

TODAY'S CATHOLIC

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In pandemic, Catholic churches turned to technology, creativity, faith

BY CAROL ZIMMERMANN

WASHINGTON (CNS) — As the coronavirus pandemic upended normal activities and routines across the United States, Catholic parishes, schools and organizations had to quickly and continuously find ways to adapt.

For starters, this primarily involved technology: livestreaming Masses and teaching and meeting on Zoom platforms, but it also prompted outdoor worship, drive-thru confessions and, as the year went on: a return to socially distanced in-person Masses and classes at Catholic schools and colleges, with reduced crowd sizes.

When the pandemic first hit and dioceses around the country closed churches and bishops issued dispensations for the Sunday Mass obligation, parishes — with varying degrees of technical know-how — set up parish YouTube channels for the first time or dusted off their Facebook pages for online streaming.

Father Ken Gill, pastor of Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish in Solomons, Maryland, met with his parish staff after the Archdiocese of Washington announced there would be no public Masses as of March 14 and asked: "What can we do to stay connected?"

They decided that with the proper equipment, the parish could begin livestreaming Masses, so the pastor bought a laptop, a microphone and a camera, and a parishioner helped him set up the connection to livestream daily Masses four days later.

By the next week he was broadcasting a noontime holy hour, praying the Angelus, the rosary, the Divine Mercy chaplet and Benediction with viewers and planning to livestream Stations of the Cross on the parish Facebook page.

"We're using this opportunity to foment and create a stronger bond of community," he said.

This happened at many parishes across the country and continued once churches slowly reopened because Mass congregation sizes have been limited.

Mary DeTurris Poust, director of communications for the Diocese of Albany, New York, said in late March she was inspired by what parishes were doing, saying they realized their parishioners were "hungry for spiritual connection and for the grounding nourishment liturgy can provide at this really critical and chaotic time."

Parish closures also meant

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CNS photo/Kevin J. Parks, Catholic Review

Baltimore Archbishop William E. Lori blesses the University of Maryland Medical Center in Baltimore April 8 amid the coronavirus pandemic.

'A love poem from God and to God'

Oratory art, design reflect beauty and His mercy

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Feeding the hungry

Arcola parish helps coordinate, deliver government food

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Redeemer Radio adjusts lineup, format

Station hopes to accompany seekers of Christ on their journeys

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Families observe feast of St. Nicholas at holy hour

BY ISABEL KERN

Observing the Advent season looks a lot different this year than it has in previous years. Nevertheless, parishes continue to provide opportunities that encourage families to observe the season with anticipation and hope.

In 2020 the second Sunday of Advent coincided with the feast day of St. Nicholas, a beloved patron saint of children. A new tradition for the feast day was observed at Our Lady of Good Hope Parish, Fort Wayne.

A holy hour for families took place in the church, which included eucharistic adoration, prayer and benediction. The holy hour began at 5 p.m. with exposition

of the Eucharist.

The only light within the church came from the candles lining the altar, smaller votive candles on the sanctuary steps, a spotlight directed towards the monstrance and rows of paper lanterns flanking the center aisle, giving the space a hushed, reverent atmosphere. The prayerful silence was broken by a recording of a soft Gregorian chant and the voices of the very youngest present.

After a few minutes of silent prayer, Father Daniel Whelan read I Cor. 13:1-13. A short homily followed in which he encouraged the families to pursue holiness and prayer and to foster a

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Isabel Kern

Volunteers put candy, holy cards and rosaries in shoes left in the gathering space of Our Lady of Good Hope Church, Fort Wayne, on Dec. 6, the feast day of St. Nicholas. The parish offered an Advent holy hour for families at which children were encouraged to put one of their shoes underneath the tree for "St. Nick" to fill.

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Oratory's sacred art honors beauty Mary Magdalene saw in the risen Lord

FORT WAYNE — As early as April, when the wooden framework of the Oratory of St. Mary Magdalene was rising, pastor Father Daniel Scheidt called the future perpetual adoration chapel a “new missionary outpost of pioneering prayer.” It was to be a tribute to the legacy of life-altering faith of the 18th-century pioneers who founded the parish.

The chapel's architectural design and decor actively encourage 21st-century pioneers to come in, sit down and reflect on their role in Christ's eternal victory. It is a building so intentionally adorned and inspiring that worshippers do not enter the chapel and kneel to pray as much as they are swept toward an audience with the Lord that saturates the soul.

The various opportunities to convey the beauty that Mary Magdalene saw in the glory of the risen Lord lent themselves to a collaboration, pastor Father Daniel Scheidt said, of talented creative artists both local and abroad. The unifying vision was his, brought often to prayer over the course of two decades.

For a time he saw pieces of the detail in his dreams at night; a confirmation of what the Lord wanted portrayed in His new home. “It was a prayerful reception on my part of what the Lord wanted to give me, and it continually surprised me. It was an organic process, over several years. Every night I would dream about it, and piece by piece it seemed it was being revealed.” Each wall and window of the oratory visually enhances for the worshipper the liturgical experience through unity and symbolism, enlisting painted words, images, figurines, stained glass, mosaics, glass etching, carved designs and more among the sacred art that leads the heart and mind to prayer.

Gazing on the Lord's strength and glory

The exterior architecture of the oratory was designed to evoke the 1904 St. Vincent Church that was formerly situated on the site. A stone image of Mary Magdalene herself, in the oratory's front tower, calls parishioners and passersby to worship the Lord in His home on Wallen Road.

Because St. Mary Magdalene knew, in her friendship with Christ, deep liberation from the slavery of the devil, the oratory is a redeemed outpost of angelic protection, Father Scheidt explained in the parish directory in the spring. Eight stone seraphim angel heads are ensconced below the windows of the building's front and side walls, and representations of the



Photos by Jodi Marlin

When Jesus rose from the grave, His holy beauty was first witnessed by Mary Magdalene. With its intentional and inspired sacred art and design, the Oratory of St. Mary Magdalene at St. Vincent de Paul Parish, Fort Wayne, seeks to inspire in visitors the same awe she felt at seeing the glory of the risen Lord.

seven angels of the apocalypse described at the beginning of the Book of Revelation “preside as sentinels of the Last Judgment over the internment niches on the oratory's apse wall.”

Entering the oratory's interior through the Song of Songs

The inside of the oratory is decorated with verses and imagery from the Song of Songs, the biblical love poem at the heart of the Old Testament; a book that for generations has celebrated not only the exchange of a human lover and his beloved but also the love of God for His people; of Christ, the divine bridegroom for His bride, the Church.

Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades noted the relationship between the bride seeking her beloved and Mary Magdalene in his homily during the blessing of the new oratory Nov. 1.

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The interior door is etched with images of the angels who once guarded the Garden of Eden and now welcome those who will share the good news of salvation with others.



CNS photo/courtesy Bishop Daniel Flores, Diocese of Brownsville

Bishop Daniel E. Flores of Brownsville, Texas, poses for a group photo July 26 after confirmations at San Felipe de Jesus Parish. A group of 13 Catholic youth received the sacrament of confirmation as parts of Texas were undergoing a hurricane threat amid the coronavirus pandemic.

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functions such as religious education classes and meetings had to move to an online format, getting many people familiar with Zoom, an online platform they might not have heard of a year ago.

"The internet is the blessing of all blessings" right now, Sister Susan Francois, an assistant congregation leader for the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace, told Catholic News Service. She has held Zoom video conference meetings with team members across the country and in other parts of the world.

But Zoom fatigue also set in. Bishop Barry C. Knestout of Richmond, Virginia, used the platform a lot this past year with meetings, conferences and diocesan functions including a diocesan eucharistic congress in early November. After taking part in the U.S. bishops' virtual fall meeting in mid-November, he acknowledged that "looking at computer screens is very draining."

"Technology is a blessing," because it enables people to do more, he said, but "it also has its limits," noting people are meant for in-person encounters, which he said is what the sacraments are about and where grace comes in.

With fewer limits on congregation sizes outdoors, many parishes attempted to keep in-person outdoor gatherings, such as Masses, when possible, often in church parking lots, with congregants in their cars, listening on a radio channel.

Several U.S. bishops during a Nov. 17 discussion during their virtual meeting this fall said they have seen an unwavering thirst for the Eucharist and spoke of extraordinary measures people have taken to worship before the Blessed Sacrament.

Bishop Daniel E. Flores of Brownsville, Texas, said he has seen people kneeling outside churches, praying for the chance to receive holy Communion. Similarly, Bishop Kevin W. Vann of Orange, California, said he

saw people kneeling in the rain early one morning waiting for the city's cathedral to open.

Several bishops said such yearning for the Eucharist presents an opportunity for the church to begin a new effort of evangelization and catechesis as the public celebration of Mass gradually expands and church leaders determine how best to encourage people to reengage in parish life.

At this virtual bishops' meeting and in a survey this summer by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University, the bishops expressed concern about people returning to Sunday Mass after the pandemic and noted that without their return, the financial outlook for church entities — parishes and schools — was grim.

Catholic schools have seen this firsthand, with more than 100 schools closing this year, many because of financial stress, worsened by the coronavirus pandemic.

But this fall, many Catholic schools — often with smaller enrollments than public schools — were able to reopen for in-person education with a number of health and safety protocols in place along with sneeze shields and plenty of hand sanitizers, disinfecting wipes, face masks and gloves.

For younger students, recess also was different, with students prevented from playing on the equipment or engaging in contact sports. School lunches were either delivered to the classroom or grab-and-go style, with students eating at their desks or outside.

This same creativity and adherence to safety guidelines was practiced at Catholic schools and colleges that reopened in person this fall after being primarily virtual during the spring semester.

On campuses, crowded lecture halls, sporting events and dining halls were no longer the norm and classes were either predominantly online or significantly smaller with separated seating

and plexiglass barriers. Dorms were at reduced capacities and primarily singles-only rooms.

The academic calendar also was different. Most colleges started earlier, eliminating fall holidays and ended their in-person session either just before Thanksgiving break or concluding the semester virtually, with online exams, in the first few weeks of December.

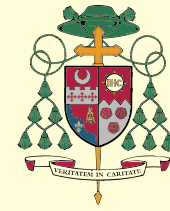
Parishes also have been complying with restrictions amid reopening. This summer, in the Diocese of Portland, Maine, the effort to reopen churches, even in a limited fashion, prompted creativity among clergy and parish staff. No more than 50 people could be in attendance, masks were mandatory and temporary pew-seating arrangements ensured social-distancing guidelines were followed. In addition, reservations were required to make sure capacity wasn't exceeded.

As parishes and schools have taken steps to slowly reopen and the coronavirus pandemic shows signs of worsening before improving, church and school leaders have maintained that the key in all of this is flexibility. They have stressed that reopening requires strict adherence to new protocols and the flexibility to switch gears if necessary.

Baltimore Auxiliary Bishop Adam J. Parker emphasized this same view several months ago when the pandemic's outbreak in the United States was still new.

"We're really grateful for the patience our faithful parishioners, parish leaders and pastors have shown throughout the pandemic," he said. "We ask for that to continue because it is such a complex matter and there is no precedent for it. We've practically rewritten the entire archdiocesan policy manual over the past five or six weeks. Now, in some senses, we are going to be writing it again."

Contributing to this report was Mark Zimmermann in Washington, Sam Lucero in Green Bay and Dennis Sadowski in Cleveland.



Public schedule of Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades

Sunday, December 13: 11 a.m. — Mass, Our Lady of Good Hope Church, Fort Wayne
 Monday, December 14: 10 a.m. — Meeting of the Bishop's Cabinet, Archbishop Noll Center, Fort Wayne
 Monday, December 14: 2 p.m. — Virtual Meeting of Diocesan Budget Committee
 Friday, December 18: 11 a.m. — Mass for Diocesan Employees of South Bend Area, St. Matthew Cathedral, South Bend
 Saturday, December 19: 11 a.m. — Mass for Seminarians, their Families and Serra Club of South Bend, Queen of Peace Church, Mishawaka
 Sunday, December 20: 9:15 a.m. — Mass, St. Catherine of Alexandria Church, Columbia City

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true domestic church within their homes. He closed with the blessing, "may your homes be a reflection of God's love in the Trinity, as He shows us in His Son, Jesus Christ."

The theme of encouraging families to pray together continued as the attendees were invited to write down their prayer intentions on notecards and place them in a basket at the foot of the altar. Many knelt for a few moments to pray directly before the monstrance before returning to their seats.

After praying the chaplet of the Holy Family with the petition to receive the graces of the Holy Family, the hour of prayer and adoration ended with benediction.

Father Whelan has organized a number of similar holy hours at the parish over the last few years. The importance of taking time to pray as a family is essential, he said, especially in these times

He hopes that families will return to their homes with them the same attitude that is fostered in church. "The main thing is for them to continue to bring the love out there (into the world)," he said.

This was the second Our Lady of Good Hope parish holy hour geared specifically toward families on the feast of St. Nicholas. The saint's patronage of children makes the timing of the holy hour especially poignant.

Under normal circumstances, the children are allowed during the holy hour to come quite near to the altar to adore Jesus present in the Eucharist; however social distancing requirements

made a gathering of children up at the altar unfeasible this year. Another missing feature was the reception in the parish basement following adoration.

The tradition of setting out shoes to be filled with treats in honor of St. Nicholas was not foregone, however. Children were invited to leave a single shoe beneath the Christmas tree in the gathering space of the church and while they were praying inside with their families, volunteers filled the shoes with candy, prayer cards and rosaries.

St. Nicholas of Myra lived in the fourth century A.D. in what is now modern Turkey. He served as a bishop for much of his life

and suffered many persecutions along with his fellow Christians, including being thrown into prison.

He was raised by devout Christian parents, whose great impact may be seen later in the saint's life by his great generosity, love and boldness for the faith in the face of persecution.

There are multiple accounts of him giving gifts to poor families. He also lived in a time of persecutions and plagues, similar to the Church's situation today.

In St. Nicholas, Catholics find among themselves a "great cloud of witnesses" (Heb. 12:1) and a friend who understands anxious times. He remains an example of living joyfully and growing in holiness even in the face of hardship.

"May your homes be a reflection of God's love in the Trinity, as He shows us in His Son, Jesus Christ."

FATHER DANIEL WHELAN

Administration urged to stop federal executions, recall God's mercy during Advent

BY CAROL ZIMMERMANN

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Federal executions are at odds with Advent as a season “of anticipated redemption” and must be stopped, said the chairmen of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ domestic policy and pro-life committees.

“This Advent, the Lord comes to love us even though we don’t deserve it. Let us repent and embrace his gift,” the committee chairmen said in a Dec. 7 statement.

They called on President Donald Trump and Attorney General William Barr to “stop these executions” in “recognition of God’s unmerited gift of self-giving love.” “Executions solve nothing,” they said.

The statement was issued jointly by Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City, chairman of the USCCB’s Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, and Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City, chairman of the USCCB’s Committee on Pro-Life Activities.

They noted three bishops’ committee chairmen issued a similar statement in Advent 2019 and that the bishops as committee chairs and as a body have urged the Trump administration to halt federal executions since they resumed them in July 2019.



Demonstrators are seen near the Federal Correctional Complex in Terre Haute, Ind., showing their opposition to the death penalty July 13.

CNS photo/Bryan Woolston, Reuters

“We’ve asked many times to stop the federal executions,” Archbishop Coakley and Naumann said. “In fact, last Advent, three bishops wrote that the resumption of federal executions was at odds with this season of anticipated redemption. “But the executions resumed.

Eight since July. Two more this week (of Dec. 7). Three (planned) in January. A new regulation will permit federal execution by means other than lethal injection, such as the electric chair.”

They called on Trump and Barr, who is Catholic, to recall God’s mercy during Advent.

“What does the birth of our Lord say to this? The Lord comes not to destroy, but to save,” Archbishops Coakley and Naumann said. “For the Second Sunday of Advent, we hear St. Peter counsel that the Lord ‘is patient with you, not wishing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance’ (2 Pt. 3:9). Can we follow the Lord’s example?”

They added: “We are all sin-

ners. Some have done terrible things. Victims need help. Justice is needed for peace. But executions solve nothing.”

On Nov. 27, the Justice Department published a final rule change, effective Dec. 24, to add to the execution methods it uses for federal death sentences, permitting it to use “any other manner prescribed by the law of the state in which the sentence was imposed.”

The proposed change was announced in August and posted on the Federal Register for public comment. It calls for alternative means for federal executions if the lethal injection drug is not available in the state where the defendant is given the death sentence.

In July 2019, the Trump administration announced the resumption of federal executions and Barr ordered the Bureau of Prisons to schedule executions for five federal inmates, with all taking place in the U.S. Penitentiary in Terre Haute, Indiana.

That month, Bishop Frank J. Dewane of Venice, Florida, then-chairman of the Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, called on the administration to abandon its plans to resume federal executions.

Eight federal inmates have been executed this year. The most recent was Orlando Hall, who was put to death by lethal injection just before midnight Nov. 19, about an hour after the Supreme Court denied him a stay.

In a response issued that same day, Archbishops Coakley and Naumann called on Trump and Barr to stop federal executions “as an act of witness to the dignity of all human life.”

Two more are scheduled to take place in December: Brandon Bernard, Dec. 10; he was convicted of murdering married youth ministers Todd and Stacie Bagley in 1999; and Alfred Bourgeois, Dec. 11; he was convicted of abusing, beating and torturing his 2-year-old daughter to death in 2002.

Lisa Montgomery was scheduled to be put to death Dec. 8 for being convicted of strangling a pregnant woman then cutting her open and kidnapping her baby. On Nov. 23, a judge ruled to postpone her execution until Jan. 12. She would be the first female to be executed in almost six decades.

Barr also said Nov. 23 that the Justice Department plans to carry out more executions before president-elect Joe Biden takes office Jan. 20.



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"In the beautiful art of this Oratory, we see many quotes from the Old Testament book, the Song of Songs, and we heard a passage from the Song of Songs in our first reading today. The bride is seeking Him whom her heart loves, but she could not find him. It's the same with Mary Magdalene in the Gospel (...). She is seeking the Lord whom she loved, but does not find him. She reported to the apostles: 'They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they put him.' She went back to the tomb and wept." Her tears, the bishop said, reveal her love.

The interior door is decorated with the angels who once presided over the banishment of sinners from the Garden of Eden. At the Oratory of St. Mary Magdalene they instead keep vigil to welcome those who, Father Scheidt said, will "bear the good news that Christ's saving death and glorious resurrection have open paradise to sinners, who will receive this gift with adoring love."



Photos by Jodi Marlin

Photographed prior to the opening of the Oratory of St. Mary Magdalene at St. Vincent Parish, Fort Wayne, in November, this 3-foot monstrance is now home to the Lord of Hosts and allows for His perpetual adoration.

Beholding Jesus through the Bible of the Poor

Intricate wood framing of the interior side walls serves as a lattice to support the Bible of the Poor: 40 panels illustrating scenes from the life of Christ. Each panel depicts a scene from the life of Christ and is flanked by two scenes from the Old Testament that foretold or support it. The scenes are sur-

rounded by other biblical passages. This medieval type of woodblock illustrations and verses from Scripture was for centuries a popular way to share Old Testament prophecies and Christ's fulfillment of them, allowing all to meditate on the mysteries of salvation, commit the word of God to memory and grow in a life of prayer shaped

by grace.

Each of the 40 panels is a hand-drawn reproduction and reinterpretation of the original, created by Fort Wayne graphic artist Aaron Minier. The full 20 mysteries of the rosary and 14 stations of the cross are also represented this way: Looking at them takes the form of prayer.

A path that leads to the Lord

In the entryway of the oratory, visitors are greeted by a circular mosaic of a vanquished serpent and the fruit Adam and Eve disobediendly seized. Stepping on the serpent's head symbolizes the access worshippers now have to Christ, the new Adam, through His sacrifice. Apples also lead down the central aisle, drawing the eye toward the Tree of Life Crucifix carved specifically for the chapel's sanctuary space and toward the two-tier altar on which the apostles participate in His sacrifice each time the celebration of the Mass is offered.

The pulpit in the sanctuary continues the spiritual axiom that the old is revealed in the new and the new concealed in the old: In one of the panels of the base is displayed an antique figurine of Mary holding the Christ child. She is accompanied by saints of the Old Testament and New Testament: Moses, St. John the Baptist, St. Paul and the four evangelists.

At the moment, the chapel's windows – which are a collaboration with history, designed to evoke the windows of the 1904 St. Vincent Church – are made of clear glass. As funding becomes available each awaits the depiction of a saint with a historical connection to the parish. The stained glass windows in the sacristy depict scenes from St. Therese of Lisieux, and even those in the restroom will present a visual, artistic connection to the parish by depicting historic versions of the church.

Earlier this year, Father Scheidt told St. Vincent de Paul parishioners that he was convinced the Oratory of St. Mary Magdalene would be a place where many of the painful divisions of the Reformation will be bridged, misunderstandings corrected, and long-standing wounds healed.

"In welcoming both Catholics and all non-Catholic Christians to a place of silent prayer saturated in and surrounded by the Biblical witness, Jesus Christ will be worshipped and adored in a way that is both ancient and new."



The entryway of the oratory contains a mosaic of a vanquished serpent and the fruit Adam and Eve disobediendly seized. Stepping on the serpent's head upon entering symbolizes one's renewed access to Christ, which was gained by His suffering, death and resurrection.

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Trier's Catholic cathedral becomes center of mourning after SUV attack

BERLIN (CNS) — People gathered in Trier's cathedral the evening of Dec. 1 to pray for the victims of a lone attacker who plowed his SUV into Christmas shoppers, killing five people and seriously injuring about a dozen others. A 9-week-old baby and her father were among those who died; the mother and the family's 18-month-old were among the injured in the quaint pedestrian zone of Germany's oldest town. As Germany reacted with horror and shock, the people of Trier turned to their mostly Catholic faith. The fourth-century cathedral became the center of mourning. Bishop Stephan Ackermann of Trier said he was "deeply shocked by the amok run that happened virtually on our doorstep." The cathedral and bishop's residence are only a few yards away from the path the perpetrator's vehicle took. The cathedral was opened for prayer, while an Easter candle was placed in front of the altar. Emergency chaplains were on duty. Other churches around Trier held small prayer services.

Like parents, God loves His children even at their worst, pope says

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — While sin may distort and disfigure the image of Christ that every person bears, it does not completely erase it, nor does it remove people from God's abundant mercy, Pope Francis said. At his weekly general audience Dec. 2, the pope said that even when a sinner remains "in error for a long time," God waits patiently, "hoping that the sinner's heart will eventually open and change." "God is like a good father and a good mother. They never stop loving their child, no matter what he or she may have done wrong," the pope said during the audience, which was livestreamed from the library of the Apostolic Palace. While continuing his series of talks on prayer, Pope Francis also offered prayers for the victims of a terrorist attack Nov. 28 in Nigeria; 43 farmers near the northeastern city of Maiduguri were brutally murdered. Remembering the victims, the pope prayed that God would "welcome them in His peace and comfort their families and convert the hearts of those who commit such horrors, which seriously offend His name."

'Let my people worship,' archbishop says after California church decision

WASHINGTON (CNS) — In response to the Supreme Court's Dec. 3 order saying federal judges

Former ND coach awarded Medal of Freedom



CNS photo/Jonathan Ernst, Reuters

President Donald Trump congratulates retired University of Notre Dame football coach Lou Holtz after awarding the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Holtz, 83, in the Oval Office at the White House in Washington Dec. 3. Holtz coached the Irish from 1986-96.

should take another look at pandemic limits on California churches, San Francisco's archbishop said: "The time is overdue for our civil officials to work with us and other churches on worshiping safely." "Catholics need the body and blood of Christ this Christmas, in California as everywhere else. And they have every right to access it," said Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone in a statement issued late Dec. 3. The court's decision was based on its Nov. 25 ruling to lift similar restrictions on congregations in New York due to the pandemic. For now, the unsigned order leaves the state restrictions on indoor worship in place, but it sends the challenge, issued by the California's Harvest Rock Church and Harvest International Ministry, an apostolic Christian church in Pasadena, back to a lower court. This court will likely stop the state's governor from prohibiting most indoor religious services. This summer, California's Gov. Gavin Newsom issued restrictions prohibiting most indoor religious services in California counties that have experienced a surge in coronavirus cases and hospitalizations.

Pope marks anniversary of U.S. churchwomen's murder in El Salvador

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Remembering the three U.S. religious women and a laywoman brutally murdered during El Salvador's civil war, Pope Francis hailed them as examples of faith and missionary discipleship. Before concluding his weekly general audience Dec. 2, the pope commemorated the 40th anniversary of the death of the four American missionaries: Maryknoll Sisters Maura Clarke and Ita Ford, Ursuline Sister Dorothy Kazel and lay missionary Jean Donovan. "With evangelical commitment and taking great risks, they brought food and medicine to displaced people and helped the poorest families," he said. "These women lived their faith with great generosity. They are an example for all to become faithful missionary disciples." The December 1980 murder of the four missionaries capped a deadly year for the Catholic Church in El Salvador. In March of that same year, St. Oscar Romero, then-archbishop of San Salvador and a critic of the right-wing govern-

ment's use of violence and torture in the country, was murdered while celebrating Mass.

Italian bishops say 'midnight Mass' must end before 10 p.m. curfew

ROME (CNS) — As rumblings and grumblings grew in the press and on social media, the permanent council of the Italian bishops' conference met to discuss the problem of Christmas "midnight Mass" when the government has imposed a 10 p.m. curfew as part of its measures to slow the spread of the coronavirus. Since late November, bishops, theologians and others have pointed out that what commonly is called "midnight Mass" is liturgically called "Mass during the night" and that anticipating its celebration, even by several hours, will not ruin Christmas. But the controversy continued. The bishops' permanent council met online Dec. 1 to discuss the issue. In a statement the next day, they emphasized "the necessity to determine the beginning and the length of the celebration at a time compatible

with the curfew." As of Dec. 2, the Vatican had not announced the time of Pope Francis' Christmas Mass Dec. 24, although there were rumors that it would begin at 7:30 p.m. so that the few people allowed to attend could be home before 10 p.m. Already in October, the Vatican had announced that the liturgy would not be open to the public but would be broadcast and livestreamed.

Bethlehem at Christmas: Unemployment can mean choosing food or medicine

BETHLEHEM, West Bank (CNS) — As the Christmas approaches, Franciscan Father Rami Asakrieh of St. Catherine Parish said he has been overwhelmed with requests for help — people have been out of work and with no income for almost nine months. He often continues receiving families needing money for food, medicine and rent into the evening, he said. "This is worse than the intifada," said Father Asakrieh, referring to the Palestinian uprising and echoing a refrain heard often these days. "During the intifada, the Palestinians had problems, but the world ... sent them donations. Now you can't ask for donations." "This year the spirit of Christmas we will concentrate less on the outside (trappings) of the holiday and more on the spiritual manifestations of Christmas," he said. The COVID-19 pandemic has struck especially hard in Bethlehem, where the economy is largely dependent on tourism. Bethlehem Mayor Anton Salman said Dec. 2 that almost 7,000 people involved in the tourism sector are out of work because of the pandemic.

Pope: Make your heart accessible to people with disabilities

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Marking the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, Pope Francis again insisted that all Catholics with disabilities have a right to receive the sacraments, and he suggested that Catholic parishes make real efforts to welcome and train persons with disabilities to serve as catechists. "Creating a fully accessible parish requires not only the removal of architectural barriers, but above all, helping parishioners to develop attitudes and acts of solidarity and service toward persons with disabilities and their families," the pope said in his message, published Dec. 3. For the Church, he said, "our aim should be to speak no longer about 'them,' but rather about 'us.'" The U.N. theme for the 2020 celebration of the international day was "Building Back Better: Toward a disability-inclusive, accessible and sustainable post COVID-19 world."

Spanish-language faith formation program begins Jan. 9

MISHAWAKA — A free monthly program of evangelization and faith formation will begin Jan. 9, offered by the Office of Hispanic Ministry of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. The sessions will be conducted in Spanish, and all Spanish-speakers are invited to join in.

The sessions will take place both virtually, on Facebook Live, and in person from 9:30 a.m. to noon the second Saturday of each month. Those who would like to attend in person at St. John the Evangelist Parish, Goshen, must preregister by Jan. 2. Space is limited for in-person participation so that social distancing can take place.

Each session will include a main topic, tips on methodology, personal reflection and group dialogue. The topics include: Who is Jesus? What is discipleship? How do I discern my gifts and talents? Other topics will be prayer, spiritual healing, new life in Christ, biblical foundations, pastoral leadership and more.

For more information, or to register, contact Kristah Quijada at 574-234-0687 or kquijada@diocesefwsb.org, or visit diocesefwsb.org/discipulos-en-mision.

AROUND THE DIOCESE

Holiday tournament champs



Provided by Lois Widner

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School's fifth grade boys basketball team earned the top honor in a Thanksgiving Tournament sponsored at the school over the holiday weekend. A total of five Catholic schools participated: St. Charles Borromeo, Fort Wayne; St. Vincent de Paul, Fort Wayne; St. John the Baptist, New Haven; St. John the Baptist, Fort Wayne; and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Fort Wayne.

Christmas Masses livestreamed from St. Meinrad

ST. MENIRAD — While the St. Meinrad Archabbey Church remains closed to the public during the COVID-19 pandemic, all are welcome to pray with the Benedictine monks as the Christmas services are livestreamed at saintmeinrad.org/live. The schedule of services is on Central Time.

Christmas Eve, Thursday, Dec. 24: Daily Mass 7:30 a.m., vespers 5 p.m., Christmas Eve Mass 10 p.m.

Christmas, Friday, Dec. 25: Mass of Christmas Day 10:30 a.m., vespers 5 p.m.

Feast of St. Stephen, Saturday, Dec. 26: Mass 9:30 a.m., vespers 5 p.m.

New Year's Day, Friday, Jan. 1: Mass for the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God 9:30 a.m., vespers 5 p.m.

Mass is livestreamed each day in the Archabbey Church, at 7:30 a.m. Monday through Saturday and at 9:30 a.m. on Sundays and feast days.

New books for teens, kids focus on morality, Bible, Jesus

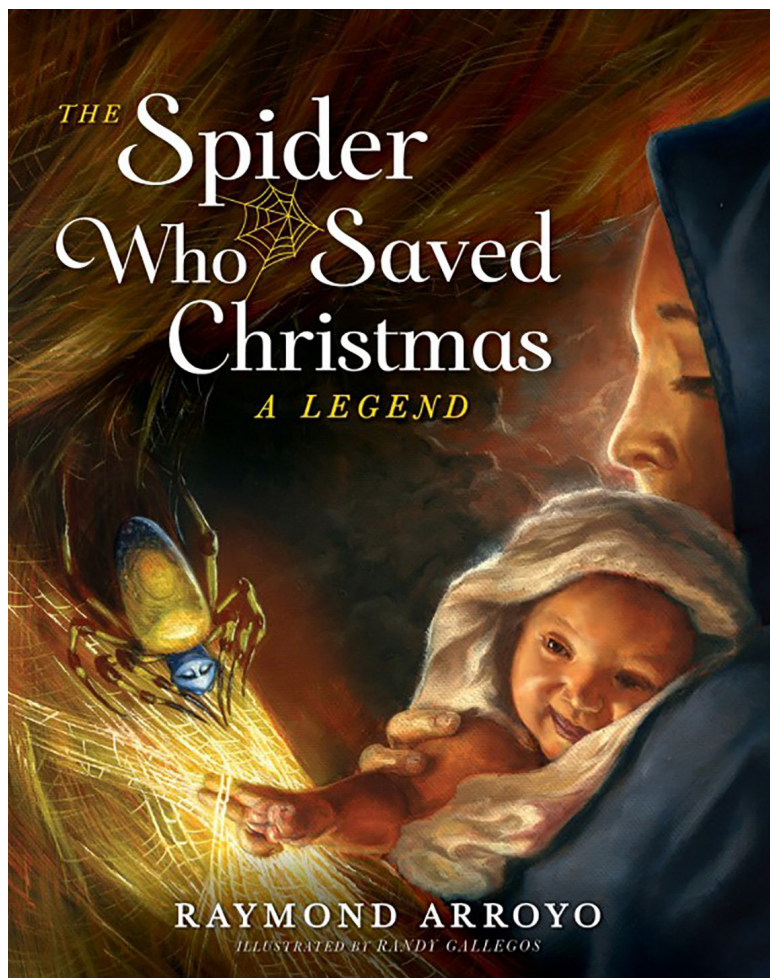
BY REGINA LORDAN

YARDLEY, Pa. (CNS) — The following books are suitable for Christmas giving.

"The Spider Who Saved Christmas: A Legend" by Raymond Arroyo, illustrated by Randy Gallegos. Sophia Institute Press (Manchester, New Hampshire, 2020) 38 pp., \$17.95.

Every so often a Christmas book stands out among the rest. "The Spider Who Saved Christmas" is not only the charming retelling of the legendary origin of tinsel, but it also gives readers a renewed opportunity to know and appreciate the trials the Holy Family faced after Jesus' birth. This is the tale of how a spider, both feared and fearful herself, saved the baby Jesus from King Herod's murderous soldiers with her intricate web. This also is a story of a gentle Mary, the watchful Joseph and the baby they all work to protect. The pictures beautifully illustrate the wonder of God's design in creation. Ages 4-10.

"Marian Consecration for Families With Young Children" by Colleen Pressprich, illustrated by Rebecca Gorzynska. Our Sunday Visitor (Huntington, Indiana, 2000). 95 pp., \$18.95.



CNS photo/courtesy Sophia Institute Press

This is the cover of the book "The Spider Who Saved Christmas: A Legend," by Raymond Arroyo, illustrated by Randy Gallegos. The book is reviewed by Regina Lordan.

Uniquely geared toward younger children, this Marian consecration preparation helps families build their domestic church by learning about Mary's role in a Catholic's journey toward knowing and loving Jesus. This 33-day guide helps set an easy-to-achieve routine and ritual introducing children to one of the many rich traditions of the Catholic faith. The lessons and conversation-starter questions are easy to understand but also deeply anchored in church teaching. The illustrations are compelling, welcoming each child to know that Mary is a universal mother to all. In one depiction, Mary is dark, with thick lips and curly hair. In another, her hair is covered, her eyes tearful. In others, Mary looks young and fair. The illustrations, which are inspired by famous art and Mariology, are part of the daily discussions. Parents will be fully prepared to lead these daily readings thanks to the extensive and user-friendly guides. Ages 4 and up.

"Hope Upon Impact: A Miraculous True Story of Faith, Love and God's Goodness" by Julie Overlease. Paradete Press (Brewster, Massachusetts, 2020). 221 pp., \$19.99.

"Hope Upon Impact" is the uplifting true story of how a nearly fatal accident simultaneously spins a family into tragedy

while launching friends into action. Written by the young survivor's mother, the book is at its core about the power of and gratitude for God's presence during life's scariest moments. Mothers and daughters particularly will appreciate this story of familial love and the value of true friendships. All readers will applaud the much-needed messages of Christian hope. Ages 13 and up.

"The Adventures of Loupio: Volume 5, The Cave" by Jean-Francois Kieffer. Magnificat (New York, 2020). 44 pp., \$6.99.

The fifth in a series, this is the story of an orphaned boy named Loupio who witnesses the broad impact of sin, conversion and forgiveness in his most recently published adventures. A friend of St. Francis of Assisi and his wolf, the young Loupio will take readers on an exciting journey. A cognizant audience will not only easily pick up on the Christian message of redemption, they also will note all the examples of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy displayed throughout. The graphic novel series will hook readers with its high-quality storyline and pictures, as well as bonus add-ons such as coloring pages and sheet music. Ages 7-10.

BOOKS, page 14

Catholics, Methodists work together to feed community

BY JENNIFER BARTON

Just west of Fort Wayne is the small community of Arcola. It may be something less than a one-stoplight town, but the community boasts a heart larger than its borders.

Since October, St. Patrick Parish in Arcola has been the site of a weekly Farmers to Families food distribution initiative. Farmers to Families is a government program that began this year as a part of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act to aid those who have found themselves in need due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A representative of a ministry in New York state who had been tasked with distributing the food boxes contacted Nikki Marker, co-pastor of Arcola United Methodist Church, to ask if she would like to have a truckload of food to distribute in her community.

Marker knew that the most convenient delivery spot in the community was St. Patrick. The parking lot is situated along Arcola Road, the main street, and has easy access via two entrances. And St. Patrick had already successfully hosted its annual fish fry as a drive-thru option, so she knew it was a viable location for food pickup.

She enlisted the aid of Sally Strack, a longtime parishioner at the church. The two volunteer together in the local thrift store. Through word of mouth and emails sent out by the St. Patrick parish secretary, Patti Denihan, a group of volunteers quickly gathered to help tote the first round of delivery boxes.

"Just like the fish fry, people have come out of the woodwork to help," Strack remarked.

Word got around. Volunteers from St. Patrick and Arcola United Methodist were joined by volunteers from other organizations, such as the Arcola Volunteer Fire Department and Carroll High School's Future Farmers of America chapter. A handful of volunteers even loaded up their vehicles and distributed boxes to people who cannot leave their homes and to workers at the retirement homes near the church.

The boxes consist of 35 pounds of food, mostly dairy products and produce, which Marker and Strack believe contained roughly \$50 worth of food. Strack reported that on delivery days people often began lining up nearly two hours in advance, and those who come range in age from elderly people to young families. They were encouraged to take a box for themselves and one for someone else.

"It's for everyone, it's not just if you're in dire need. Everybody needs milk. I don't know a family who doesn't," Strack stated. "Some of them get more than one box ... they may have a huge family or they're giving it



Photos by Jennifer Barton

Volunteers in the small community of Arcola help load boxes of food into the backs of vehicles in the parking lot of St. Patrick Nov. 21. The boxes are part of a coronavirus relief program called "Farmers to Families."



to neighbors, so we want them to take them and give one away. We kind of worked with that premise from the beginning, so it works out for the good."

"It's been a blessing to be a blessing," Marker added.

While there were additional locations in the Fort Wayne area earlier in the year, the ladies speculate that St. Patrick is probably the only one that continued into the third wave of distribution, which must be completed by the end of the year. Arcola has already completed one set of six truck deliveries and is in the middle of another set.

The Strack family has been a huge part of this service. Sally's daughter Sarah and her twin

teenagers have been out helping load boxes.

"It's amazing because we're helping the people who need help through this hard time right now and through the holiday season," Sarah commented.

Sarah is involved in the life of the parish as part of the flower committee, too. "I help wherever I'm needed." She is proud of the contribution her family has made to assist the community, noting that she had many nieces and nephews come out to help on various days. Anybody who wanted to help was more than welcome.

Another parishioner at St. Patrick, Coleen Loeffler, also brought her family out to assist.



At right, a man directs cars leaving the parking lot after receiving their boxes. The volunteer force was made up of parishioners of St. Patrick along with members of Arcola United Methodist Church, the local volunteer fire department and other groups from town.

Her daughter needed service hours for confirmation, so they chose to take the opportunity to help others at the same time.

"It was really touching to be able to provide food for some of the people who came through, and they were so appreciative," she said. "I was really overwhelmed by how many cars were lined up when we arrived 30 minutes before it was supposed to start. Based on that, there seems to be a large demand for these type of food distribution days."

On a recent distribution day, the line of cars stretched all the way down a country road, through town and out the other side, but the volunteers were not intimidated. With some of them directing cars into two drive-up lanes and others distributing boxes to multiple vehicles at one

time, they were able to move the line along quickly. Two neighbors even loaned their forklifts to aid in unloading the truck and bringing pallets of food boxes from the back of the parking lot to the front when supplies ran low.

It has truly been a community effort. "This is Arcola serving the world," said Marker.

Those who came out to help benefitted as much as those receiving the necessities. Loeffler stated, "I'm thankful that we were able to be a part of it and hope we can help again."

The community expected to complete one additional delivery before the end of the year. That date was Saturday, Dec. 5, and almost certainly saw the same level of service to supply food to the long lines of people in need.

Sharing 'the most beautiful message in human history'

BY JENNIFER BARTON

Spreading the Gospel message in a changing world requires innovation and creativity. With increasing numbers of the population in the U.S. no longer claiming a religious denomination, ministries such as Redeemer Radio must seek new methods of reaching out to these people, especially the younger generations.

This year, Redeemer Radio began testing these new methods and will continue to institute changes in the new year. Cindy Black, executive director of Redeemer Radio, addressed some of those changes.

Black stated that in the past, the great need in Catholic radio was to teach apologetics so that the average Catholic could defend the faith against Protestant objections. That mission has morphed into finding a way for Catholics to share "with a secular world why we have hope, why we affirm the dignity of every human person, why we are involved in politics and issues of justice," said Black.

She described what she called "the new apologetics" as demonstrating to young people who feel left out of the Church that they do belong to the family of God and His Church on earth; that Catholicism goes beyond a set of rules to knowing the love of Christ; and taking His love to others.

"We're really hoping to help our listeners see what that looks like; that every person is on their unique journey to God. We want to journey with them wherever they are and accompany them, which is what Pope Francis has built his pontificate on. We want to accompany them along the way."

To do this and to better utilize airtime and listeners' support, Redeemer Radio plans to broadcast various podcasts in the morning, hoping to catch new listeners who are driving to work or school each day. To bring these podcasts to radio audiences the station will open up the 8 a.m.-1 p.m. time slot, melding podcasts of different lengths together to create a cohesive lineup that fits the allotted time frame.

The advantage of using podcasts over traditional radio programs is that podcasts are not limited to the hour or half-hour time frame to which live airtime restricts a show, which can either force a host to continue talking beyond what is necessary or cut time short even if a topic is not fully covered. In podcasts, only the amount of time needed to discuss the topic thoroughly is required, thereby shaving unnecessary filler while allowing enough time for a comprehensive conversation.

In a nutshell, "There's a lot of really great content that



Photos by Jennifer Barton

Cindy Black, executive director of Redeemer Radio, and Steve Niemoeller, director of IT and platform partnerships, converse in the station's newly renovated studio. The renovations are not the only change coming to Redeemer Radio: The station looks to change its programming lineup and format to reach a wider audience.

isn't making it to Catholic radio because of the time constraints that traditional radio has," Black explained. "So many people are attracted to podcasts because you get the good content without all the extra stuff."

Some of Redeemer Radio's preferred podcasts are produced by Catholic News Agency, such as "CNA Newsroom" and "CNA Editor's Desk." These focus on current events and feature different guests and topics relevant to the season.

Many familiar programs will remain in the lineup, however, to help listeners deepen their faith life and learn more about the truths of Catholicism. "We are making sure there's a balance of good instructional programming. We hear from both strong, faithful Catholic listeners and seekers that 'Called to Communion' and 'Catholic Answers' really do strengthen their faith but also answers those questions they have."

Local programs listeners have become familiar with, such as "Truth in Charity with Bishop Rhoades" and "Doctor, Doctor," will remain in the noontime position — though these could start a few minutes later on various days, depending on the run time of previous podcasts.

Redeemer Radio hopes to launch the new podcast blocks on Jan. 4. Black recommended that listeners "give it a bit of a

chance; the Holy Spirit might be leading them in a way that they haven't been led by other programming."

Adjustments at the station have been underway since Kyle Heimann announced he was taking a leave of absence this summer to pursue a potential ministry for Catholic Creatives. Instead

of "The Kyle Heimann Show" in the mornings, "The Daily Refill," produced by Andrea Serrani, has been broadcast in that time slot.

"The Daily Refill" is a mix of local interest pieces blended with programs that target a broader audience, such as "The Messy Family Project," with Mike and Alicia Herson, covering topics on

family life; and "Ask Christopher West," which focuses on Theology of the Body questions. Serrani links common topics, keeping the day's theme relevant to the time of year or current events to create an hour-long show. After an episode airs, she posts it to the Redeemer Radio website each day for those who want to go back and listen on their own time.

"That's kind of a sample prototype of what's to come in some of the other podcast blocks," Black noted.

As for the question of Heimann's return, Black was pleased to report that he is still a part of the Redeemer Radio ministry and currently produces seven podcasts a week.

In the future, Black hopes to see Redeemer Radio become a source for relevant, well-produced and, most importantly, faithful Catholic content even beyond the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend.

"Redeemer Radio is expanding. God is calling us to try some different things with the radio towers, and we have a really engaged Catholic audience that give us feedback so we want to be able to test some of these shows and see what people want more of. But we also see ourselves growing."

She expects the station's own growth to encourage the spiritual growth of both Catholics and non-Catholics alike, helping them to "recognize that longing; that God-shaped hole in our hearts, which can only be filled through Him."

"We want to bring to the radio stories of that self-reciprocal love that we all long for, in hopes that we all grow closer to Christ."



Podcasts attract listeners in the Millennial and Zoomer age bracket. Redeemer Radio hopes to reach out them through its new lineup of morning podcast blocks.

Christmas tradition lives on for Eastern European descendants

BY JENNIFER BARTON

Bread has great significance in a Catholic household. Jesus called himself the “Bread of Life.” He was born in a town named after the dietary staple. (Bethlehem meaning “house of bread.”)

Catholics break bread at Mass, but some Catholics break bread on Christmas Eve. The traditional Polish meal called “wigilia,” which is eaten late on Christmas Eve, involves sharing the “opłatki,” a custom carried on by many families in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend.

An “oplatek” wafer — *opłatki* is the plural form, in the Polish language — is roughly index card-sized, made of only flour and water and similar to a communion wafer. They are typically embossed with a Christmas scene such as the Nativity.

Opłatki usually come four in a package: three white and one pink. In olden days the pink one was meant for the household animals, though this is not always followed in modern times, particularly for city-dwelling families who do not own livestock. According to the Polish Women’s Alliance of America, one who is pure of spirit is able to hear animals who have consumed the opłatki speak at midnight.

Several parishes in the South Bend area were founded by Polish immigrants, including St. Hedwig, St. Casimir and St. Adalbert.

Mary Ann Sommers is a life-long member of St. Casimir. Both sides of her family boast Polish ancestry, and her memories of the Christmas tradition go back “as far as I can remember,” she said.

On Christmas Eve in Polish households, the family gathers for the wigilia, in which the table is set with a white cloth and a place setting is left for the Christ Child. Sommers has been told that her “busia,” or “grandmother,” used to put hay underneath the table for the animals present at the Nativity, though Sommers has no memory of this.

At the beginning of the meal, the family breaks and shares the opłatki. She described the tradition as wishing others around the table well for the coming year; that they “always have food throughout the year.”

Sommers believes that while some other Polish traditions may be limited in practice among those of the ancestry, sharing the opłatki is fairly universal and practiced throughout the U.S. St. Casimir and St. Adalbert parishes announce when the wafers are available to purchase and they sell out every year. When people travel to relatives’ homes for the holidays, they take the tradition with them.

Her own two children are grown and she expects they will



Photos provided by Kathy Fech

“Opłatki” bread wafers are part of a traditional Eastern European Christmas Eve celebration, symbolizing the eucharistic feast and offering loved ones well wishes for the upcoming year. The practice is widespread in Polish, Slovak and Lithuanian countries, and the style of the meal varies little among these ethnic groups.

continue to carry on the custom. Her son particularly enjoys it and eats any of the leftover pieces of opłatki.

There are certain prayers to be said with the breaking of the opłatki, sometimes in the native Polish. Since Sommers’ grandmother died when she was young, the spoken prayers are now forgotten — though the tradition lives on. “I wish I knew more of the language. ... I kind of get the gist when people speak it.”

Those of Polish ancestry are not the only ones who maintain the tradition. It is popular in Lithuania, Latvia and Slovakia as well. Dennis Fech, a member of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Fort Wayne, traces his ancestry back to the Carpatho-Rusyn peoples, a minority population near the Carpathian Mountains of Slovakia where he still has distant relatives. He was born into the Byzantine Rite, though his father changed from Eastern Rite Catholicism to the Roman Rite.

For the Feches, Slovak culture has been a part of family life, including the tradition of breaking “opłatki,” as it is spelled in Slovak, on Christmas Eve. In Slovak the meal is called “vilija” or “stedry vecer.” In Lithuanian, it is known as “kucios.”

He explained the custom in his own family. “Going back, there’s a whole traditional menu that is served on Christmas Eve and that’s kind of what we try and follow. We don’t do everything that I had growing up, partially because the new generations don’t care for much of what we had traditionally.”

The meal is typically meatless, as a part of the long-lost tradition of fasting during Advent. Reading from a Slovak cookbook from a previous parish, he pointed to many of the foods



“We share the holy wafers. Through this sharing we are God bound to forgive each other all the wrongs, real and imagined, which have been committed through the year ... and promise never to return to them. Only then do we have a valid sharing of the holy wafers. As Christ forgives us, so we forgive each other. Then Bethlehem, the House of Bread, where the True Bread from heaven was born, is born from above, among us, in us. For this reason the Christmas wafer is called the “Bread of Unifying Love.”

—from the back of Opłatki packages

that are still part of the Fech family meal, such as “bobalki,” a sweet bread soaked in milk, and poppy seeds, mushroom soup and smoked fish. Stewed prunes are no longer on the menu.

His children and grandchildren still look forward to the meal. “It’s just something to hold on and grasp and have a humble meal ... It’s in preparation for the coming of our Lord. That’s really what we’re preparing for.”

In common practice, the wigilia

table is set with a blessed candle at the center to symbolize the Star of Bethlehem and Christ as

“I wish you much happiness, and good fortune, and after this life an eternal crown in heaven.”

TRADITIONAL OPLATKI CHRISTMAS BLESSING

the Light of the world. The Fech family candle has the Eastern cross engraved on it. The meal is supposed to take place after the first star appears in the night sky and is often followed up by singing Christmas carols until midnight Mass.

Before the meal comes the opłatki. Each member of the family is given a wafer, “but we break it and pass a piece to the person

sitting next to us. And then it’s served with honey,” he said.

Fech is certain his is not the only family in Fort Wayne that practices the opłatki tradition, because many participate in other Eastern European traditions in the Catholic community.

As people continue to relocate from state to state or city to city, they bring their family’s culture with them. Father Timothy Wrozek, pastor of Immaculate Conception in Auburn, is of Polish ancestry and has worked to keep this tradition alive in the parishes he has served. “I used to give opłatek wafers to people when I was down in Wabash and at St. Charles.”

His memories of Christmas Eve include a white cloth in the center of the table covered with straw and opłatki sitting atop the straw. He explained that custom is very eucharistic; that it symbolizes the breaking of the bread and sharing it with others, even strangers, if any are present at the meal.

In his own family, he expects the tradition will die out simply because family members cannot find the wafers locally. He bought them from Detroit and said that sometimes family members and friends send opłatek to each other, similar to the sending of Christmas cards.

Father Wrozek told of how he used to buy the wafers in boxes of 100, put them in envelopes with the instructions for the associated ritual, and distribute them to people at St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Fort Wayne when he was associate pastor there. Those who received them would give a small donation, though he never charged for the wafers. “Fifty or sixty people of Polish descent heard I did that,” he commented. “I always ran out.”



Provided by Stephen Horton

Seven South Bend-area seminarians visit with the Comeau family Dec. 2 after caroling at the family's home. Seminarians Holden Berg and Stephen Horton came up with an idea to offer Christmas caroling this year to demonstrate their appreciation for the support members of the Catholic community have provided them during their discernment process.

Seminarians give the gift of song

BY JENNIFER BARTON

Christmas caroling is mostly a thing of the past, a nostalgic practice of bygone days when carolers dressed in Victorian costumes and sang songs like “Good King Wenceslas.” But this year the “Christmas Caroling Seminarians,” as they call themselves, are reviving the tradition on the South Bend side of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend.

Holden Berg and Stephen Horton came up with the idea as a way to show their appreciation for the people who have supported them throughout their discernment process. “The seminarians all care about those within our home parishes and the diocese who have been a bright light in our discernment of the priesthood,” said Berg.

The idea took root separately among the men, yet together. Horton explained: “I was actually thinking about it and told myself ‘I don’t think the guys would be into it’ ... and as it was on my mind, Holden said ‘hey, what do you think about this?’”

It felt like more than a coincidence to Horton, who was reassured that the other seminarians would support the effort. “So we just kind of hashed out what it would look like from there.”

Even though they would have to split their time between final exams that took place the week after Thanksgiving and enjoying their holiday break, five other seminarians jumped on board with the plan and were anxious to lift the spirits of those disheartened by the COVID-19 pandemic. “All the seminarians on the South Bend side of the diocese are excited to participate in this Advent cheer,” Berg remarked.

Horton has a background in music, performing in choirs

“This is a gift back to the diocese and specifically the people whom we are privileged to love in this life, hopefully — specifically — as priests.”

and bands since the third grade. Additionally, at least two of the other members of the Christmas Caroling Seminarians are musically talented. “Nick Monnin can automatically, off the top of his head, harmonize,” Horton said. “Brian Florian sang in the Mount St. Mary’s schola, and I know if I sing an upper harmony that he can just join me as well. So we’re able to add a little bit of musical complexity without necessarily a lot of extra effort.”

Though he typically refrains from singing sacred Christmas music prior to late Advent, which this year begins on Dec. 17, the selections Horton chose include a mix of the well-known secular and sacred Christmas tunes along with traditional Advent hymns.

Initially, Horton explained, the group wanted to continue caroling throughout the Christmas season. To ease that time commitment, they decided instead to make their caroling rounds on specific Monday and Wednesday evenings.

“Our marketing campaign consisted of creating a nostalgic and heartwarming flyer that parishes could easily put in their bulletin or on social media,” Berg stated. An advertisement tar-

geted the seminarians’ home parishes of St. Matthew Cathedral, St. Anthony de Padua and St. Jude in South Bend; St. Monica in Mishawaka; and St. Pius X in Granger. Berg is a member of St. Pius X and Horton is from St. Monica, both of which placed the ad in their bulletins asking

Seminarians was a local nursing home. The stop was especially meaningful for Horton, who declared he has a deep love for the elderly residents.

Going into the first round of caroling, the organizers had no idea how their audience would react. After the first successful night, Horton was pleased to say that “I could not have planned for it to go so well ... People were ecstatic.” He was saddened that some of the nursing home residents for whom they had been scheduled to sing were not at their windows, but the seminarians performed anyway and others came to their windows to watch and listen instead. For him, the highlight of the evening

was when they arrived at the home of a woman who relies on a wheelchair for mobility and hasn’t been to church in some time, though she said she has been considering returning. A friend had arranged for the caroling. When the woman’s husband opened the door to the surprise, the woman began crying.

Berg also feels strongly about the blessing he is able to give to the people who have given so much to him and whose kindness he feels deeply.



interested parishioners to call the church office to request a caroling appointment.

St. Monica parish secretary Katie Rohrer reported that parishioners responded well. She scheduled several of the seminarians’ engagements, including their final stop of the first night — pastor Father Jacob Meyer’s residence, where he would provide them with dinner.

One of the first locations set to experience the musical stylings of the Christmas Caroling

“This is a gift back to the diocese and specifically the people whom we are privileged to love in this life, hopefully — specifically — as priests.”

Another aspect of the initiative that Berg and Horton appreciate has nothing to do with singing, however. It has been the collaboration between the two. Horton credits their “utter complementarity and set of skills” in bringing it all together. While Berg, who is more analytical, handled the organizational and logistical details, Horton brought musical experience to the table.

In a year with little to no singing praise to God in churches, Horton said: “I think everyone right now is thirsting to sing. Everyone just feels singing-deprived.” In the small town he grew up in he went caroling and has also done so a time or two with the St. Monica choir, but this time a little different.

“I think for me as a seminarian, it’s this opportunity to meet the people of God who you know are praying for you, who you’re going to have the delight of getting to know in the future. And even if you’re never assigned to their parish, as we pray for the Church, these are the people who may one day be Catholics in my diocese. My goal will be to serve them with my life.”

In fleshing out their plans, the men are evaluating whether caroling could become a yearly tradition for them and whether it could develop in the Fort Wayne area, too. “Coming away from the first night, it really is a low amount of effort for a high amount of return,” Horton stated. He feels “pretty resolute to continue in the years to come.”

The Christmas Caroling Seminarians have several more evenings of caroling scheduled, making the old custom new again and spreading Christmas joy to those they love.

Mary of Guadalupe, symbol of hope and renewal

The most popular Marian devotion among U.S. Catholics presently is the devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe. She is the most widely embraced Marian devotion in the entire American continent and perhaps the most revered religious icon in the world.

Although we could attribute her wide appeal to the fast-growing Hispanic population in our country — nearly half of all U.S. Catholics — Mary of Guadalupe has a special place in the hearts of Catholics from every culture, race and social location.

My first encounter with Our Lady of Guadalupe was at a very young age when I heard the story of her apparitions. The text is beautiful and enthralling. It tells a story in which the human and the divine intersect seamlessly, as in the best of the biblical stories.

A woman, “the Lady of Heaven,” appears to an indigenous man, Juan Diego, in the year 1531. She treats him with love and respect, something that the conquistadores denied to his people at a time of much violence and suffering. He listens yet feels unworthy of her words and the tasks she gives him.

She insists that he be her messenger to the ecclesial powers of the time. He doubts himself; she affirms him. He eludes her; she reaches out again. He does not seem to understand why she chose him; she suggests that he does not have to understand it all.

After several interchanges of trusting and loving words, he acquiesces. She wants a temple. He conveys the message and she gets her wish. In the meantime, a divine sign occurs. The image of a young, pregnant and indigenous-looking maiden is miraculously imprinted in his tilma (cloak). She stayed with him. She remains with us.

The story enjoys the characteristics of a true drama. A Christian drama, one of the first of this nature in the continent for which we have a record! As in the larger Christian story, at the end the poor are lifted up, the oppressed find freedom, life supersedes death, despair is conquered by hope.

There is no doubt in my mind that these characteristics, all present in the story of the apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe, explain why millions upon millions of people have embraced the devotion. They resonate with our daily human experience. We all are Juan Diego at some point.

Mary of Guadalupe is a powerful symbol of hope. I have seen this in the way many Catholics approach her story and venerate her image. She is a reminder that no matter how hard life is, God does not abandon us. God cares about the poor and downtrodden. As a pregnant woman, her body enshrines God’s ultimate hope for the world: Jesus Christ.

Mary of Guadalupe is a true symbol of renewal. At the time of her apparitions, the story goes,



JOURNEYING TOGETHER

HOSFFMAN OSPINO

precious birds sang and beautiful flowers blossomed out of season. In the Nahuatl tradition, the presence of flower and song signified creation: a new creation. Through her, God signaled a new beginning in which justice, friendship and love would prevail.

The year 2020 was a tough year, no doubt. The pandemic brought illness, pain, isolation, despair and death to many. Recent social tensions reopened wounds inflicted by racism and reminded us that this evil will remain with us until we really decide to confront it. Our communities ache with division as our political system withstands unprecedented tests.

God knows that we need hope and renewal. I turn first to Jesus and in doing so I turn to Mary of Guadalupe. As she promised to Juan Diego, she remains with us. I know she does.

Hosffman Ospino is professor of theology and religious education at Boston College.

Of mice and men: a saint for our times

“Synchronicity.” That’s the word one journalist used in a Nov. 3 Instagram post to describe the fact that Election Day fell on the feast day of St. Martin de Porres, the patron saint of social justice. It was a timely reminder, he felt, to vote with those ideals in mind, to imagine the kind of world the 17th-century Dominican lay brother was trying to bring about.

The icon caught my eye: a robed Peruvian man with a broom at his side and a mouse at his feet. I was intrigued. Who was this saint? And what could he teach us today?

I texted my aunt Jan, my own personal Catholic Wikipedia, who responded in minutes.

“I just finished a novena to St. Martin,” she wrote.

Now I was hooked.

After some reading, it became clear how uniquely suited this saint is for our times. St. Martin de Porres is the patron saint for public health workers, for multiracial people and for all those seeking racial harmony. If that doesn’t say 2020, I don’t know what does. All he’s missing is a Zoom app.

St. Martin was called an “illegitimate son,” born to a Spanish nobleman who quickly abandoned the boy and to a freed slave of African and Native descent. She did laundry to make ends meet but had to send him to foster care with a barber. The



TWENTY SOMETHING

CHRISTINA CAPECCHI

lonely child spent hours a night in prayer, a great solace.

St. Martin longed to enter religious life, but Peruvian law banned descendants of Africans and Native Americans from becoming full members of religious orders.

St. Martin was undeterred. There was another way, he learned. (There is always another way!) He could apply to become a Dominican volunteer — someone to do the grunt work.

At 15, the Dominican Convent of the Rosary in Lima accepted him as a servant boy, letting him to stay at the monastery and wear their habit. Just as his mother had done, St. Martin took on the laundry. He cleaned, managed the kitchen and worked as a barber.

After eight years of faithful service, St. Martin received incredible news: The prior had decided to turn a blind eye to the law and allow St. Martin to take his vows as a member of the Third Order of St. Dominic. He was scorned by some fellow

CAPECCI, page 13

The One who is to come is far mightier than we are



THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

MSGR. OWEN F. CAMPION

Third Sunday Of Advent John 1:6-8, 19-28

This weekend, the Church celebrates “Gaudete Sunday,” the name coming from the opening word of the Entrance Antiphon. In Latin, “gaudete” means “to rejoice.” Rejoicing is not indicated because Advent, and its stress on prayer and penance, is half completed, but rather because Christmas is nearer.

Another reason for rejoicing is that, hopefully, all feel closer to God as a result of observing Advent with prayer, reflection and penance. If we have used Advent as intended by the Church, we are nearer to a fuller

communion with the Lord, the “light of the world.”

The third part of Isaiah furnishes the first reading. When this passage was written, God’s people were weary and frustrated.

They, or their forebears, had undergone the humiliation, uncertainty and misery of exile in Babylon. When allowed finally to leave Babylon and return to their homeland, they understandably were overjoyed.

A sterile and parched land, hardly flowing with milk and honey, awaited them. Had God tricked them, providing for their release from Babylon only to subject them to worse trials at home? Did God even exist?

Typically for the third part of Isaiah, this reading glows with optimism. Whatever may be the reality of the moment, for those loyal to God, a wondrous future awaits.

St. Paul’s First Letter to the Thessalonians provides the second reading.

Belief in the Lord’s second coming, and impatience to see it occur, filled the first generations of Christianity. This reading well

catches this mood.

Longing for the second coming among the early Christians is not hard to explain. They had much to endure. Cruel, severe persecution had developed. The culture all around the Christians was hostile. Temptations to renounce the Gospel abounded.

Paul reassured the Christians of Thessalonica, urging them to be true to the Gospel. God, and God’s goodness, would one day prevail.

St. John’s Gospel is the source of the last reading. The reading is a story about John the Baptist, whose own identity puzzled many of his contemporaries. Some assumed that John was the Messiah. Others wondered if he were Elijah, or another prophet who had returned to earth.

Replying to these questions, John was very firm. Another would follow him, he insisted. John was to prepare the way for this future representative of God. John is not worthy even to untie the straps of His sandals.

Reflection

Priests may wear rose-colored vestments on this weekend, symbolizing the dark violet of Advent already being lightened by the forthcoming light of the Lord’s arrival in our souls.

Why rose? As day breaks, the sky does not suddenly change from black to brilliant gold. Light creeps over the horizon, its first rays rose, a blending of dark purple with gold.

In calling us to rejoice this Gaudete weekend, the Church either presumes that we have spent the weeks of Advent pondering within ourselves the meaning of salvation for us personally and individually, or it urges us to use the remaining time in this season to seek God with all our hearts.

Excitedly, the liturgy proclaims that when the Lord’s kingdom comes, how wonderful it will be. “Gaudete!” Rejoice! When the Lord’s kingdom comes, death and evil indeed will end.

Still, we voluntarily must turn to God, admitting God into our hearts. Necessarily, we wholeheartedly must reject our own sin.

Many influences will weaken our determination to reject sin. Holy resolve will require conviction, discipline and focus.

Always the good teacher, the Church, through this reading from John’s Gospel, instructs us to look for Jesus realistically, never creating our own false versions of the Messiah.

Repentance and rededication are hard, but the gold of the new day of Christ will reward our efforts. The remaining time of Advent gives us time to go to the light.

READINGS

Sunday: Is 61:1-2am 10-11 (Ps) Lk 1:46-50, 53-54 1 Thes 5:16-24 Jn 1:6-8, 19-28

Monday: Nm 24:2-7, 15-17a Ps 25:4-5ab, 6, 7bc, 8-9 Mt 21:23-27

Tuesday: Zep 3:1-2, 9-13 Ps 34:2-3, 6-7, 17-18, 19, 23 Mt 21:28-32

Wednesday: Is 45:6b-8, 18, 21c-25d Ps 85:9ab, 10-14 Lk 7:18b-23

Thursday: Gn 49:2, 8-10 Ps 72:3-4, 7-8, 17 Mt 1:1-17

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

Saturday: Jgs 13:2-7, 24-25a Ps 71:3-4a, 5-6b, 16-17 Lk 1:5-25

Doing some Advent spiritual work

We will never be adequately prepared for the coming of the Savior unless and until we feel in our bones that there is something we need to be saved from. If we don't require salvation, then Jesus devolves, very quickly, into one wise man among many, one more spiritual teacher in a long line of similar figures across space and time. The great and ancient Advent chant, "O come, O come, Emmanuel, / and ransom captive Israel, / that mourns in lonely exile here / until the Son of God appear," catches this fundamental Christian truth. Until we feel like prisoners held for ransom, men and women condemned to hopeless exile, we will not sing those words with anything even approaching conviction.

A passage from the 63rd chapter of the prophet Isaiah provides a series of images that help us to articulate this sense of being in desperate need of salvation. "Why," Isaiah laments, "do you let us wander, O Lord, from your ways?" The trope of the path is a common one in the Scriptures: there is a way that we are meant to walk in the spiritual order, and the vast majority of us tend to lose it.

There is a feeling that now only people of a certain age remember, and that is the sensation of being well and truly lost. I limit this to older folks, because today's hyper-sophisticated GPS tools usually permit us to find our destinations with ease. But prior to those wonderful gadgets, when we relied on maps or, more frequently, on directions scribbled on a piece of paper, we much more readily got lost. When I was about 17 and hence a very inexperienced driver, I was making my way through the streets of Chicago, looking for an expressway entrance. I managed to miss it, and in short order, as darkness was coming on, I realized, with a uniquely sinking sensation, that I didn't really know where I was or where I was going.

Dante's *Divine Comedy* commences with these lines: "Midway on the journey of our life / I woke to find myself alone and lost in a dark wood / hav-

ing wandered from the straight path." Even if you have found great success in your profession, and even if you are relatively satisfied in your relationships and your social standing, I would be willing to bet that, at the deepest level, you feel lost, and you don't really know where you are going. As Dante intuited, this insight often occurs when we are at midlife, but we all know the truth of it to varying degrees. As painful as it might be, move, this Advent, into that spiritual space. Feel what it's like to be off the path, disoriented. Then, you will be able to cry out for the one who said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." (John 14:6)

A second lament from the prophet Isaiah is this: "Why do you . . . harden our hearts so that we fear you not?" For the biblical authors, the heart is the seat of emotion, thought and action — the core of the personality. It is meant to be "soft" so that God might easily shape it according to His purpose. The hardened heart is like brittle, dry clay, which cracks and shatters at the merest touch of the divine potter. When we are obsessed by our own plans and projects, when we are preoccupied with the prerogatives of the ego, our hearts are hard.

In his Letter to the Galatians, St. Paul utters this ecstatic cry: "It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). This is the language of someone who has allowed his soft heart to be molded utterly by the Lord, who has exchanged the ego-drama for the theo-drama.

During Advent, we should inquire after the quality of our heart. How have we been resisting the manner in which God wants to shape us? Only those who know that they are hard-hearted truly long for the arrival of the Sacred Heart.

A third and final Isaian complaint is this: "Behold, you are angry, and we are sinful; all of us have become like unclean people." It is difficult to read any two pages of the Bible in succession, Old Testament or New, and not encounter a reference to the divine anger. It will simply not do to set this idea aside, as though it were an unfortunate



WORD ON FIRE

BISHOP ROBERT BARRON

holdover from a benighted time. But we must be careful not to emotionalize the reference so as to suggest that God flies, like a raging, dysfunctional father, into a fit of pique. I would suggest that the divine anger is a beautifully apt metaphor for God's passion to set things right. When sin and injustice deface the beauty of God's beloved creatures and produce deep unhappiness in them, God cannot hold Himself in. He rages, as it were, to rectify the situation.

Therefore, this Advent, we all ought to identify those actions and attitudes in us that rouse God's anger. I fully realize that the culture instructs us in a thousand ways to affirm our guiltlessness: "I'm okay, you're okay." But the Bible instructs us to admit to our "unclean-ness." Once again, this is not an exercise in psychologically debilitating self-reproach; it is a courageous willingness to offer our weakness to the divine physician. It is allowing the God of justice to set things right in us. Until we do this, we will never appreciate the One who said, "I have come to light a fire on the earth," (Luke 12:49) and who, in magnificently high dudgeon, turned over the tables in the temple.

So lest Christmas become one more blandly secular holiday, let us all do some real Advent work: come to grips with how lost we are, how hardened our hearts have become, how we have stirred up God's anger.

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

Amid this resurging virus, he calls us to persistence and prayer.

Perhaps the best response to our big problems is to focus more intensely on the little things. The littlest things. Now is a time to bolster our own domestic church, making like the "saint of the broom" — to fold the laundry, to talk to the mice and to pray without ceasing.

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

SCRIPTURE SEARCH®

Gospel for December 13, 2020

John 1:6-8,19-28

Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for the Third Sunday of Advent, Cycle B: the Baptist explains his identity. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

FROM GOD	TESTIFY	LIGHT
TESTIMONY	JOHN	JEWS
PRIESTS	LEVITES	TO ASK
DENY IT	ELIJAH	I AM NOT
PROPHET	ANSWER	CRYING OUT
STRAIGHT	ISAIAH	WATER
AMONG	WORTHY	BETHANY

JOHN SPEAKS

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

FEAST: DECEMBER 21
1521-1597

This doctor of the Church was born in Holland and studied canon law in Belgium before turning to the study of theology in Germany. He entered the Society of Jesus in 1543 and soon was a well-known preacher. He attended two sessions of the Council of Trent and was an important figure in the post-conciliar Catholic revival in Europe. As the Jesuit provincial in southern Germany, Austria and Bohemia, he started schools, colleges and seminaries, and is credited with keeping the southern German peoples Catholic.

CAPECCHI, from page 12

brothers, but unfazed. His dream had come true.

Over the decades, St. Martin devoted himself to work in the infirmary, being recognized for his care of the sick and credited for miracles. His gift was that he could see Jesus in anyone. He was a friend to the lowly and would even talk to the monastery mice.

Once, when an elderly beggar approached the convent, St. Martin gave the stranger his own bed. The man was nearly naked and covered in ulcers, but he looked like Jesus to St. Martin.

When a fellow Dominican reprimanded him, St. Martin responded: "Compassion, my dear brother, is preferable to cleanliness. Reflect that with a little soap I can easily clean my bed covers, but even with a torrent of tears I would never wash from my soul the stain that my harshness toward the unfortunate would create."

In these polarizing times, when wearing a mask is not merely a public health measure but a political statement, St. Martin speaks to us. He exhorts us stop judging our neighbors and our Facebook friends. He stands for compassion.

Nun, who claims 'divine help,' advances to final of MasterChef Brasil

BY LISE ALVES

SAO PAULO (CNS) — A Brazilian nun who has moved into the finals of a TV cooking show said she received "divine help" and prayed the entire time she was cooking.

The "divine help," she said, helped her notice that the shrimp she was supposed to cook were not deveined.

"If I had left them the way they gave them to me I would not have won," said Sister Lorayne Caroline Tinti, a member of the Sisters of Our Lady of Resurrection. She prepared shrimp stroganoff and tiramisu for the episode of MasterChef Brasil. Sister Lorayne is now scheduled to compete in the show's 2020 final contest at the end of December.

"Many people mentioned how calm I was throughout the episode, and I tell them it was because I was praying for Our Lord to help me get through it. That gave me confidence," Sister Lorayne told Catholic New Service.

Sister Lorayne said she learned to cook early, with members of her family.

"My mother, aunt and grandmother always cooked so I learned from them. My father also was interested in the preparation of food," she told CNS.

Her culinary skills, she noted, improved while living in the order's mission house in the state of Minas Gerais.

"We had a bakery there which the sisters ran, so I learned about making pastries and bread," she added.

While looking at her social media, Sister Lorayne came

across a call for participants for MasterChef Brasil and decided to register.

"I needed authorization and, at first, the mother superior was not very keen on me leaving the convent to go on TV, but the sisters here convinced her," she said with a chuckle.

Asked what motivated her to sign up for the contest, Sister Lorayne said the show gave her a chance to talk about the social projects that the sisters do with the elderly and children, and to encourage young people into looking to religious life as an option.

"After the show we had many lay persons call up asking how they could help our projects, and a few young people wanting to know more about religious life in general," she said.

But it was not only laypeople who reached out to Sister Lorayne after the cooking challenge: "I received calls congratulating me for my participation from many religious, including two bishops."

Asked about her favorite food to prepare, Sister Lorayne was quick to say eggplant.

"It is so versatile, you can fry it, you can bake it, you can grill it," she said.

Those who eat her meals, however, say she excels in pastries and deserts.

"Whenever there is a celebration, it is always 'let Sister Lorayne bake the cake,'" she said as she laughed.

Sister Lorayne said she does not know what the organizers will ask her to cook for the finals, but she is certain of two things: She will once again ask for divine help and will pray while cooking.



CNS photo/Carlos Reinis, courtesy BandTV

Sister Lorayne Caroline Tinti smiles while holding the trophy for her victory in the 17th episode of MasterChef Brasil Aug. 7. Sister Lorayne, a member of the Sisters of Our Lady of Resurrection, is now scheduled to compete in the show's 2020 final contest at the end of December.

BOOKS, from page 7

"Where Is the Baby King?" by Heather Henning and Alison Atkins. Pauline Books and Media (Boston, 2020). 21 pp., \$14.95.

Perfect for preschool-age children, the bright images and peek-a-boo flaps of "Where is the Baby King" will engage young readers from start to finish. Each page contains a flap covering a hidden picture that helps shape the story of Christmas. "What Did God Make?" is a companion to the aforementioned, this time a retelling of the Book of Genesis. But teachers and parents beware: Although the book is hardcover, the pages — however sturdy — are fragile. Ages 3-5.

"The Donkey's Journey" by Madeleine Carroll, illustrated by Annie Palmer. Isaiah Books (Little Bookham, United Kingdom, 2020). 34 pp., \$9.99.

Sometimes the simplest stories have the most impact, especially in this sensory overload world of virtual learning and media. "The Donkey's Journey" retells the story of Christmas with special appreciation for

the beast who carried the baby. Lightly brushed watercolor illustrations pair perfectly with the sweet story. Ages 2-5.

"A Child's Christmas ABC Book: Angels in the Air Arrayed" by Paul Thigpen, illustrated by John Folley. Tan Books (Charlotte, North Carolina, 2020) 32 pp., \$16.95.

The story of Christmas unfolds letter by letter in this alphabet book for young children. Though geared toward pre-readers, older generations will appreciate the traditional feel of the book. The quality of the text and intricate artwork will likely make it a Christmastime classic. Ages 3 and up.

"Saint Jose: Boy Christian Martyr" by Kevin McKenzie, LC. Ignatius Press (San Francisco, 2019). 181 pp., \$11.95.

"Saint Jose" is the inspiring story of a young boy who courageously felt called to fight for his country's religious freedom. Canonized in 2016 by Pope Francis, St. Jose left the comfort and safety of family to valiantly fight along his fellow Mexicans to end religious persecution. The story is both engaging and educa-

tional for readers. Author Father Kevin McKenzie researched Vatican and Mexican government sources for 10 years, giving readers a foundational understanding of the Cristeros and the anti-Catholic violence during that time. Ages 10 and up.

"Noah and the Ark" by Tomie de Paola. Magnificat (New York, 2020). 32 pp., \$12.99.

Although Tomie de Paola died in March, his storytelling and distinctly unique illustrations live on in this republishing of the original. Older generations might remember this book from their youth, fondly recalling the recognizable almond-shaped eyes and pastalike hair expected in de Paola's illustrations. Predictably ending with a rainbow, "Noah and the Ark" is a much-needed reminder of God's love. Ages 4-8.

"Be Yourself: A Journal for Catholic Boys" by Amy Brooks. Our Sunday Visitor (Huntington, Indiana, 2019). 91 pp., \$19.95.

Fans of "Be Yourself: A Journal for Catholic Girls" will be happy to know that author Amy Brooks has developed a new journal specifically for preteen and teen boys. Engaging, entertaining and rooted in the Catholic faith, this journal is jam-packed with high-quality images and activities. "Be Yourself" offers pages of opportunities for boys to reflect on their Catholic identity and God-given purpose, as well as ways to pray, be a good friend and become a virtuous and holy person. Ages 10-14.

Lordan, a mother to three young children, has master's degrees in education and political science and is a former assistant international editor of Catholic News Service. She currently teaches and is a court-appointed advocate for children in foster care.

Catholic Kid's Corner

"Let the little children come to me." Mt. 9:14

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

This week,
I will follow
Jesus by:

Write your commitment in the box above then color in the footprint each day you take that step to walk with Jesus!

Find other faith-based activities and printables posted at the beginning of each month at todayscatholic.org/kids

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and bring it to the bookstore for
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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.

Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe
ANGOLA — St. Anthony de Padua, 700 W Maumee St., will celebrate the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe with Mañanitas at 5 a.m. in the main church. A Mass at noon will follow. No fiesta will take place this year. Visit www.stanthonyangola.com or contact Patti Webster at 260-665-2259 for information.

Noche de Alabanza/ Night of Praise
MISHAWAKA — Join the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend's Hispanic Ministry and Santiago Fernandez on Tuesday, Dec. 15, from 7:30-8:30 p.m. for a Night of Praise in Spanish. The event is free and stream live through

Facebook @ministeriohispanofwsb with songs of worship and inspirational meditations. For information, visit diocesefwsb.org/hispanic-ministry or the Facebook page.

Belonging: Ministry with Persons with Disabilities meeting
FORT WAYNE — A Belonging meeting will be Tuesday, Dec. 15, from 7-8:15 p.m. at the Archbishop Noll Catholic Center, 915 S. Clinton St. (or via Zoom). The Office of Catechesis works to ensure meaningful participation for individuals with disabilities and their families in the life of the Church. Contact Allison Sturm at asturm@diocesefwsb.org or 260-

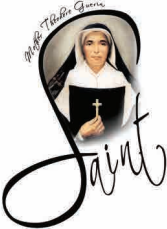
399-1452 to get the Zoom link or for any questions. Visit www.diocesefwsb.org/belonging.

Live drive-by Nativity
ANGOLA — A safe, socially distant Advent event has been planned by St. Anthony de Padua Parish, 700 W. Maumee St., on Sunday, Dec. 13, from 6-8 p.m. Visitors may remain in their cars and drive by the parish to see a live Nativity on the lawn facing Maumee Street. No admission will be charged.

Epiphany concert at St. Vincent de Paul
FORT WAYNE — An Epiphany Concert at St. Vincent de Paul Church, 1502 E Wallen Rd., will be Wednesday, Jan. 6, at 7 p.m. Members of the Fort Wayne Philharmonic will help celebrate the Christmas season with beautiful music. No charge to attend. This performance will also be streamed at saintv.org, YouTube and Facebook.


REST IN PEACE

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| Decatur
Simeon J. Hain, 98, St. Mary of the Assumption | Sai Somsavath, 78, St. Vincent de Paul | Patricia DeClercq, 92, St. John the Baptist |
| Theodore E. Loshe, 64, St. Mary of the Assumption | Henry J. Sorg, 87, St. Joseph - Hessen Cassel | Donald Grzegorek, 79, Holy Family |
| Fort Wayne
Edwin Boknecht, 96, St. Charles Borromeo | Lavon Sorg, 93, St. Charles Borromeo | Lawrence Hauguel, 79, Holy Family |
| Charles A. Colligan, 85, St. Vincent de Paul | Goshen
James P. Bopp Sr., 81, St. John the Evangelist | Cecelia Lowman, 100, St. John the Baptist |
| Gwyn Ditmars, 58, St. Jude | Adriana Mares Solano, 38, St. John the Evangelist | Cyril Matthys, 90, Holy Family |
| Tim Ellert, 64, St. Jude | Granger
Ailene Lardon, 95, St. Pius X | Steven Morrison, 71, Holy Family |
| Joan Haverstick, 82, St. Charles Borromeo | Mishawaka
Dolores Bankowski, 91, St. Monica | Harriet Piatkowski, 99, Holy Family |
| Nancy Kohr, 60, St. Jude | New Haven
Kyle M. Shanayda, St. John the Baptist | Waterloo
Agnes M. Fender, 84, St. Michael the Archangel |
| Adolf Nix, 92, St. Vincent de Paul | Arthur J. Wilder, 90, St. John the Baptist | Deaths elsewhere
Sister Mary Lee Mettler, SP, 88, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods |
| Enrique Olivas Q. Sr., 81, St. Patrick | South Bend
Margaret Balint, 78, Christ the King | Sister Mary is a Fort Wayne native |
| John S. Rose, 81, St. Vincent de Paul | | |
| Magdalen Simone, 92, St. Patrick | | |




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Livestream on Facebook
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