin at 4 p.m. at 6600 N. Clinton St., Fort Wayne. A caravan to the downtown area will follow.

The goal of the diaper drive is to collect 130,094 diapers, one for every abortion performed in the Midwest annually.

All civil guidelines in regard to COVID-19 precautions will be followed. To register and to receive more details, visit [marchforlifechicago.org/tour](http://marchforlifechicago.org/tour).

## Sister of Providence celebrates jubilee

SAINT MARY-OF-THE-WOODS — One Sister of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana, with ties to the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, celebrated a jubilee last year.



**SISTER ANN  
STEPHEN  
STOUFFER**

Sister Ann Stephen Stouffer is a native of Wabash. Currently, she ministers in prayer at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. She celebrated 60 years with the congregation in 2020.

Sister Ann Stephen entered the congregation on Feb. 2, 1960, from St. Francis Xavier Parish, Pierceton. She professed first vows on Aug. 15, 1962, and final vows on Aug. 15, 1967.

She graduated from Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College with a bachelor's degree in education and earned her master's degree in education from Indiana University. Her ministries included serving as a teacher at St. Jude School, Fort Wayne, 1966-69.

## Scout leader receives national service emblem

FORT WAYNE — Theresa Dirig, a Scout leader of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, was among five National Catholic Conference on Scouting members to receive the National Catholic Conference on Scouting Silver St. George Emblem this fall. This recognition is given to Scouters

# AROUND THE DIOCESE

## Christmas cheer in Huntington



Provided by Dean Taylor

Santa Claus visits with children at St. Mary Parish, Huntington, Dec. 12. The Huntington Knights of Columbus Council, No. 1014, organized the opportunity. Santa arrived by sleigh and the children were encouraged to have their pictures taken in it and then take home a bag of goodies to eat.

## Christmas dinner for the less fortunate



By Jennifer Barton

Key Club members at Bishop Dwenger High School, Fort Wayne, helped pack boxes of food for the Suzy Beard Christmas Dinner drive Dec. 17, collaborating with St. Vincent de Paul and St. Henry parishes in the effort. Student CeCe Cooper said 20-30 students came, after two rounds of finals testing, to assist in packaging nearly 400 boxes for needy families. The boxes will be distributed through Fort Wayne Community Schools to places like the Euell A. Wilson Center, St. Henry and Vincent Village.

for both their years of service as members of the NCCS and the impact they have made in the promotion of Scouting within the Catholic Church. Recipients are nominated by their peers.

Dirig has been active in Scouting for decades at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton and St. John the Baptist parishes in Fort Wayne. She has also served on the Diocesan Catholic Committee on Scouting. At the national level, she serves on the Religious Activities Committee of the National Catholic Committee on Scouting writing lessons on saints for Scouts and their families.

"I am so glad for Theresa that her hard work, her commitment to sharing her faith with young people, and her joyful spirit were recognized by the National Catholic Committee on Scouting with this prestigious award," said Secretary for Catholic Education Carl Loesch. "The Scouts and Scout families in our diocese have been blessed by her leadership. Her servant's heart and hearty laugh have blessed many meetings and campouts."

The awardees were featured in the winter edition of the NCCS newsletter *The Bridge*.

## Discípulos en Misión/ Disciples on a Mission

MISHAWAKA — A monthly program of evangelization and faith formation will be offered by the Office of Family Life through Facebook Live @ministeriohispanofwsb or in person by pre-registration. Every session will include topics, personal reflection and group dialogue. The topics will be: prayer, spiritual healing, new life in Christ, biblical foundations, pastoral leadership and questions like Who is Jesus? What is discipleship? How do I discern my gift and talents?

Sessions are in Spanish and completely free. They begin Jan. 9 and continue every second Saturday of the month throughout the year.

Acompaña a la Oficina de Vida en Familia en un programa mensual de evangelización y formación en la fe por Facebook Live @ministeriohispanofwsb o en persona con preinscripción. Cada sesión incluirá oración, dinámicas, temas, reflexión personal y diálogo en grupos. Los temas serán: oración, sanación espiritual, nueva vida en Cristo, fundamentos bíblicos, liderazgo pastoral y preguntas como ¿Quién es Jesús? ¿Qué es el discipulado? ¿Cómo discernir mis dones y talentos?

Las sesiones son completamente gratis y en español. Este programa comienza el 9 de enero y se llevará a cabo el segundo sábado de cada mes durante el año. Para más información visita [diocesefwsb.org/discipulos-en-mision](http://diocesefwsb.org/discipulos-en-mision).

For more information visit [diocesefwsb.org/discipulos-en-mision](http://diocesefwsb.org/discipulos-en-mision) or contact the Office of Family Life at 574-234-0687.



# 2020

## YEAR IN REVIEW

# Christ our light: hope

Perhaps no liturgical season focuses more on hope than the season of Advent. But during the year 2020 — an unprecedented 12 months in the lives of the modern generations — the world's attention turned to hope early on and has yet to permit an alternative focus.

In January, Catholic and non-Catholic citizens of the U.S. hoped the news they were hearing about a virulent virus originating in China would remain far-removed from their reality. In February, they hoped it would not spread beyond a few initial cases discovered in the U.S. In March, they hoped their cities and their livelihoods would be spared a hard hit by what had become a deadline pandemic. By May, hope had become the lifeline to which the entire country and the rest of the world clung.

An austere and dramatic “Urbi et Orbi” blessing given by Pope Francis to the world from St. Peter’s Square in March acknowledged the fear into which the world had been submerged. He encouraged the Catholics to turn over their fears to Jesus so that He could conquer them. In the midst of the storm, Pope Francis said, God was calling people to faith, which is not just believing God exists, but turning to Him and trusting Him. Prayer and quiet service, he said, “are our victorious weapons.”

As the particularly penitential Lent ticked by, an historic suspension of Masses challenged the ability of the Catholic faithful to win the war that had been declared against human life.

Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades, in an Easter homily given to an empty Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Fort Wayne, noted that even once a vaccine had been developed for the novel coronavirus, it would not eliminate death; only, perhaps, death from this virus.

The only medicine to ensure immortality, he reminded, was baptism.

The risen Lord, he said, “gives us the love, peace and joy of Easter. The Risen One promises us a share in His Resurrection. This is the hope of Easter, the hope that does not disappoint. May we be witnesses of this hope during this crisis and witnesses to the love that destroys sin and is stronger even than death.”

Liturgies were streamed online for home viewing, phone calls, online connections and distanced “hellos” replaced the normal practice of the faith. They were no substitute for true fraternal accompaniment, but diocesan Catholics opted to embrace them so that they would become those witnesses of hope.

When racial injustices provoked yet another widespread challenge to complacency and indifference, Christian concern for the dignity of all — as inscribed in Catholic social teaching — was also given an opportunity for diffusion.

Joys were found in new places this year, too. Among the moments celebrated in the diocese this year were:

- The diocese observed the 10th anniversary of ordination of its shepherd, Bishop Rhoades
- The Light Is On For You, an evening of reconciliation that took place across the diocese, reunited thousands of Catholic with the mercy of Christ
- The remains of more than 2,000 babies aborted by Ulrich Klopfer were entrusted to the Lord during a burial service in South Bend
- Rekindle the Fire carried out its 10th year of the Rekindle the Fire conference, encouraging men to aspire to holiness
- St. Patrick Parish in Walkerton dedicated a new altar during a celebration of its 150th anniversary in March
- Because public Masses were suspended for a time, new and effective tools for evangelization and faith formation were incorporated into the skill set of clergy and laypeople
- Six fervent young seminarians were ordained to the diaconate for the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend: Deacon Logan Parrish, Deacon Augustine Onuoha, Deacon Michael Ammer, Deacon Benjamin Landrigan, Deacon Keaton Lockwood and Deacon Paolo Degasperi
- At that same Mass in May, the Holy Spirit was called down by Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades on Father Stephen Felicichia to equip him for a lifetime of service as a priest serving the Catholic faithful of the diocese
- Father Eric A. Zimmer was appointed president of the



Molly Gettinger

University of Saint Francis by Bishop Rhoades: He served his first day in the position July 1. Following 27 years of capable and humble leadership, Sister Elise Kriss retired. Following a sabbatical, she will return to the Sisters of St. Francis provincial house in Mishawaka

- By coming together to provide for others' basic needs, Catholic schools and social service organizations fed thousands of students and families whose livelihoods had been impacted by the pandemic with food drives
- In August, Catholic schools of the diocese, which had closed early due to the pandemic, reopened and incorporated virus mitigation strategies
- Amid nationwide and local protests against racial injustice, Catholics were reminded — as Bishop Rhoades said during a September prayer service at Bishop Luers High School, Fort Wayne — that racism is a pro-life issue, and that every human being possesses the inherent dignity given him or her by God
- Walking with Moms in Need, an initiative of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, launched nationwide
- A Catholic court of appeals judge and University of Notre Dame professor, Amy Coney Barrett became a member of the Supreme Court
- Father Chuck Herman, a priest of the diocese, was welcomed into eternal life



# for a fearful world

BY JODI MARLIN



CNS photo/Philip Toscano, PA Wire via Reuters



Jennifer Barton



Ann Carey



John Martin



CNS photo/Tom Brenner, Reuters



University of Saint Francis





## St. Patrick rectory blessed a year after fire

BY JENNIFER BARTON

On Veterans Day in 2019, the rectory of St. Patrick Parish in Arcola burned down. Thirteen months after the destructive fire, Father Thadeus Balinda, who was unharmed in the incident, happily welcomed Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades to bless the new priestly home at St. Patrick on Dec. 22.

Bishop Rhoades began by blessing Father Balinda and all priests who would take residence there in the future. After this, he proceeded to say a house blessing and sprinkled each room with holy water. Father Balinda thanked the bishop heartily and introduced him to a few people who play a large role in the faith community. According to Father Balinda, "Everybody should have been here" to welcome the bishop and thank him for coming. Instead, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, a small group representing the parish was invited.

Two of those in attendance were the couple who saved Father Balinda's life a year ago. Carl and Lisa VanAllen live across the field from the rectory. Lisa reported that on that night that she happened to look out her patio door and saw something unusual in Father Balinda's living room – a fire.

"It was a fluke that I even looked," she stated. "I looked out the sliding doors and it didn't seem real; it didn't seem possible."

Both she and her husband reported that checking the patio door was not normally something she did every night, but she happened to do so at around 10 o'clock in the evening. Lisa called 911 while Carl went to wake Father Balinda, who had already fallen asleep.

"By the time I came over and



Photos by Jennifer Barton

**Father Thadeus Balinda, pastor of St. Patrick Parish, walks with Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades around the Arcola parish's new rectory as the bishop blesses the home Dec. 22. A fire destroyed the old rectory in 2019**

started kicking the door down, flames were already shooting over the house," Carl said.

At first, Father Balinda did not answer. He had been sleeping deeply and believed someone was trying to break into the house, he said. Carl, a retired volunteer firefighter, recalled assisting Father Balinda out of the house, with both of them crouched down to about 4 feet because of the smoke that was already filling the house.

Of saving Father Balinda's life, Carl said, "A few minutes more and it might have been different. It was divine intervention." The heat from the fire

had been so intense that even the concrete patio needed to be replaced. Many of the attendees agreed that it was a miracle that Father Balinda came through unscathed, and they were thrilled to see a beautiful new house take the place of the wreckage.

Among those invited to the blessing were Roberta Davis, director of religious education; Jerry and Susie Fawbush, who housed Father Balinda after the fire; and Priscilla Van Allen, housekeeper for the parish priest for 40 years, now retired.

The new house is a spacious one-story with an office for the

wanted something in the home to resound with his homeland and her daughter found the picture, which happened to fit perfectly on the mantle.

Fortunately for the parish, all parish records had been moved to the new parish office in 2006 and so were not harmed in the fire.

Father Balinda is grateful to the community that has provided for him throughout the last year. He said, "When all this happened, I received so much consolation in all ways from this community. God is great."





# Living Nativity provides Advent hope in pandemic darkness

BY COLLEEN SCHENA

A crackling fire and a pavilion filled with hay attracted 100 people for an Advent celebration steeped in joy. On the weekend of Dec. 20, the parishioners of SS. Peter and Paul Parish in Huntington ventured to the grounds of St. Felix Catholic Center to bring to life a living image of the Nativity.

This budding tradition, ushered in by the parish's director of Faith Formation, Drew Stuart, returned to the parish for a second season. The concept was gleaned from Stuart's time as a student at the University of Saint Francis, and SS. Peter and Paul parishioners joyfully and unflinchingly carried it on with Stuart leading the way.

The overwhelmingly positive reception of the 2019 living Nativity prompted, if not necessitated, in Stuart's mind, its triumphant return for the 2020 Advent liturgical season. "[Parishioners] demanded this. They said it helped them, that it didn't feel like Christmas until they came to this," he said. Yet as with many events this year, cancellation was a legitimate concern.

Ultimately, the volunteers chose to proceed, seeing even more of a need for an outdoor prayer experience this year than any before it. "A pall's been thrown over Christmas this year," commented Stuart. "People need light, and people need hope."

"It was a good way to share our faith and to put a spotlight on the actual reason for the season," added Chace Olinger, who has played a wise man in the parish's Nativity since its first season. A longtime friend of Stuart, Olinger agreed to offer his talents to the living Nativity once more without hesitation.

"It's a bright spot in our community and in our church – and that's definitely something you need during the dark winters."

The power of a simple narrative retelling of one of the greatest stories ever told was enough to bring a new wave of joy, anticipation and active reflection into the attendees' remaining Advent season. Participation in the Nativity scene, humbly framed by live animals, left its participants pondering the truly meek and quiet beginnings of Christ's incarnation.

University of Saint Francis faculty member Allen Machielson, who said he has been privileged to embody the role St. Francis at the event, finds it to be a great honor to recall the historical roots of the Nativity scene as it is presented in modern times. "We are literally turning people back to that day, when St. Francis presented this in Greccio."

Being immersed in Franciscan spirituality and heritage, Machielson sees a clear set of

parallels through the century, connecting the first Nativity and the Greccio presentation of Francis' crèche to the present-day's masked actors and still-snowy terrace of December 2020. Each presentation holds historical significance and further intertwines hope in Christ into the unfolding centuries. While "there will be no doubt it happened in 2020" because of the masked participants and actors, outdoor social distancing and two separate performances to mitigate crowds, the hope and joy of Christ still lived within the moment.

Maintaining the joy of Christ in a pandemic Advent season, however, came with a set of unique challenges. Gathering volunteers and resources is a task reserved for the truly determined and deeply passionate of individuals to begin with, and in a year where every breath is met with uncertainty, volunteers are even more scarce. But for the SS. Peter and Paul living Nativity, many of its previous actors returned and parishioners fashioned costumes, prepared the lighting, manned the sanitization and free mask table and documented each of the two performances with photographs and videos.

Strict adherence to diocesan safety guidelines allowed volunteers to feel able to protect themselves, actors and designers, as well as their families and friends who were in attendance.

Roger Dinius, a returning volunteer and candidate for the permanent diaconate, portrayed one of the wise men alongside his shepherd children and angel grandchildren: "It's almost like a family affair this year," he noted.

Actors participated in varying preparations the weekend of the performance, varying from lighting and mounting wind-blocking tarp to keeping watch of the experience's jumpy and ever-entertaining live animals, including a camel, a donkey, a cow, goats and sheep.

"It was nice to do something with some semblance of normalcy," noted Father Tony Steinacker, pastor of the parish. Amidst the ever-growing list of canceled celebrations, he was relieved to have the ability to continue outdoors and open to parishioners.

Many were thankful for the chance. "I'm glad that stuff like this is happening in our community," said Olinger. "I enjoyed it thoroughly last year and was really hoping we'd be able to have it this year."

For those still looking to experience the living Nativity, they can do so from an even safer distance. Both performances were recorded and will be uploaded to the parish's YouTube channel.



Photos by Colleen Schemma

The cast of the SS. Peter and Paul living Nativity make their way to the outdoor pavilion at St. Felix Catholic Center.



Allen Machielson, a faculty member at the University of Saint Francis, plays the sole speaking part of St. Francis during a living Nativity offered by volunteers from SS. Peter and Paul Parish, Huntington, the weekend before Christmas.



All pause for a moment of silent prayer at the conclusion of the first living Nativity performance offered by parishioners of SS. Peter and Paul Parish the weekend of Dec. 20 in Huntington.



## The weary soul rejoices: celebrating the Christmas season

“Have yourself a merry, little Christmas,” the classic secular song croons. Never before have these lyrics been so apropos. With the COVID-19 pandemic still spreading and getting everyone vaccinated is months away, gatherings with only a few in number are encouraged.

The celebration part may seem trickier. Why make merry at such an arduous time?

Another Christmas carol, “O, Holy Night,” offers a glimmer of why. “Long lay the world in sin and error pining, ‘til He appears and the soul felt its worth! A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices, for yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.” Although written in the mid-1800s, adapted from a French poem and later translated into English, the words ring remarkably true for 2020. The cause of our hope, our redemption is born ... and in a way that every person can relate to, that they themselves experienced, as an innocent, helpless baby.

Any new parents will share the thrill of joy the day they finally could hold their newborn. How much more this year do we all need a little Christmas, to remember that natural, innate thrill: not just for today, but for our whole soul’s life long.

Where do we place this hope then? In what do we wish and ask for? Rather, in whom do we trust? Who is our hope, our greatest peace in the midst of a maelstrom?

For each and every person

who must choose and decide for themselves, is Jesus with whom I build my foundation, my life? Is He the one for whom I truly long? Is the coming of Emmanuel, Hebrew for “God with us,” a real desire in my heart?

This Christmas, it can be simple. We can savor a real and deeply spiritual Christmas. Jesus once born into the human history 2,000 years ago comes again to be born, anew in our souls. Poor, small and weak, He comes in the humblest human condition, a homeless baby. Imagine the joy, after weeks of bumpy, rough travel Mary must have felt finally seeing the promise she agreed to nine months earlier. Imagine the wonder of Joseph, weary, poor and faithful to hold the words of an angel in his arms. Imagine the surprise and delight of the smelly shepherds to be the first to hear this good news of the Messiah, and although often on the fringes of society, to be the first to hold the clean, fragile new Child. Imagine their wonder of why the King of Kings is placed in a feeding trough, where common cows and horses eat. And imagine Him today, coming again, looking for a home, a heart open to receive such love.

Jesus’ presence is what changes this dark, difficult year. We are not alone, isolated, left to ourselves. We are in fact remembered, known and loved. In the flesh, God comes to us, to our muck and mud, to our chaotic and cluttered lives. He is with



### LIVING THE LITURGICAL LIFE

JENNIFER MILLER

us, Emmanuel. Here in the midst of this mess, He desires to love us and transform us.

Life, then, from the Christian perspective at Christmas, converts everything. Our hope is grounded in our relationship with the living Lord, not to be swayed by the latest headline. Our joy comes from deep within the living water, a well that will not go dry. Our trust is steadied on the One who made us, redeems us and renews us. We can well live and celebrate such a God.

Christmas is not just for one day then, over when the radio stops playing carols, but rather for a whole season. Our dull souls may sharpen and expand to take in such a gift of grace. They may adjust to this new reality. Celebrating well that God is not only transcendent but also immanent, we normally sing the “Gloria,” the very words of the choirs of angels announcing His birth, on all the days of the Christmas season. With Christ, our salvation has finally come.

In the Incarnation, God is made flesh in Jesus and made

MILLER, page 13

## The problem of political theologians

Some say religious leaders get too involved in politics. But we should also worry about politicians who wander into theology.

One example comes from Gov. Ralph Northam of Virginia, while announcing new restrictions on social gatherings due to growing COVID-19 cases.

To justify placing further restrictions on church services, he urged religious leaders to realize what is most important. “Is it the worship or the building? For me, God is wherever you are. You don’t have to sit in the church pew for God to hear your prayers. Worship with a mask on is still worship. Worship outside or worship online is still worship.”

To be sure, Gov. Northam has not acted on his opinion, because the Supreme Court recently invalidated a similar effort to close churches in New York. For now, Virginians can still attend church if they follow strict protocols for wearing masks, social distancing and so on.

But a government official seemed to be lecturing people of faith on what constitutes worship.

Of course God can hear our prayers wherever we are. But Christian tradition has generally not seen individual prayer as an adequate substitute for the Third Commandment’s call to come together in worship.

Catholics, especially, have a communal and sacramental faith, as the Catechism of the



### A MORE HUMAN SOCIETY

RICHARD DOERFLINGER

Catholic Church observes (Nos. 2177-83). When we gather for Mass, we are more fully the Church, and we receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ to help us live as members of His body. To quote Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone of San Francisco, “The sacraments as we Catholics understand them cannot be livestreamed.”

Just as Israelites saw the whole chosen people as being in covenant with God, we Catholics believe that our bond with the Church founded by Christ supports and guarantees the authenticity of our individual faith. At every Mass we pray to God: “Look not on our sins but on the faith of your church.”

Another narrowing view of religion recently came to light when President-elect Joe Biden announced his plan to nominate Xavier Becerra as secretary of Health and Human Services. As attorney general of California, Becerra has worked to force the Little Sisters of the Poor to provide coverage for contraceptive and abortifacient drugs, supported a state law to require private health insurance to cover unlim-

DOERFLINGER, page 13

## We come to worship the newborn King



### THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

MSGR. OWEN F. CAMPION

### Feast of the Epiphany of the Lord Matthew 2:1-12

This weekend, the Church invites us to celebrate the feast of the Epiphany of the Lord, one of the most revered feasts in the Christian calendar.

Clear and distinct in the first reading from the third section of the Book of Isaiah is a brilliantly triumphant note. Why? The long, dreary exile of the faithful Hebrews in Babylon has ended.

It was not all rejoicing, however. For those who returned to the Holy Land, life was not easy. The land was decimated.

Despite this, the prophet

insists, a new day will come! It is not necessarily a prediction of material success, although this would be a part of it. Rather, the new day would come when the Chosen People realized their vocation. Then, when they returned to God, the world would see the majesty and power of the great God of Israel.

For its second reading, this liturgy presents a selection from the Epistle to the Ephesians. In the first generations after Jesus, as converts increased the numbers of the Christian community, great interest began to surround the question of who was entitled to the salvation secured by the Lord?

Prompting this interest was the fact that so many new converts were from pagan backgrounds. It intensified when, in short order, once-pagan Christians outnumbered the one-time Jewish Christians.

Part of the message of Jesus was that throughout the ages, God had spoken through, and to, the Chosen People, the descendants of Abraham, the Hebrews.

Now, God spoke to all through Christ. Gentiles could expect salvation.

This promise undergirds the reading. Salvation procured by Jesus is open to any human being.

St. Matthew’s Gospel furnishes the last reading, the story of the Magi who came from the “East” to find, and then to adore, the newborn “king of the Jews.” The story is unique to Matthew. No other Gospel reports such a visit.

The story situates Jesus, the newborn son of Mary, in the great train of God’s saving works. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the birthplace of David, who as king established his own covenant with God. David ruled the Chosen People, but he was much more than a political leader. His task was to bring the people to God, God to the people.

The Magi were searching for the “king of the Jews.” The title often appears in the stories of Jesus offered in the Gospels. Christ’s kingship was the subject

of Pilate’s interrogation when he tried Jesus on Good Friday. It was inscribed on the placard that was placed atop the cross as Jesus was dying.

The Lord is king. His majesty eclipses all else.

Finally, who were the Magi? No one knows exactly. Where was their home? We know only that they came from the mysterious East. How many of them? Tradition says three. The Gospel is silent.

It is unimportant. They were not Jews, searching for truth, for God; yet they found both in Jesus.

### Reflection

At the time of Jesus, salvation with its promise of God’s mercy and eternal life was seen as being primarily, if not exclusively, available to the chosen people. Indeed, Jesus was a Jew, born of a Jewish mother. Could people of other nationalities expect to be saved?

The message of this feast is that all people may hope for

salvation through Jesus. None is preferred. None is excluded. All are beloved.

Nationality is no longer so much the issue, but sin, fear, guilt or indifference separate people from God or from a sense of being with God.

On this feast, the Church calls us to come to the Lord, born of Mary, the king of the Jews, the lamb slain on Calvary. He belongs to us all. He loves us all.

### READINGS

**Sunday:** Is 60:1-6 Ps 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-13 Eph 3:2-3a, 5-6 Mt 2:1-12

**Monday:** 1 Jn 3:22—4:6 Ps 2:7bc-8, 10-12a Mt 4:12-17, 23-25

**Tuesday:** 1 JN 4:7-10 Ps 72:1-4, 7-8 MK 6:34-44

**Wednesday:** 1 JN 4:11-18 Ps 72:1-2, 10, 12-13 Mk 6:45-52

**Thursday:** 1 Jn 4:19—5:4 Ps 72:1-2, 14, 15bc, 17 Lk 4:14, 15bc, 17 Lk 4:14-22a

**Friday:** 1 Jn 5:5-13 Ps 147:12-15, 19-20 Lk 5:12-16

**Saturday:** 1 Jn 5:14-21 Ps 149:1-6a, 9b Jn 3:22-30



# Reflections and resolutions for the new year

**H**appy New Year! We are grateful to God for seeing us over the threshold of a new calendar year, and we pray that 2021 will be one that will see the end of our current pandemic and the return to a somewhat normal life.

With a new year comes a fresh start — and not just for more organized homes or a renewed plan for healthy eating. We also have the opportunity to get our spiritual houses in order. In this week's issue, Deacon Greg Kandra offers readers 10 New Year's resolutions to consider embracing from a Catholic perspective, especially after the year we've all just experienced. After encouraging that we resolve to embrace more prayer, gratitude, frequent reception of the sacraments and works of mercy, among other things, Deacon Kandra reminds us that no 2021 list of resolutions can be complete without proper reflection on 2020.

With that in mind, we offer a few reflections and corresponding resolutions that we hope will help you turn the page on 2020 and enter into 2021 with renewed spiritual zeal.

**Reflect:** Did I think about, pray for and support others enough last year, especially those who may have been struggling financially, mentally or physically? Or was I too concerned with my own well-being?

**Resolve:** Commit to praying for those in need throughout the day. Keep a list hanging on the refrigerator of names of those who have asked for your prayers. Make an effort to pray daily for the sick and their caregivers. Pray the Litany of Humility daily.

**Reflect:** Did I maintain a connection with my parish in 2020? Have I continued to financially

contribute? Or did I become out of sight or out of mind?

**Resolve:** Reconnect with a priest or deacon at your parish. Ask what their needs are and how you can (safely) become involved. Consider a financial donation to express your support and gratitude for all your parish has done during the pandemic.

**Reflect:** Did I take advantage of the emptier 2020 calendar to actively pursue a stronger prayer life? Did I make talking to God a priority every day?

**Resolve:** Don't miss the opportunity to create good habits now, while the relative quiet continues. Pick one time and space during the day that will be conducive for prayer, and then follow through.

**Reflect:** Despite the hardships of 2020, did I manage to express gratitude to God for his blessings? Did I find joy in the small, unexpected gifts of everyday life?

**Resolve:** Be more intentional about saying "thank you" to God. If you do not pray before meals, now is a great time to start. (If you do pray before meals, add grace after meals as well.) Be vocal with your loved ones about your attitude of gratitude each day. Keep a running list of all for which you are grateful. Don't give thanks only in the month of November.

**Reflect:** Did I connect enough with my family? In the first few weeks of "lockdown" in 2020, forts were built, and time at home with loved ones was treasured. As the pandemic continued, did the familial closeness?

**Resolve:** Put down your device and engage with your kids or spouse intentionally every day. We shouldn't have to wait for a pandemic to be sure to set aside time just for family life. Loving your family well — starting with

## GUEST COMMENTARY

OSV EDITORIAL BOARD

your spouse — is key to any healthy domestic church.

**Reflect:** Did I make an attempt to see the "face behind the mask"?

**Resolve:** With our newest accessories, it can be all too tempting or easy to avert our eyes when interacting with others. When speaking to someone else, from a safe distance, do your best to smile with your eyes, not just your mouth. Let the people in front of you see that you see them, and that they matter.

**Reflect:** With so much fear, frustration and conflict in the last year, did I do my part to pursue and advance the cause of peace?

**Resolve:** In his message for this year's World Day of Peace (Jan. 1), Pope Francis says there can be no peace without a "culture of care" that advocates for "a common, supportive and inclusive commitment to protecting and promoting the dignity and good of all, a willingness to show care and compassion, to work for reconciliation and healing, and to advance mutual respect and acceptance." May we make such a commitment in 2021.

**The Our Sunday Visitor Editorial Board** is comprised of Gretchen R. Crowe, Scott P. Richert, Scott Warden and York Young.

even of for-profit companies like Hobby Lobby owned by believers, saying that such protection "protects the religious liberty of the humans who own and control those companies." The court also invalidated California's abortion referral mandate for pro-life centers, saying it attacked the centers' First Amendment right of free speech.

I'm grateful that Gov. Northam has not enacted his opinion on the nature of faith into civil law. Far more ominous is the prospect that another official, with little understanding of or sympathy for institutional religious freedom, may soon exert great power over the Catholic clinics and hospitals that are so vital a part of our national health care system.

**Richard Doerflinger** worked for 36 years in the Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

### MILLER, from page 12

manifest to all people of the whole world. All people of good will are called to baby Jesus and adore Him — the Scriptures reveal well the diversity and divine nature of people led to Christ, from the most overlooked shepherds to the astrologers from countries far from Israel.

This Christmas season, which begins, not ends, on Dec. 25, and extends through the baptism of Our Lord, we all have the opportunity to celebrate well this gift. We all have finally rest for our weary souls and the opportunity for peace, which the world does not understand. Will you welcome baby Jesus in?

### DOERFLINGER, from page 12

ited abortion and tried to require pro-life pregnancy aid centers to make abortion referrals.

In 2017, at a confirmation hearing for his position as attorney general, Becerra insisted that "the protection for religious freedom is for the individual" as opposed to "protections you are giving to some institution or entity who is essentially bootstrapping the First Amendment protections on behalf of somebody else." So much for the central importance of a communal faith.

Becerra's view leads him to deny religious freedom to religious orders and other groups with moral convictions about human life. But our highest court has repeatedly corrected him, saying that individual and institutional rights are not easily separated.

The Supreme Court has upheld the religious liberty not only of the Little Sisters, but

## SCRIPTURE SEARCH®

Gospel for January 3, 2021

Isaiah 60: 1-6 / Matthew 2:1-12

Following is a word search based on the First and Gospel reading for the feast of Epiphany, Cycle B: The Magi visit the Holy Land. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

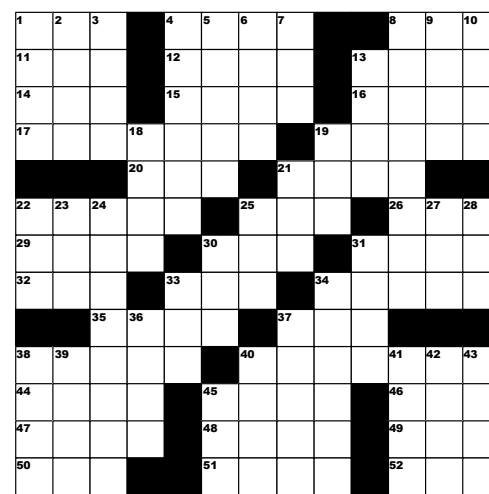
EYES	GATHER	YOUR SONS
DAUGHTERS	NURSES	HEART
EPHAH	PRAISE	JUDEA
MAGI	EAST	PRIESTS
PROPHET	JUDAH	RULERS
SECRETLY	OVERJOYED	GIFTS
MYRRH	WARNED	COUNTRY

### EPHAH IN THE EAST

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

## The Cross Word

January 3 and 10, 2021



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**Readings:** Ish 60:1-6; Eph 3:2-3a, 5-6; Mt 2:1-12 and Is 42:1-4, 6-7; Acts 10:34-38; Mk 1:7-11

### ACROSS

- 1 Fraction
- 4 Spar
- 8 Vane direction
- 11 **vs. Wade**
- 12 **Holy** \_\_\_\_\_
- 13 Potato
- 14 Possessive pronoun
- 15 **Pharisees sought to** \_\_\_\_\_ **Jesus**
- 16 \_\_\_\_\_ **Herod**
- 17 **Evangelist**
- 19 Had too much to drink
- 20 **Cardinal wears**
- 21 Marrow
- 22 **Religious** \_\_\_\_\_

### 25 Epiphany month

- 26 Expression of surprise
- 29 Gloomy
- 30 Affirmative
- 31 Fresh
- 32 Environment protection agency (abbr.)
- 33 Bathtub rug
- 34 Ball and mall do, for example
- 35 **"Smoldering** \_\_\_\_\_ **"**
- 37 Poet Edgar Allen
- 38 Overdue
- 40 "The \_\_\_\_\_ in Christ"
- 44 **Shades a cardinal wears**
- 45 Close-fitting cap

- 46 **Christmas month**
- 47 **The Baptist wore one of leather**
- 48 Healing plant
- 49 **Papal name**
- 50 Works undercover
- 51 **He shines on Jerusalem**
- 52 Gray sea eagle

### DOWN

- 1 Rim of cup
- 2 Small particle
- 3 Exam
- 4 **Mary**
- 5 Voiced
- 6 Cabbage salad
- 7 Cooking measurement
- 8 **January 6**
- 9 Stars
- 10 Fidgety
- 13 Act
- 18 Journey
- 19 Can metal
- 21 Pop - multiple
- 22 Poem of praise
- 23 Knock on sharply
- 24 Doodle (2 wds.)
- 25 Air commuter's transport
- 27 Border
- 28 **Respect for God**
- 30 Wild ox
- 31 Excuse me!
- 33 Microgram
- 34 Covered
- 36 Institution (abbr.)
- 37 **Abbot's assistant**
- 38 Globes
- 39 Cry
- 40 Pony game
- 41 Loaf
- 42 Oracle
- 43 Economics (abbr.)
- 45 Calorie

Answer key can be found on page 15



**MOVIE CAPSULES**

**NEW YORK (CNS)** – Following capsule review is by the Office for Film & Broadcasting of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

**"News of the World" (Universal)**


Epic adventure, set in 1870 Texas, in which a Confederate veteran (Tom Hanks) accidentally becomes the temporary guardian of a 10-year-old orphan girl (Helena Zengel) and reluctantly undertakes a journey of hundreds of miles to deliver her to her only surviving relatives. Director and co-writer Paul Greengrass' visually expansive yet emotionally understated screen version of Paulette Jiles' 2016 novel explores the ethnic, sectional and economic tensions of the Reconstruction era as well as the redemptive bond uniting

two victims of personal tragedy. But a sequence premised on the potential sexual exploitation of Zengel's character and an immoral offscreen encounter for Hanks' make this fare for grown-ups. Considerable stylized violence, implied nonmarital, possibly adulterous, sexual activity, mature themes, including sexual abuse, a few profanities, about a

half-dozen milder oaths, a single use each of crude and crass language. The Catholic News Service classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association rating is PG-13 — parents strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.



Tom Hanks and Helena Zengel star in the movie "News of the World." The Catholic News Service classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association rating is PG-13 — parents strongly cautioned.



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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](http://www.todayscatholic.org/event). For additional listings of that event, please call the advertising sales staff at 260-399-1449 to purchase space.

**Opportunities to stand for life**

**FORT WAYNE** — Jan. 22 marks the 48th anniversary of Roe v. Wade, the Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion on demand in the U.S. There are many opportunities in the diocese to witness to life this January and to pray for an end to abortion: prayer gatherings, a peaceful protest, a downtown march and even a drive-in rally. Visit [www.diocesefwsb.org/local-marches](http://www.diocesefwsb.org/local-marches) for a listing of all of the local pro-life events this month, as well as how to sign up for the national 9 Days for Life novena. Contact Lisa Everett at 574-234-0687 or [leverett@diocesefwsb.org](mailto:leverett@diocesefwsb.org) for information.

**Epiphany concert at St. Vincent de Paul**

**FORT WAYNE** — An Epiphany Concert will be at St. Vincent de Paul Church, 1502 E. Wallen Rd., Wednesday, Jan. 6, at 7 p.m. Members of the Fort Wayne Philharmonic will help celebrate the Christmas season with beautiful music. No charge. This performance will also be streamed at [saintv.org](http://saintv.org), YouTube and Facebook. Contact Anthony Andorfer at 260-489-3537 or [church@saintv.org](mailto:church@saintv.org) for details.

**Little Flower Holy Hour**

**FORT WAYNE** — Little Flower Holy Hour for Vocations will be Tuesday, Jan. 5, from 7-8 p.m. at the St. Mother Theodore Guerin

Chapel, 1102 S. Clinton St. The January holy hour will be led by Father Thomas Shoemaker.

## The CrossWord

January 3 and 10, 2021

B	I	T	M	A	S	T	E	S	E		
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S	P	Y	L	O	R	D	E	R	N		

## REST IN PEACE

**Arcola**

Martha Trahin, 98, St. Patrick

Steve Trahin, 74, St. Patrick

**Auburn**

Pauline Badman, 93, Immaculate Conception

**Decatur**

Bonnie J. Schultz, 72, St. Mary of the Assumption

Joan C. Tinnel, 80, St. Mary of the Assumption

**Fort Wayne**

Charles H. Brown, 85, St. Therese

Dorothy Dice, 84, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

Tatum M. Dimit, infant, St. Therese

Donald J. Figel, Jr., 73, St. Joseph Hessen - Cassel

Barbara Harber, 86, St. Vincent de Paul

Kathleen Hunnicutt, 51, St. Vincent de Paul

Thomas P. Jackson, 82, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

David Lothamer, 64, St. Charles Borromeo

Maria S. Lozano, 83, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

Camille O'Connor, 56, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

Ruth G. Ottenweller, 90, St. Joseph Hessen - Cassel

John F. Otto Jr., 83, St. Jude

Betty L. Pequignot, 82, St. Joseph - Hessen Cassel

Ellen A. Pyle, 68, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

James J. Riemen, 76, St. Vincent de Paul

Donald L. Rodenbeck, 90, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

Mary J. Tourney, 91, St. Therese

Dorothy Trischler, 91, St. Vincent de Paul

James T. Uecker, 85, St. Therese

Sandra Wiegman, 71, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

Marilyn Wunderlin, 91, St. Jude

**Granger**

Kathleen Bajo, 72, St. Pius X

Joseph Walsh, 59, St. Pius X

**New Carlisle**

Janet Tobolski, 73, St. Stanislaus Kostka

**New Haven**

Leah M. Grimmer, 88, St. John the Baptist

Helene M. Spieth, 83, St. Louis, Besancon

Lavon H. Squier, 95, St. John the Baptist

**Notre Dame**

Father Donald F. Guertin, CSC, 92, Sacred Heart Chapel

**South Bend**

Rupert Biddle, 91, Holy Family

Lavern Buss, 80, St. Jude

Pearl Czarniecki, 94, Holy Family

Sandra K. Swiatowy, 78, St. Jude

**Walkerton**

Betty J. Hartsell, 91, St. Patrick

**Warsaw**

Aura R. Aguilar, 95, Sacred Heart

**Deaths elsewhere**

Sister Joan O'Shea, 90, Sisters of Sinsinawa Dominican chapel

Sister Deirdre served at St. Joseph Medical Center, South Bend

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Employment conditional on completing a background and reference check.



**CHRISTMAS EVE, from page 1**

tonight, people would have worn facemasks and kept physical distancing. The important thing, however, was that the faithful gathered to celebrate the Nativity of the Lord, like we do tonight."

"And we have the added blessing of technology," he noted, adding that many people were praying with those present on the holy night via livestream video. He extended Christmas greetings and prayed for all, "especially those who are elderly or sick, and those who are lonely on this Christmas Eve," and for "all who are in the hospital or who live in nursing homes ... (and) doctors, nurses, health care workers, EMTs, police and firefighters, all those who are working so hard to keep us safe.

"I think of their exhausting work and of the tremendous sacrifices they have been making these past several months. On this Christmas Eve, may they know of our gratitude and be uplifted by our prayers.

"Christmas is a feast of love, the self-emptying love of God who sent us His only-begotten Son so that we can share in His divine sonship," the bishop said. "To save us, He assumed our human nature. He became Emmanuel, God-with-us. Because of Christmas, we can walk the journey of our life and endure its sufferings, knowing that God is with us. God is close to us, in solidarity with us. This is the great gift of Christmas: Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us."

"Tonight we contemplate God's loving mercy in sending us a Savior. We see God's tenderness in the infant Jesus. It is a mystery for us not only to ponder, but to imitate. ... I've seen so much goodness in the people of our diocese who have reached out with love to those who are sick or economically devastated during this pandemic. In the midst of pain and suffering, so many have made sacrifices to help and assist those in need.

"Sadly, in the midst of this crisis, others have focused on themselves, on their rights, but not their responsibilities," he reflected. "They have angrily embraced an ideology of personal autonomy, rather than our Catholic teaching on the common good. A crisis like this pandemic reveals what is in our hearts. It is a call to conversion.

"Christmas is all about solidarity, God's solidarity with us in becoming a man," the bishop continued. "To live the true meaning of Christmas is to live in solidarity with others, especially with the poor, the sick, the suffering, and the marginalized. We will not experience the joy and peace of Christmas if our hearts are hardened ... We need a revival of kindness and tenderness in our nation and in our world, beginning in our own families and in the Church. Enough with bickering and criticizing, gossiping and attacking. God calls us to be close to each

### Prayer of Entrustment of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend to St. Joseph

Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

To you, O blessed Joseph, do we come in our tribulation, and having implored the help of your most holy Spouse, we confidently invoke your patronage also.

To you God entrusted his only Son; in you Mary placed her trust; with you Christ became man.

Through that charity which bound you to the Immaculate Virgin Mother of God and through the paternal love with which you embraced the Child Jesus, we humbly beg you graciously to regard the inheritance which Jesus Christ has purchased by his Blood, and with your power and strength to aid our Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend in our necessities.

O most watchful guardian of the Holy Family, defend the chosen children of Jesus Christ;

O most loving father, ward off from us every contagion of error and corrupting influence;  
O our most mighty protector, be kind to us and from heaven assist us in our struggle with the power of darkness.

As once you rescued the Child Jesus from deadly peril, so now protect this Diocese and God's Holy Church from the snares of the enemy and from every evil.

Blessed Joseph, shield, too, each one of us by your constant protection. Show yourself a father, obtain for us grace, mercy, and courage, and guide us to the path of life; so that, supported by your example and your aid, we may be able to live piously, to die in holiness, and to obtain eternal happiness in heaven.

Amen.

other as He became close to us in the Incarnation.

"We must not allow ourselves to be overwhelmed by sadness or gloom that reflects a worldly mentality. We are a people of hope because the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. This truth of the Incarnation is the cause of our joy, even in the midst of trials, sufferings, and failures. When we pray before the Christmas creche, may we become more aware of the closeness and tender love of God, who took flesh for our salvation.

He closed by praying that all those present and watching the Mass might be filled with "wonder at this mystery of love,

the mystery of Christmas, which brings us the joy, hope, and peace for which our souls long. And then may we, through the witness of our lives, spread this joy, hope, and peace to others."

Following the general intercessions, Bishop Rhoades approached and stood before an image of St. Joseph placed in the cathedral for the occasion of the entrustment. He prayed that St. Joseph, who was among the first to suffer, face trials and weather uncertainty because of the newborn King, would assist the faithful of the diocese in their struggles against "the power of darkness" and help them "obtain eternal happiness in heaven."



Jodi Marlin

**During Christmas Eve midnight Mass at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Fort Wayne, Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades prays a prayer of entrustment of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend to St. Joseph. Pope Francis announced Dec. 8 that the year 2021 would be dedicated to the earthly protector of the newborn King.**

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