



TODAY'S CATHOLIC

People need God to have hope, pope says in new encyclical



CNS PHOTO/L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO VIA REUTERS

Pope Benedict XVI signs his encyclical, "Spe Salvi" (on Christian hope), at the Vatican Nov. 30.

BY JOHN THAVIS

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — In an encyclical on Christian hope, Pope Benedict XVI said that, without faith in God, humanity lies at the mercy of ideologies that can lead to "the greatest forms of cruelty and violations of justice."

The pope warned that the modern age has replaced belief in eternal salvation with faith in progress and technology, which offer opportunities for good but also open up "appalling possibilities for evil."

"Let us put it very simply: Man needs God, otherwise he remains without hope," he said in the encyclical, "Spe Salvi" (on Christian hope), released Nov. 30.

The 76-page text explored the essential connection between faith and hope in early Christianity and addressed what it called a "crisis of Christian hope" in modern times.

It critiqued philosophical rationalism and Marxism and offered brief but powerful profiles of Christian saints — ancient and modern — who embodied hope, even in the face of suffering.

The encyclical also included a criticism of contemporary Christianity, saying it has largely limited its attention to individual salvation instead of the wider world, and thus reduced the "horizon of its hope."

"As Christians we should never limit ourselves to asking: How can I save myself? We should also ask: What can I do in order that others may be saved?" it said.

It was the pope's second encyclical and followed his 2006 meditation on Christian love. He worked on the text over the summer during his stay in the Italian mountains and at his villa outside Rome.

The pope said the essential aspect of Christian hope is trust in eternal salvation brought by Christ. In con-

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Catholic Charities: Many ways to help refugees

BY DON CLEMMER

FORT WAYNE — As has been reported in this paper and the secular media, Catholic Charities is currently facing a huge influx of refugees from the country of Myanmar, formerly Burma. While these reports have informed the average person on the plight of the thousands of Burmese refugees in refugee camps in Thailand, one question that remains is what the average person can do to help this situation.

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend has offered several areas in which people who want to help both Catholic Charities and these refugees can do so.

Understanding the situation

The main difference between a refugee and an immigrant is that a refugee can not go home again. They have no home to return to.

Instead, they are sent by the State Department, usually only on a couple weeks notice, to Fort Wayne, where Catholic Charities must have housing waiting for them.

Supplies

Since the refugees have almost no possessions, Catholic Charities is responsible for essentially filling a completely empty house or apartment with basic furniture such as tables, chairs and beds, linens, towels, toilet paper, cleaning supplies, soap, dishes, pots and pans, and silverware and appliances such as toasters and can openers. Catholic Charities is always greatly in need of these supplies and will pick them up from a donor's home. Donations can also be dropped off at Catholic Charities at 315 E.

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BISHOP SIGNS BOOKS



TIM JOHNSON

Lines formed as Bishop John M. D'Arcy signed copies of "Worthy of the Gospel: A History of the Catholic Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend" at the Cathedral Bookstore in Fort Wayne on Saturday, Dec. 1. Bishop D'Arcy will be signing copies of the history book on Saturday, Dec. 15, from 12 to 1 p.m. at The Hammes Bookstore at the University of Notre Dame.

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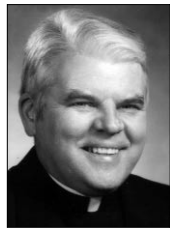
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John the Baptist models spirituality of ministry for all



NEWS
& NOTES

BISHOP JOHN M. D'ARCY

The season of Advent

In the beginning of this beautiful season, we meet the figure of St. John the Baptist. He seems severe as we hear of him in the Gospel for the Second Sunday of Advent. Perhaps not. After all, he called for conversion of heart. It is true that in Matthew's Gospel he referred to some of those who were following the great crowds as, "a brood of vipers." But his purpose was to open their hearts towards the one who was to come. John called for a change of heart, an inner renewal. The other thing that made John very attractive besides his courage, which was evident in the way he lost his life, is the fact that for the Baptist, it was clear that he was pointing to another. "I am not the One." "The One who is coming after me is mightier than I. I am not worthy to carry his sandals." This is a great lesson for all of us, and especially for those involved in some kind of ministry in the church. We hear much today about ministry. Perhaps not enough about the spirituality of ministry, whether of the ordained or the laity. John the Baptist is a great model for all of us. Whether we are ordained or doing a reading at Mass, or an extraordinary minister of the Eucharist or serving on a parish council or finance council or whether we have embraced the exemplary ministry of being a catechist, it requires a spirituality; namely, a time of prayer that we tell Christ that this is for him, and that we always wish to point to Christ and not to ourselves.

In the Gospel this Sunday, John asks us, "Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance." John the Baptist presents a hard saying, indeed, but a beautiful one. If embraced, it brings about peace because it helps us to be released from egotism and self-centeredness, which is the enemy of true ministry. I hope we will all hear his word and embrace it.

The sacrament of penance

Soon our priests will begin services of penance in various parishes. This week many of our priests will gather, and I will be with them, at St. Martin de Porres Parish, Syracuse, for a Day of Recollection, and we will all have the opportunity to receive the sacrament of penance. It has been encouraging to see how many have received the sacrament of penance during the Jubilee Year. Certainly the best preparation for the feast of Christmas is to confess

our sins, knowing that in the sacrament of penance Jesus Christ is the one to whom we confess through the priest, and he is the one who grants us forgiveness through the church, through the priest.

The signing of books

It is very encouraging to see the widespread interest in the history of our diocese. Entitled, "Worthy of the Gospel of Christ: the History of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend" by Joseph White, Ph.D, this book is being very well received. A grant from Our Sunday Visitor has made it possible, and I have felt an obligation to make it known. So, I was pleased this past Saturday morning to go to our wonderful new bookstore in the Archbishop Noll Catholic Center as promised at 11 a.m. To my delight and surprise there were about 20 people waiting for the bishop to sign the book. I must have signed 50 to 60 of these books, and I was kept busy for these two hours. It was also a chance to meet many people. We are just delighted with our Cathedral Bookstore and wish we had a similar initiative in South Bend. It draws so many people, and there is a real hunger for Catholic spiritual reading, and we are doing our best to respond to it. I am pleased that some of our parishes have now constructed libraries of Catholic books.

Also, on this coming Saturday, Dec. 15, I will be in The Hammes Bookstore on the grounds of Notre Dame to sign copies of

We must continue to open our hearts

this Advent, as Mary did,

and let us follow John the Baptist

— repent and change from within.

the history of the diocese. We are also making it available through the parishes.

An ecumenical event

For six years now we have gathered, both Catholics and Lutherans, in the Fort Wayne area on the first Sunday of Advent to sing vespers. It is a prayerful evening, and, despite a rainy, windy Sunday, Our Lady of Good Hope Church was nearly full. In a program led by my good friend, Bishop James Stuck and myself, we sang hymns of praise and gave thanks to God in a lovely evening prayer. The very fact that we are praying together is of the highest significance, and this is not lost on our people. Bishop Stuck longs for the day when we are able to receive the Eucharist together. For Catholics this requires a full unity of faith, because to receive the body and blood of Christ without full unity would be in

opposition to the very nature of the holy Eucharist. But we can pray together and listen to the word of God. Another part of our ecumenical effort must always be to converse about areas of agreement and disagreement. That is why, for me, one of the joyful parts of this prayer service is to meet again a number of Lutheran pastors. I must admit that I do not always remember all their names, but these are good and holy men whom I have met year after year; and sometimes I can recall the first name. I see how important the relationship with the Catholic Church, and indeed with the Catholic bishop is for them. In fact, this year they asked me if we could, once again, renew the conversation on particular, doctrinal issues we have had in past years. They specified especially a recent document from the Congregation of the Doctrine of The Faith relevant to the nature of the Catholic Church and what the church believes about itself. This statement in which the church has clarified its understanding of itself as proclaimed in the Second Vatican Council is an appropriate document for conversation with others, especially Lutherans; and we shall work together to plan such a conversation.

Quite a contrast

The atmosphere and time of these ecumenical efforts is quite a contrast to some articles that have appeared in the Fort Wayne *Journal Gazette* in recent weeks.

The dialogues we have had over the years with the Lutherans and the Methodists have been an attempt to understand each other — to clarify what we believe, and thus often narrow our differences. But two recent articles in the Faith page of the Fort Wayne morning paper have been distortions of what Catholics believe, and I am grateful to Father Mark Gurtner of Our Lady of Good Hope Parish and John Bequette, professor of theology at the University of Saint Francis for appropriate responses. Indeed, I

am preparing a response to a recent article, which distorts our teaching on Our Lady and on the sacraments and on the word of God. The public media is not a good place for this, and in this diocese I have always found a spirit of dialogue and mutual understanding is preferred by our ecumenical partners, and I prefer it as well. Nevertheless, a bishop must teach, and so I will do my best to prepare a clarifying article.

We must continue to open our hearts this Advent, as Mary did, and let us follow John the Baptist — repent and change from within.

Much joy in my hometown about the resurgence of the once mighty Celtics and of course the Patriots, while Red Sox Nation sleeps quietly until the first signs of spring.

See you all next week.

'The few, the humble'

Student group aided by online presence

BY DON CLEMMER

HUNTINGTON — From its earliest days, the church has been known to thrive and grow in unusual circumstances. This is particularly amazing, as in all those centuries past, the church didn't have the advantage of a tool like www.facebook.com.

Facebook, as many know, is a popular social networking site most popular among college and high school students. It has recently become the tool of small group of students at Huntington University who call themselves "Catholicus" — Latin for Catholic — and for the past two years have discovered the value of connecting with other Catholics on a predominantly Evangelical Christian campus.

Emily Horne, a senior member of the group who graduates this month, recalls that before the group's inception, "I was being criticized, and I thought, 'I must be the only Catholic on campus, and

everyone knows that I'm Catholic and is finding me. All the Protestants are finding me and asking me questions.'"

She describes the group's formation as a "security blanket," a small circle of students who would drive to Mass together and meet to discuss and affirm their faith. The meetings remain informal today, meeting in residence halls to pray the rosary once a week. The group also remains small, as its members estimate Huntington University has less than 30 Catholic students out of an enrollment of over 1,500. New membership in the group includes freshmen Nathan Martin and Erica Harris. Horne is the last of the original lineup.

While still awaiting approval for official status as an on-campus group, Catholicus has managed some notable feats in its short history, such as in May, when it hosted a Catholic-Protestant discussion panel, which included two diocesan priests, Horne's pastor, Father Larry Kramer of St. Paul of the Cross in Columbia City, and Father John Pfister of St. Mary's in Huntington.

The group has also received membership interest from an



DON CLEMMER

Jacob Lehmann, Nathan Martin, Erica Harris and Emily Horne make up the core of the small student group "Catholicus" on the Huntington University Campus. The group has utilized a group on Facebook.com to help with organizing meeting times and networking between members.

unlikely source: non-Catholics. Huntington University senior and religious studies major Jacob Lehmann, whose faith journey has brought him to a point he considers himself Anglican with a strong sense of empathy toward Catholicism, brings to the group a spirited ecumenical dynamic, serv-

ing almost as an interpreter between the group and the rest of the Protestant student body.

Amid all of this, the meetings, events and general networking between members has been aided by their Facebook group, aptly titled, "The Few, the Humble, the Catholics of HU."

Today's Catholic announces Facebook group

In a latest instance of branching out into new media, *Today's Catholic* has started a group on Facebook.com. This group, accessible to anyone registered at www.facebook.com, is intended to serve as an extension of the published paper, including additional photos, videos, news updates from both around the diocese and around the world, as well as links to Today's Catholic Podcast, Catholic News Service and other resources.

As Facebook is a social networking site, the Today's Catholic Facebook group is also a forum where Catholics can discuss issues and ideas related to the church today.

If you have a Facebook account, or know someone who does, *Today's Catholic* encourages you to check out the group or encourage someone else to do so.

Details on getting papal Mass tickets likely not ready for weeks

WASHINGTON (CNS) — To answer the question that is increasingly being asked of officials with the archdioceses of Washington and New York — and pretty much anyone else who works for the Catholic Church in the region — you can't yet get tickets to any events during Pope Benedict XVI's visit to those cities in April.

The two archdioceses don't expect to have information about how to get tickets for the few public events of the April 15-20 visit until after the first of the year. And what tickets are available will likely be distributed according to formulas that will give priority to people from Washington and New York and neighboring dioceses.

The Vatican announced Nov. 12 that the pope will arrive in Washington April 15, spend the next two days there, move on to New York April 18 and depart for Rome the evening of April 20.

He will address the United Nations; participate in events with interreligious and ecumenical religious leaders; visit the White House and ground zero, the site where the World Trade Center stood; meet with U.S. bishops and representatives of Catholic education institutions; join a rally for youths and seminarians; and celebrate Mass for priests, deacons and religious of New York.

However, most of those activities will be invitation-only. Unlike previous papal visits, when Masses were held at the National Mall and Central Park — wide-open venues with space for hundreds of thousands of people — opportunities to see Pope Benedict will be more limited.

Pretty much the only chances

the general public will have will be at Masses at the Washington Nationals' new baseball stadium, with a capacity of about 45,000, and Yankee Stadium in New York, which has a capacity of perhaps 65,000.

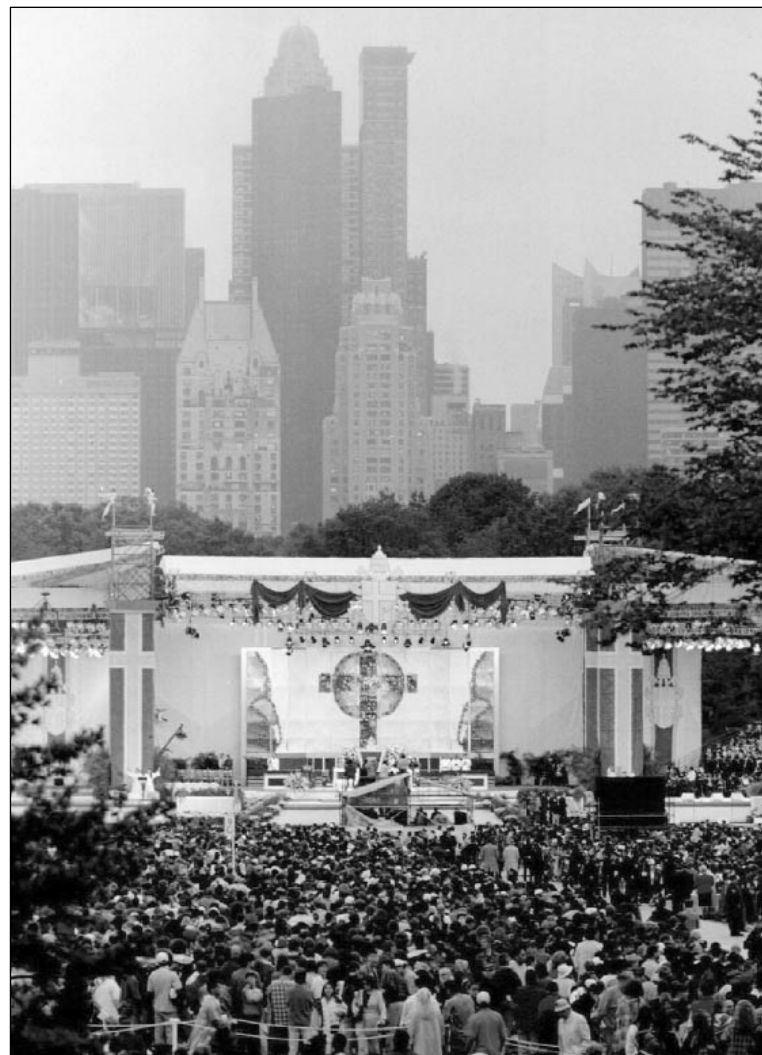
The youths and seminarians rally at New York's St. Joseph's Seminary also is listed as a public event, but Joseph Zwilling, communications director for the New York Archdiocese, told Catholic News Service the 15,000 to 20,000 spots will be filled primarily with people from the New York region and some of the approximately 5,000 seminarians in the country.

All other papal events will be closed to anyone who isn't specifically invited, said Zwilling and Susan Gibbs, communications director for the Washington Archdiocese. Invitations and plans for those events are being handled by various organizations including the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Archdiocese of New York, the White House and the United Nations.

The New York Archdiocese has basic information about how tickets will be handled on its Web site: www.archny.org. It notes that tickets to the stadium Mass will probably be distributed through parishes; and tickets to the youth rally will be distributed by Catholic schools, youth groups and religious education programs.

Gibbs told CNS a similar strategy will probably be used for tickets to the Mass at the Nationals' stadium. She said she expects information to be released soon about how the tickets will be allocated.

Zwilling said some seats for the Yankee Stadium Mass will be



CNS FILE PHOTO

Part of the New York skyline is pictured as Pope John Paul II celebrates Mass in Central Park in this Oct. 7, 1995, file photo. At least 100,000 people turned out under overcast skies and a light rain to see the pope. Pope Benedict XVI's visit to the U. S. next spring brings a different kind of pope to a different security environment than when millions of people were able to participate in Masses celebrated by the late pontiff on his U.S. visits.

allotted for people from the three U.S. archdioceses that along with New York are celebrating bicentennials in 2008 — Louisville,

Ky., Philadelphia and Boston. He said another batch of tickets will be set aside for the Archdiocese of Baltimore, which was the orig-

inal see in the United States.

How tickets are distributed by other dioceses will be up to them to decide, he said. However, applicants for Mass tickets will have to provide name, address and other information and must show an ID to be admitted to the stadium, according to the archdiocese's Web site.

The tickets will be nontransferable, it notes, warning that any tickets for sale through brokers or Web sites are fraudulent.

The Washington Archdiocese has not yet settled on its procedures, Gibbs said, but they likely will be similar to New York's. The archdiocese has already received hundreds of requests for tickets from individuals, tour companies and parishes.

"We've heard from tour companies that are planning pilgrimages, from youth groups, from individuals wanting 27 tickets," she said. Others are a bit audacious, like those who have asked whether their season tickets to the Nationals baseball games entitle them to use those seats for the papal Mass, she said. (They don't.)

For now, said Gibbs, all the requests are getting the same response: letters explaining that nothing has been determined, and that opportunities to see Pope Benedict will be limited.

Also yet to be decided in both cities is whether the pope will have a motorcade route where people may line up for a chance to see him, said Zwilling and Gibbs.

For further information on tickets to the papal Masses, check the Web sites of the Archdiocese of Washington, www.adw.org, or the Archdiocese of New York, www.archny.org.

Angels in Adoption Award honors foster mom

BY LAUREN CAGGIANO

FORT WAYNE — It takes a village to raise a child. At least that's what Terri Harless believes.

Harless, 52, is the recipient of the Angels in Adoption Award, a congressional distinction that recognizes "individuals, families or organizations from their home state, who have demonstrated a commitment to improving the lives of children in need of permanent, loving homes."

Debbie Schmidt, the executive director of Catholic Charities, nominated Harless for this award bestowed by Rep. Mark Souder on Monday, Nov. 19.

But foster care is nothing new to Harless.

"I got into foster (care) because I was fostering a young boy who needed childcare," she said. The boy had been removed from foster care and needed a more permanent home, so Harless rose to the challenge.

Harless has remained an advocate of the foster care system ever since; she attributes her inspiration to one person in particular.

About six years ago, a case-worker approached Harless about adopting another child, Dale, then 11, who was in need of a stable home. Harless was hesitant at first, but Schmidt encouraged her to pursue the adoption process.

"I'm a single parent," Harless said. "It doesn't matter," Schmidt responded.

It was that reassurance that inspired Harless to remain in the system. Over the past six years, Harless has cared for 14 children with various forms of mental and emotional challenges. "The first one was easy," she said about her



DON CLEMMER

Terri Harless receives the Angels in Adoption Award from Rep. Mark Souder, R-3rd, at Catholic Charities in Fort Wayne on Nov. 19. Over the past six years, Harless has cared for 14 children with various forms of mental and emotional challenges.

initial experience with raising a foster child.

Currently Harless manages a full house, with five biological and two adopted children at the moment. It's that sense of permanency that Harless strives for.

"It's more about what's permanent for the kids," she said. "Permanency has meant that (the children) stay with me. You have to give them what they need."

And Harless takes pride in giving the children what they need.

"I will adopt again ... I hope," she said. "It's really not what I want, but what God wants. I hope God opens the door for that."

The foster mother said foster care and adoption have changed her outlook on life.

"I give a lot, but these kids give back far more," she said.

Harless said she wants to share her love of children with others.

"It should be the norm," she said about adoption. "It can change your outlook on your own children, and (ultimately) the course of humanity in the world."

The foster parent stresses the importance of community in raising children. "To be able to foster and adopt is not a one-man show," she said. "I could not do any of this without community."

Harless has maintained the initial relationship with Catholic Charities and especially with Debbie Schmidt over the years.

"She treats people with dignity and respect," Harless said about Schmidt. "That makes the things she does work so well."

Harless joined several hundred guests at a special gala in Washington, D.C., courtesy of Congressman Mark Souder's office Oct. 4 for the ninth annual awards.

War might have caused end of Christianity in Iraq, says bishop

BY SIMON CALDWELL

LONDON (CNS) — The war in Iraq might have caused the end of Christianity in the country, said a Chaldean Catholic bishop.

Bishop Antoine Audo of Aleppo, Syria, said that the hundreds of thousands of Christians who had fled their homes in the aftermath of the 2003 U.S.-led invasion were still too scared to go home.

He told Catholic News Service in a Nov. 28 interview in London's Church of the Immaculate Conception that unless security improved in Iraq the Chaldean diaspora may become permanent.

"They love their country, but at the same time it is impossible for them to go back to this situation," said Bishop Audo, who ministers to approximately 60,000 Iraqi Christian refugees in Syria.

During a Nov. 29 press conference, Bishop Audo said that prostitution among desperately poor Iraqi Chaldean female refugees had emerged as a "serious problem" for the church in Syria.

The bishop visited London Nov. 28-29 as a guest of Iraqi Christians in Need, a British-based group set up this year to provide displaced or persecuted Christians with money for food, medicine and an education.

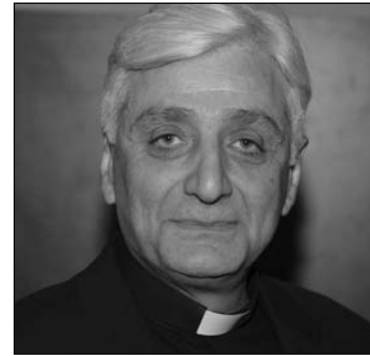
The bishop told CNS that the war was a tragedy for the 1.2 million Christians who lived in the country at the time. More than half of those Christians have since fled.

"It may be the end of Christianity in Iraq," he said. "This is very sad and very dangerous for the church, for Iraq and even for Muslim people, because it means the end of an old experience of living together."

"If in the Middle East Christians and Muslims are not able to live together, then it will also be very dangerous for the West in the future," he said. "We have to save this coexistence, this nice experience of history, in spite of all the difficulties which we have."

The bishop's comments came as the Iraqi government said that refugees slowly were beginning to return to the homeland after a decline in sectarian violence. The reverse flow has followed a recent surge in U.S. and Iraqi military operations against terrorists and militia groups.

The government has offered free transportation and is offering



CNS PHOTO/LIANA ALLO

Bishop Antoine Audo of Aleppo, Syria, said many Iraqi Christians who have fled their country remain too frightened to return home. He is pictured Nov. 28 in London, which he visited to raise awareness of the plight of Chaldean Catholic refugees in Syria.

to pay \$800 for every family willing to return. Some 4,700 families have heeded the call, and another 8,500 are on a waiting list.

Of the 4 million Iraqi refugees, about 1.4 million are in Syria and 750,000 are in Jordan. Two million are displaced within Iraq. In Syria, 44 percent of Iraqi refugees are Christian, according to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees.

Bishop Audo said Iraqi refugees were suffering great hardships.

"They have no legal protection by law and they are not recognized as refugees," he said. "They feel that they can't go home because of the war, and at the same time they can't get a (work) visa."

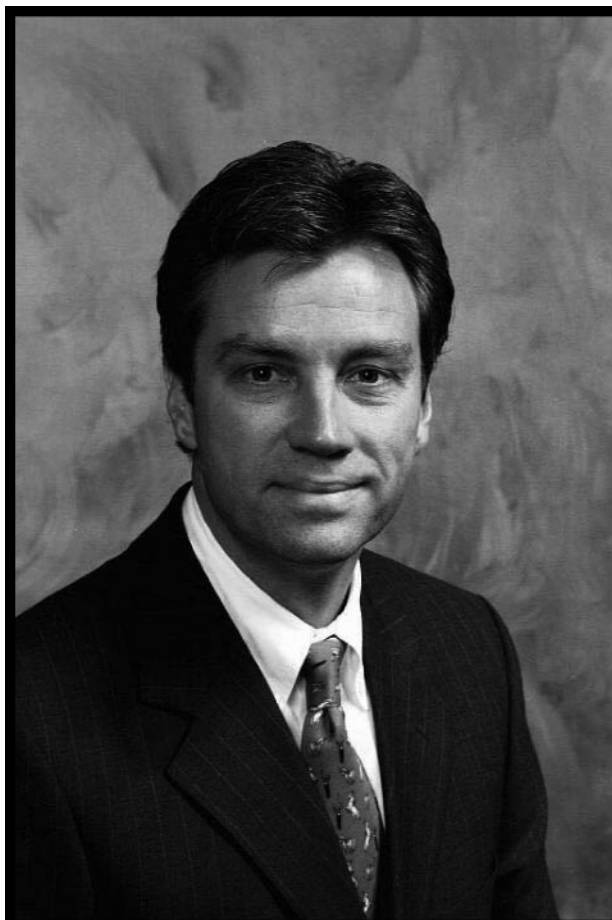
"They have to work on the black market and they are exploited by the Syrians," he added. "They pay huge amounts of money to hire (rent) apartments, and they are suffering from severe poverty."

The bishop said many of the refugees had lost family members, as well as their homes and jobs, because of the violence.

He said they found themselves in a foreign land without rights, security or hope. He said the psychological impact on the refugees has been devastating.

The Christians were being targeted partly by Muslims who identified them with Western military aggression, he told CNS.

He said Western governments should grant asylum to more Iraqi Christians and that Christians in the West should support them with money and with work in peace and reconciliation.



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HOPE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

trast with followers of mythology and pagan gods, early Christians had a future and could trust that their lives would not end in emptiness, he said.

Yet today the idea of "eternal life" frightens many people and strikes them as a monotonous or even unbearable existence, the pope said. It is important, he said, to understand that eternity is "not an unending succession of days in the calendar, but something more like the supreme moment of satisfaction."

"It would be like plunging into the ocean of infinite love, a moment in which time — the before and after — no longer exists," he said. This is how to understand the object of Christian hope, he said.

The encyclical's main section examined how the emphasis on reason and freedom — embodied in the French revolution and the rise of communism — sought to displace Christian hope. Redemption was seen as possible through science and political programs, and religious faith was dismissed as irrelevant and relegated to a private sphere.

While praising Karl Marx for his great analytical skill, the pope said Marx made a fundamental error in forgetting that human freedom always includes "freedom for evil," which is not neutralized by social structures.

In the same way, the pope said, those who believe man can be "redeemed" through science and technological advances are mistaken.

"Science can contribute greatly to making the world and mankind more human. Yet it can also destroy mankind and the world unless it is steered by forces that lie outside it," he said.

The pope said that while Christians have a responsibility to work for justice, the hope of building a perfect world here and now is illusory. Hopes for this world cannot by themselves sustain one's faith, he said.

"We need the greater and lesser hopes that keep us going day by day. But these are not enough without the great hope, which must surpass everything else. This great hope can only be God," he said.

The second half of the encyclical discussed how Christian hope can be learned and practiced — particularly through prayer, acceptance of suffering and anticipation of divine judgment.

The pope called prayer a

"school of hope," and as an example he held out the late Vietnamese Cardinal Francois Nguyen Van Thuan, who spent 13 years in prison, nine of them in solitary confinement.

In this "situation of seemingly utter hopelessness," the fact that he could still listen and speak to God gave him an increasing power of hope, the pope said.

He emphasized that prayer should not be isolating and should not focus on superficial objectives. Nor can people pray against others, he said.

"To pray is not to step outside history and withdraw to our own private corner of happiness," he said.

"When we pray properly we undergo a process of inner purification which opens us up to God and thus to our fellow human beings as well," he said.

Suffering is part of human existence, and the sufferings of the innocent appear to be increasing today, the pope said. He said Christians should do whatever they can to reduce pain and distress.

Yet suffering cannot be banished from this world, and trying to avoid anything that might involve hurt can lead to a life of emptiness, he said. Instead, Christians are called to suffer with and for others, and their capacity to do so depends on their strength of inner hope, he said.

"The saints were able to make the great journey of human existence in the way that Christ had done before them, because they were brimming with great hope," he said.

The pope recalled that in the not-too-distant past, many Christians would "offer up" to Christ their minor daily disappointments and hardships. Perhaps that practice should be revived, he said.

The pope said the idea of judgment — specifically the Last Judgment of the living and the dead — touched strongly on Christian hope because it promises justice.

"I am convinced that the question of justice constitutes the essential argument, or in any case the strongest argument, in favor of faith in eternal life," he said.

It is impossible for the Christian to believe that the injustices of history will be the final word, he said.

The Last Judgment should not evoke terror, however, but a sense of responsibility, the pope said. It is a moment of hope, because it combines God's justice and God's grace — but "grace does not cancel out justice," he said.

"(Grace) is not a sponge which wipes everything away, so that

whatever someone has done on earth ends up being of equal value," he said. "Evildoers, in the end, do not sit at table at the eternal banquet beside their victims without distinction, as though nothing had happened."

The pope said the idea of purgatory, as a place of atonement for sins, also has a place in the logic of Christian hope. Heaven is for the "utterly pure" and hell for those who have destroyed all desire for truth and love, but "neither case is normal in human life," he said.

Thus, the souls of many departed may benefit from prayers, he said.

The pope began and ended his encyclical with profiles of two women who exemplified Christian hope. The closing pages praised Mary for never losing hope, even in the darkness of Jesus' crucifixion.

The encyclical opened by describing a similar sense of hope in a 19th-century African slave, St. Josephine Bakhita, who after being flogged, sold and resold, came to discover Christ.

With her conversion, St. Bakhita found the "great hope" that liberated and redeemed her, the pope said.

The pope emphasized that this was different from political liberation as a slave. Christianity "did not bring a message of social revolution," he said, but something totally different: an encounter with "a hope stronger than the sufferings of slavery, a hope which therefore transformed life and the world from within."

Y ou can find a link to the complete encyclical "Spe Salvi" on the diocesan Web site: www.diocesefwsb.org/TODAY



CNS PHOTO/GIAMPIERO SPOSITO, REUTERS

Pope Benedict XVI greets the crowd at the end of a prayer service on the eve of Advent in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican Dec. 1. The pope said Advent was the time to understand that Christian hope is not "vague and illusory" but is embodied in Jesus Christ.

Pope says Advent is good time to rediscover hope, read encyclical

BY JOHN THAVIS

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Benedict XVI began Advent by summarizing his latest encyclical on Christian hope and encouraging people to read it.

The time before Christmas is a good period to rediscover the hope that Christ brought to human history, which can "change one's life," the pope said Dec. 2, the first Sunday of Advent.

He said he wrote his second encyclical, "Spe Salvi" (on Christian hope), for the entire church and for all people of good

will. The 76-page text was released at the Vatican Nov. 30.

Addressing pilgrims at his noon blessing, the pope said the essence of Christian hope was an awareness of God and "the discovery that he has the heart of a good and merciful father." Christ's life and death gave God's love a human face, he said.

The days leading up to Christmas can be a time of spiritual reawakening, a reminder that Christ "does not stop knocking at our door," he said.

"What else moves the world forward, if not the trust that God has in man?" he said.



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L'Osservatore: Papal invite to Muslims opens door to higher dialogue

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — By inviting a varied group of Muslim scholars to meet with him, Pope Benedict XVI has opened the possibility for a higher-level dialogue between Catholic and Muslim leaders, the Vatican newspaper said. The newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, commented Nov. 30 on a letter to the pope from 138 Muslim scholars and the pope's invitation in response. The newspaper quoted German Jesuit Father Christian Troll, a scholar of Islam, who said that the 138 scholars represent a wide and diverse portion of the world's Muslim community, and the fact that they were able to write to the pope together is important. The letter, Father Troll said, is an initiative "which the church can only look favorably upon because it needs a skilled dialogue with the non-Christian world." *L'Osservatore* said, "The pope's response opens concrete horizons for this hope." The pope's invitation, released Nov. 29 at the Vatican, included a suggestion that the scholars hold a working meeting with the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and with experts from Rome's Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies and from the Pontifical Gregorian University.

Retired U.S. Rep. Henry Hyde, known for pro-life efforts, dies

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Henry J. Hyde, the former Republican congressman from Illinois whose name became synonymous with efforts to limit federal funding of abortion, died Nov. 29 at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago. Hyde's death was announced in Washington by House Minority Leader John Boehner, R-Ohio. The 83-year-old Catholic political figure, who underwent quadruple bypass surgery in July, died of a fatal arrhythmia, a hospital spokeswoman said. Hyde retired from politics in 2006 after 32 years in Congress and eight years in the Illinois Legislature. He received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor, from President George W. Bush Nov. 5 but was too ill to attend the White House ceremony. At the ceremony, Bush described Hyde as a "commanding presence" and "a man of consequence," who impressed colleagues with his "extraordinary intellect, his deep convictions and eloquent voice." He was named a Knight of St. Gregory by Pope Benedict XVI in 2006 in recognition of his long-time fight for life.

U.S. province of Holy Cross Sisters drops age restrictions

MERRILL, Wis. (CNS) — Spurred on by the vitality of their elderly sisters and the congregation's motto that "The need of the times is the will of God," the Holy

NUNS PRAY ON FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT IN BETHLEHEM



CNS PHOTO/DEBBIE HILL

Nuns pray during Mass on the first Sunday of Advent, Dec. 2, in St. Catherine's Church, which adjoins the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, West Bank.

Cross Sisters have dropped the age restriction that prevented women over 50 from being considered for entrance to the congregation. "When we look at the energy and vitality of our elderly sisters ..., we know that for us retirement has a very different meaning because there is always something that draws us to bring the good news to others, even at the age of 90," said Sister Celine Goessl, provincial for the sisters' USA province, based in Merrill. The age restriction was dropped by a decision made at the sisters' provincial chapter last summer. The chapter asked vocation and formation personnel to rethink and rewrite the criteria for entering the community. Sister Kathy Wiesneski, director of vocations, said members of the congregation had seen around them "women of many ages who are seeking the 'will of God' in vowed religious life." She added, "Women tend to be able to productively work and minister longer."

Pope offers prayers for families of millions who died of AIDS in 2007

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Benedict XVI offered his prayers for the families of the estimated 2.1 million people who have died of AIDS this year, and he asked all people to work to end discrimination against those living with AIDS and HIV. At the end of his Nov. 28 general audience, the pope spoke about the Dec. 1 commemoration of World AIDS Day. "I am spiritually close to those who suffer because of this terrible disease and their families, especially those

who have lost a relative," he said. "I assure all of them of my prayers," the pope said. "In addition, I want to exhort all people of good will to multiply their efforts to stop the spread of the HIV virus, to oppose the scorn which often strikes those who are afflicted with it and to take care of the sick, especially when they are still youngsters," he said. According to figures released Nov. 20 by UNAIDS, "global HIV prevalence — the percentage of people living with HIV — has leveled off" and the number of new infections each year has fallen. UNAIDS estimated that in 2007 about 33.2 million people were living with HIV, 2.5 million became infected and 2.1 million died of AIDS.

Western Christians can learn much from Eastern Christians, says pope

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Christianity is not and never has been a uniquely European phenomenon, and Christians of the West can learn much from the cultural expressions of Eastern Christians, especially those of the early church, Pope Benedict XVI said. "Today it is a common opinion that Christianity is a European religion that exported European culture to other countries, but the reality is much more complicated and complex," he said Nov. 28 at his weekly general audience. "It is not only that the roots of the Christian religion are found in Jerusalem, in the Old Testament, in the Semitic world and Christianity is constantly nourished by these Old Testament

roots," he said, "but the expansion of Christianity in the first centuries" went simultaneously West and East. In Europe, but also throughout the Middle East and over to India, "Christianity with a different culture was formed," he said. Christians in the East lived the faith "with their own expressions and cultural identities," demonstrating "the cultural plurality of the one faith from the beginning."

Vatican official: Homelessness demands Christian, government response

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Homelessness is "a global pandemic" that demands a Christian response and government intervention, a Vatican official said during the Vatican's first international conference addressing the pastoral needs of the homeless. Archbishop Agostino Marchetto, secretary of the Pontifical Council for Migrants and Travelers, said more than one billion people are homeless or lack adequate shelter, and that number is on the rise. Some 50,000 people, mostly women and children, die every day because they lack decent shelter, clean water and proper sanitation, he said in a Nov. 26 address. In the United States alone, 3.5 million people are estimated to be homeless with up to 1.4 million of them children, he said. He said these "figures should startle, if not shock us, and they should goad us to greater pastoral action" and advocacy work aimed at tackling the root causes of homelessness and poverty. The archbishop was one

of about 50 participants from all over the world who met at the Vatican Nov. 26-27 to share ways the church could continue to provide basic material assistance for people on the street and find new ways that promote their dignity and value.

God on the gridiron: Faith helps football players on, off the field

INDIANAPOLIS (CNS) — After beating the Chicago Bears in Super Bowl XLI in February, the Indianapolis Colts stormed to another strong start, winning their first seven games of the 2007-08 season. Even with a faith-filled head coach like Tony Dungy, it might have been easy for players on the team to think they are invincible. But the players know better. And consecutive losses to the New England Patriots and the San Diego Chargers helped bring that reality into perspective, as have serious injuries suffered by some of the team's star players. Father Peter Gallagher, volunteer chaplain of the Colts and chaplain of Cardinal Ritter Junior-Senior High School in Indianapolis, said coping with injuries is an opportunity for football players to grow closer to Christ. "I would try to get them to associate whatever they're experiencing with the suffering of Christ," he said. "If we can't associate even those difficult things in our lives with Christ's experience of those same things, then we're really not fully trusting in his message and in his presence in our lives."

South Texas community gives immigrant cemetery a touch of dignity

SARITA, Texas (CNS) — There is little evidence of dignity in the deaths of the undocumented men, women and children found among the south Texas cactus and brush over the past few decades. Despite the circumstances that prompted them to cross the U.S.-Mexican border and regardless of their legal status in the eyes of the government, Father Piotr Koziel said lending dignity to their final resting place is "the right thing to do." Seven years ago the priest made his first trip to Sarita Cemetery, located off a dirt road on the Kenedy Ranch. The site, overgrown with grass and weeds, impacted him in such a way that he recruited others to return and remember those who died in the area but were never identified. Now each year in preparation for the Nov. 2 feast of All Souls' blessing of the graves, a group cleans the site and makes improvements to the area where the dead are all but forgotten. Last year, the U.S. government recorded the deaths of more than 450 who died while making their way through south Texas. The numbers dropped by about 100 for 2007. Dehydration, exposure to the extreme heat in the summer and unexpected cold in the winter are among the factors that lead to death.

Christmas Concert at Dwenger

FORT WAYNE — The Bishop Dwenger Music Department will host a combined band and choir Christmas concert on Sunday, Dec. 16, at 2:00 p.m. in the school's main gymnasium. Come and enjoy the sounds of the season as performed by the concert band, orchestra and various choirs under the direction of Christine Russell and Ryan VanAntwerp. Admission is free.

Annual Christmas concert at cathedral

FORT WAYNE — All are invited to the annual "Christmas in the Cathedral" Concert on Wednesday, Dec. 12, at 7:30 p.m. in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in downtown Fort Wayne. The Advent/Christmas program will feature a brass ensemble, the Cathedral Choir and guest pianist Dyne Pfeffenberger performing special holiday music and carols. Also on the program this year is harpist Nancy Morse performing with the choral works and solo pieces. In addition, the audience will have the opportunity to sing along on many of their favorite carols. The concert is free and open to the public.

Lindenwood holds New Year's Eve retreat

DONALDSON — Registrations are now being taken for the New Year's Eve retreat. The retreat will take place Monday, Dec. 31, beginning at 7 p.m. and will conclude Tuesday, Jan. 1, 2008 at 11 a.m. All are invited to join this prayerful, alcohol-free retreat. Please bring a snack to share with others. Co-facilitators are Loretta Peters and Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ Sister Judith Diltz. Registration deadline is Friday, Dec. 21. Fee is \$40 and includes private room and breakfast. For more information or to register contact Lindenwood at (574) 935-1780, weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., e-mail lw@lindenwood.org or visit the Web site www.lindenwood.org.

New members invested in Order of Malta, American Association

NEW YORK, NY — St. Patrick Cathedral in New York City was the site of the Nov. 9 installation Mass where 100 new members were inducted into the Order of Malta, American Association. Edward Cardinal Egan, Archbishop of New York, and principal chaplain of the American Association, was the principal celebrant of the Mass and presided at the installation ceremony. Daniel J. Kelly, K.M., president of the association, invested the members in the name of the prince and grand master of the order, Fra' Andrew Bertie.

Benjamin F. Ziolkowski of St. Joseph Parish in Mishawaka, was installed during the ceremony and invested as a Knight of Magistral Grace. Roberta K. Ziolkowski, also of St. Joseph Parish in

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Lt. Col. Eve Peters, who serves in the Medical Service Corps was deployed to Iraq as a personnel officer for the 354th Civil Affairs Brigade. Last year, she spent 10 months working in Baghdad. While there, she handled the personnel and administrative matters for 980 soldiers, sailors and airmen. Peters presented a flag to the St. Mary of the Assumption School and Parish, Avilla, in appreciation for the support her family received from the community while she was deployed. Father Edward Erpelding, St. Mary of the Assumption pastor, blessed the flag at a Mass on Nov. 13. Peters' children — Sean, Michael and Katie — held the flag while Father Erpelding blessed it. The flag had flown over the headquarters building of the Multi-National Corps-Iraq. The building was originally one of Saddam Hussein's palaces. In the photo are the following: from left, Principal Kathy Garlitz, Sean Peters, Katie Peters, Eve Peters, Michael Peters and St. Mary of the Assumption pastor Father Edward Erpelding.

Mishawaka, was installed during the ceremony and invested as a Dame of Magistral Grace.

The Order of Malta is one of the oldest lay Catholic orders in the church, founded in 1099. The charism of the order is personal sanctification of members, defense of the faith and service to the sick and poor. For more information about the Order of Malta and the activities of the American Association visit www.maltausa.org.

Bobbi Florea wins Golden Apple Award

FORT WAYNE — Indiana's NewsCenter has chosen Bishop Dwenger theology teacher Bobbi Florea as the November recipient of the Golden Apple Award. The award honors teachers working to change young people for the better every day, and rewards them and the schools in which they work. Bishop Dwenger senior Zach Bonahoom wrote a letter nominating Florea.

In a surprise ceremony preceding the prayer service on Grandparents Day, Jennifer Blomquist of Indiana's NewsCenter read Zach's letter to

the over 1,500 students, staff and guests in attendance, then presented Florea with a plaque, certificate, sweatshirt and gifts from Ideal Office Source, Papa Murphy's Pizza and Steamatic. Zach was unable to join her until after the ceremony as he was delivering food donations to the local food bank. The presentation was aired on Nov. 28 on Indiana's NewsCenter and an article posted on their Web site, www.indianas-newscenter.com.

Redeemer Radio completes successful on-air appeal

FORT WAYNE — Redeemer Radio, Catholic Radio AM 1450, has completed its fourth on-air appeal, held Nov. 7-9. Over \$151,000 was raised toward funding the station's growth and operating expenses, a 50 percent increase from fall 2006.

Many local guests, including Bishop John M. D'Arcy, were present in the studio and live on the air. Known as Fall Sharathon 2007, the event was hosted by Jerry Usher at the studios of Redeemer Radio. Usher is the

national host of Catholic radio's most popular program, "Catholic Answers Live," heard on Redeemer Radio weekdays from 6-8 a.m. and 6-8 p.m.

Redeemer Radio's Executive Director Jason Garrett says, "We at Redeemer Radio are extremely grateful for the outstanding support shown during Sharathon by our listeners. We are also most appreciative for all the local guests who gave of their time to appear on the air with us, especially our own Bishop D'Arcy."

Bishop Luers students collect funds for Heifer International

FORT WAYNE — Bishop Luers High School students in Marilyn Fech's New Testament classes were impacted after watching an episode of "60 Minutes," which showed how one young lady from Uganda was allowed to go to school, high school and then college in New England because Heifer International gave her family a goat. The students collected money for about six weeks to see how much they could raise. They raised \$250, and they were able to

purchase a llama, a trio of rabbits and two flocks of chickens.

These animals will be given to Third World families in deep need of farm animals to survive. These animals will have been vaccinated and artificially inseminated when they arrive. The families who have asked for them will receive training in how to care for the animals. Also, the families agree to pass on to someone else in need the first female offspring of these animals. The secondary recipients also agree to pass on the first female offspring, and so on.

Heifer International was recommended by their text as a way of caring for the poor in relation to the Gospel message.

Diocesan Hispanic events corner

SOUTH BEND — The Office of Hispanic Ministry for the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend has announced the following activities:

- St. John the Evangelist Young Adult Group will sponsor a drama "Mi Cristo Roto" ("My Broken Christ"), a drama practiced yearly in the majority of the Hispanic countries for decades. The young adults hope that the people who see this drama will truthfully face their present relationship with Christ. They hope this will help viewers to prepare during Advent. This drama will be held on Dec. 15, at 7:30 p.m., St. Vincent de Paul, 1108 S. Main St., Elkhart.

Recent events:

- During September and October, Enid Roman visited a number of parishes throughout the diocese to motivate the Hispanic community and speak to them about the importance of contributing to the Annual Bishop's Appeal. The communities were eager to cooperate, many gave their donations on site.

- Humberto Delgado and Lupita Zepeda assisted to coordinate the camping event for young adults.

- Humberto Delgado escorted youth to the Ohio youth retreat, National Catholic Youth Conference, an event of which approximately 25,000 youth from the U.S. participated.

Plan ahead:

- Enid Roman, Humberto Delgado, Lupita Zepeda and Lourdes Silva are collaborating with the Office of Campus and Young Adult Ministry for the Bishop's Retreat to be held the first weekend of April 2008 at Wawasee, a yearly retreat with the bishop.

- December 12 is the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe and the various parish communities are preparing for the festivities. Contact the nearest Hispanic community parish near you to witness the Juan Diego and Guadalupe drama, hear the mariachies, see the cultural clothing and practices, and enjoy the fiestas that will include feasts with traditional foods.

Correction

In the article on historian Dr. Joseph White's talk at the History Center in Fort Wayne that ran on page 11 of the Nov. 25 issue of *Today's Catholic*, Dr. White is quoted as saying that St. Louis Besancon Parish was founded by German Catholics. As our reader response has asserted, the parish is actually of French origin.

Keeping Christ in a Merry Christmas

BY LAUREN CAGGIANO

It's easy to get caught up in the stressful hustle and bustle of the holiday season, but it doesn't have to be that way.

The following is a guide to keeping the true spirit of the season alive in our hearts, homes and society.

In the home

Associate pastor of St. Charles Parish, Fort Wayne, Father Tony Steinacker, suggests the home is the first place to start. He recommends setting up a Nativity set as a concrete reminder of the reason for the season. An Advent wreath around the Nativity set is also a nice touch.

No matter how you decorate, "have something in mind that keeps the meaning alive," he says. According to Father Steinacker, these symbols of the Christmas story help us to "get back to our Catholic roots."

To give or not to give?

Preparing spiritually is more important than preparing for a gift exchange.

Instead of outdoing ourselves with gift giving, we can do small things on the home front, Father Steinacker says.

"Limit gifts to let (your friends and family) know you care," he says. It might seem countercultural, but avoiding consumerism can help us better prepare for the birth of Christ.

Father Steinacker challenges readers to engage in philanthropy

this season. Participating in the Giving Tree at church, volunteering and donating to charities are ways to embrace the true meaning. "Remember people who are less fortunate," he says.

Continue the spirit of giving year-round

"Make contributions every month," he says. "If we can do something once a year, what stops you to carry it further?"

Spiritual bouquets — cards indicating that the sender will undertake certain devotional acts — make thoughtful gifts. A Mass celebrated in someone's honor is a gift that transcends the physical. "You're being remembered at the sacrifice of the Mass," Father Steinacker explains.

Create meaningful traditions

"Don't lose focus (of the true meaning of the season)," says Father Steinacker. "Ask yourself, what are you getting out of it? You need to enjoy (Christmas)."

"Take time to educate and share the faith," Father Steinacker says. "Christmas was the beginning of everything we believe," he reminds us.

Homemade cookies are also a thoughtful alternative to traditional gifts. "To a lot of people that means more than gift cards," Father Steinacker says.

Overall, "we have to know what's best for ourselves and what works," Father Steinacker says. It takes time to change our ways.

St. Cecilia inspires singers and musicians at Hymn Fest

BY ALEX SCHEIDLER

SOUTH BEND — The Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend anticipated the feast of St. Cecilia (Nov. 22) with the Third Annual Hymn Fest held Nov. 13 at St. Joseph Church. The event was also held at St. Joseph Parish in Fort Wayne.

This year's hymn fest began with a welcome from Theresa Slott, the chapter president of the National Association of Pastoral Musicians (NPM).

The event was designed as a walk through the liturgical year in song. It started with a general song covering the entire year before moving through the seasons: Advent, Christmas, Lent, the triduum, Easter and ordinary time which focused on Mary and the Eucharist.

Slott, also the director of music and liturgy at St. Joseph Parish, felt the Hymn Fest plays an important educational role.

"The songs themselves show moods and text that parishes use throughout the year," she explained.

She continued, "It includes lots of the classic songs people associate with the different seasons and shows how prayer and song are so tightly intertwined.

"You can't think of Christmas without songs," she concluded.

A special mixed choir convened for this celebration. It was comprised of members of five South Bend parishes: St. Joseph, St. Matthew, Holy Cross, St. John the Baptist and St. Pius. There were 25 in the choir, as well as eight instrumentalists.

"People who bring the gift of music in either voice or instrument lend so much to our worship and liturgical life," said St. Joseph pastor Holy Cross Father John DeRiso.

The first song of St. Cecilia's Hymn Fest was the appropriately selected Litany of the Saints. It was followed by a song over-viewing the entire liturgical year, "In the Cycle of the Seasons."

Next, the first Advent hymn had the congregation singing along



ALEX SCHEIDLER

Choirs from five parishes sing during Hymn Fest at St. Joseph's Parish for feast of St. Cecilia.

in "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" and "People, Look East."

To conclude the Advent cycle, a participant from the congregation gave a reflection from the sanctuary.

The celebration integrated pieces sung by the choir only, including one a capella piece entitled "Gaudete," the Latin word for "Rejoice."

As the liturgical seasons progressed, songs ranged from traditional favorites to the new.

Father John DeRiso stated, "We are delighted to host the St. Cecilia Hymn Fest this year — especially knowing how much effort Theresa Slott put into planning it.

"Our hope is that it would continue to grow, and more people will come to appreciate the gift that musicians bring to our liturgies."

Invitations were sent out to parishes around the diocese, focusing on parish music ministers. In a spirit of solidarity, Fort Wayne and South Bend hosted St. Cecilia events on the same day and time this year.

Justine Kucharski from St.

Hedwig Parish attended Hymn Fest for the first time. It was the first time she had heard of the event.

"It was beautiful. I sang my heart out," she said in reaction to the experience.

St. Cecilia is the patron saint of music and has been embraced by the National Association of Pastoral Musicians. The NPM began inviting Catholic parishes around the country to celebrate the feast of St. Cecilia by hosting an event in her honor. They have encouraged the celebration to take place either on her feast day or some time in the month of November.

"I've always asked St. Cecilia to be by my side when I sing at Mass," Kucharski added.

The format of celebration varies from place to place. Some parishes have concerts and others present special Masses or liturgies. The main goal is to include plenty of music and congregational singing.

Sandy LaViolette came from Sacred Heart, Lakeville. She heard about it from her choir director there and came with her husband, Gene, and a few others from the parish.

"It was a real blessing to be here," she said. "We certainly will come back. They worked so hard on it. It's such a great opportunity."

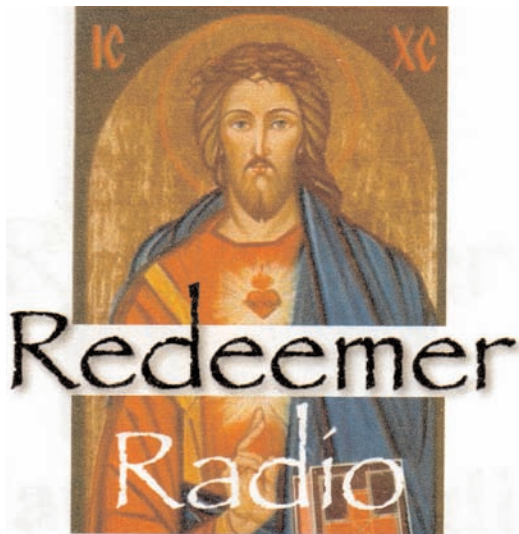
Those parishes sponsoring a celebration in honor of St. Cecilia are encouraged to register with the NPM, which maintains a record and publicizes the participation.

Celebrations sponsored by NPM in honor of St. Cecilia have been growing each year with an estimated 100-150 groups registering nationally.

A "freewill" offering collected at the Hymn Fest went to the National Hurricane Relief Fund. These funds were added to donations collected throughout the United States and are aimed at parishes affected by hurricanes on the Gulf Coast.

These parishes use the financial support for their music ministry programs — to get music ministers involved, purchase hymnals or buy instruments.

Wishing everyone a Blessed Advent!



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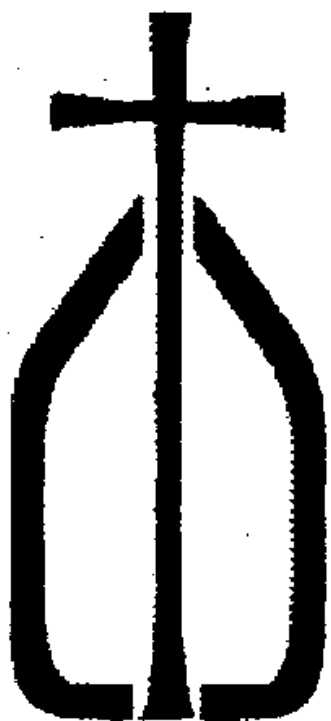
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Senior Aides Program assists 55 and older in 14 counties to regain skills

BY KAY COZAD

FORT WAYNE — Terry Noller retired four years ago from his ministry as pastor after over 20 years of service to the church community. But retirement for him didn't mean slowing down as this former pastor and chief probation officer dove right into leading the Faith-Based Initiative at Catholic Charities. After four years as case manager there, the program folded, and Noller looked to part-time retirement once again, continually seeking other ways to serve his fellow man. "I was retired maybe a month, and Debbie (Schmidt, director of Catholic Charities) called and asked me to work," recalls Noller, who eagerly took on the new Senior Aides Program.

What began as the Senior Aides Program in the single county of St. Joseph in 2002, has expanded to include 14 counties within the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. The program works to offer low-income or unemployed seniors aged 55 years and older training positions within nonprofit host organizations and governmental agencies. The goal is to sharpen existing skills and develop new ones to procure permanent full-time employment.

To qualify for one of the 197 slots of the program, participants must be unemployed and 55 years of age or older with personal identification and specific financial documentation. Noller

says the largest group the program serves are those 55 to 62 years of age who have lost their jobs and are currently unable to draw Social Security.

"Most of these people are professionals, teachers, private investigators and others who have lost their jobs and no one will hire them," he reports.

Once accepted into the program, an individual employment plan, including professional goals, is designed for each participant. Host agencies are then contacted for appropriate placements. Each training position consists of 20-hour weeks at minimum wage pay and participants not only work in desired areas as specified in the employment plan, but are also trained in other skill areas

says Noller.

There are only a few spots left of the 197 available, says Noller, adding that the spots fill up quickly. And though certain criteria, such as age and income limits, must be met for participation in this Catholic Charities program, Noller says, "We open our arms to all people. It's ecumenical."

He reports receiving at least one call per day for the program and applications are taken each week with special preference to veterans who are struggling to make ends meet as well as the homeless, the disabled and displaced homemakers.

"These are people who had savings and through bad luck lost it all due to circumstances. This

age group didn't get here by chance," says Noller compassionately, who at 64 now understands what many older Americans face. "I happen to be one of the lucky ones. This is the

most challenging job I've had. But I believe it affects more change than even the ministry," he says, adding "With this job, you know you're going to change peoples lives. They come alive again and have more faith in God. It changes people's lives!"

For more information on the Senior Aides Program contact Terry Noller at (260) 422-5625 ext. 285 or visit Catholic Charities at 315 E. Washington Blvd., in Fort Wayne.

"It's one of the good things
the federal government is doing."

TERRY NOLLER

the agency has to offer. Two outside job searches are required each week to assist in locating a permanent unsubsidized position. Occasionally the host agency will hire a participant for a full-time position.

The Department of Labor instituted senior projects beginning in the mid-1960s and provides grants to nonprofit organizations to assist older Americans. Senior Services America subsidizes the \$1.3 million Senior Aides Program in the diocese. "It's one of the good things the federal government is doing,"

Villa of the Woods: one-of-a-kind living in area

BY BONNIE ELBERSON

FORT WAYNE — Villa of the Woods is truly one-of-a-kind, according to administrator Cheryl Smith.

Located at 5610 Noll Ave., Villa of the Woods is the only free-standing licensed residential facility in the Fort Wayne area, Smith says. Though there is no provision for nursing care, Villa of the Woods is equipped to provide housing, meals, housekeeping and personal services to 35 permanent residents.

"Our residents are much more independent," she says. "They come and go as they please," but find comfortable accommodations here.

Another unique feature of the facility run by Catholic Charities is a room and board assistance program, which is available to qualified applicants. Known familiarly as the R-cap program, it provides extra help to those whose monthly income is less than \$1,100 and whose assets are less than \$1,500.

Most other residents are private pay, but at \$1,400 to \$1,600 per month depending on the size of one's room, Villa living is still a bargain compared to other residential facilities, says Smith.

Villa of the Woods began life nearly six decades ago as Our Lady of Lourdes convent and home to the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration. The sisters were teachers at nearby Bishop Luers High School, which, along with the convent, was blessed and dedicated in 1959. At that time the facility boasted 10 bedrooms, second floor lavatory, bath and shower rooms, parlor, recreation room,

laundry, kitchen and chapel. It wasn't until 1979 that the building was converted to provide residential accommodations for 27 senior citizens.

A total remodeling project undertaken in 2001 through a generous bequest to the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend added eight bedrooms while providing private baths for all 35 rooms, a new dining room and a lounge. At the same time, the facility was completely refurbished for a cheerful and welcoming appearance.

Many residents are very pleased with what the Villa has to offer and the friendships they have forged there.

Jeanette McArdle, Nancy Bartlett and Sandy Rhoades, three women who have lived at the former convent for 20 or more years, are clearly happy to call Villa of the Woods home.

Though many activities are scheduled each week, Smith says the entire month of December will be especially busy. And an open house featuring entertainment and refreshments for residents and their families slated for Sunday, Dec. 16, is expected to draw a large crowd.

Even so, Smith says she will be "more than happy" to show Villa of the Woods to visitors at any time. Openings are currently available, and she invites those interested in a tour to call her at (260) 745-7039 to schedule an appointment.

Food pantry always welcomes donations

BY JENNIFER OCHSTEIN

SOUTH BEND — Remembering those less fortunate any time of year is a virtue. Remembering those less fortunate at Christmastime reveals the heart of the season. Doing something for someone else who needs help is priceless.

According to Sara Walters, administrative assistant at Catholic Charities in South Bend, donations are accepted any time of year for the organization's food pantry. And the holiday season, for obvious reasons, is no exception.

"We've been getting donations sporadically, but as of right now we can always use more donations," Walters said.

And, as always, the Catholic Charities Food Pantry, 1817 Miami St. in South Bend, could use just about everything: canned items, frozen, boxed, etc. You name it, they need it. If it's edible, they'll take it.

She said the pantry mostly deals with food. The times the

agency can hand out personal care items are few and far between, Walters said, because she gets so few of those items donated.

But they will accept personal care items as well. These items include personal hygiene products like soaps, antiperspirant and toothpaste. But items like laundry and dish soap, diapers and other baby items are welcomed as well.

"We rarely hand out those things because we rarely have those things," Walters said.

She said the food pantry serves an average of 500 to 600 families every month.

"It usually stays pretty steady," she said in terms of the traffic the pantry sees from those in need.

She said she doesn't know what those families would do if it weren't for the food pantry Catholic Charities offers.

She said the RSVP arm of the organization conducted a survey regarding services, and many responded by saying they wouldn't know what to do without the help they receive from the pantry.

"There would be a lot of needy

people in the area," Walters said.

Walters said the food pantry makes it easy for people to donate.

All you have to do is stop by the Catholic Charities office to drop the items off. She added that if you have many products to drop off, you can call ahead so she has people available to help unload it.

She said Catholic Charities also sends out personal thank yous to each person who donates so people know how much their donations mean to a family in need.

Those who need to use the services of the food pantry can simply stop by during the hours of operation: 2-4 p.m. on Tuesdays; 5-7 p.m. on Wednesdays; 9-11 a.m. on Fridays.

She said people also need to bring proof of residency in St. Joseph County since the food pantry serves only those living in the county.

For more information, contact Catholic Charities at (574) 234-3111 or toll free at (800) 686-3112.

Gift of Warmth program assists with heating bills

BY KAY COZAD

FORT WAYNE — The dropping temperatures of the Midwestern winter season are here to stay in Fort Wayne, and the surrounding area causing local heating bills to rise. With the predicted 20 percent rate increase in gas utilities prices, unemployment and underemployment will require some area families to scramble to cover those mounting bills.

Catholic Charities Gift of Warmth Program continues to work in collaboration with NIPSCO this year to assist those struggling to make ends meet.

Lisa Young, assistant director of Catholic Charities, reports that funds for this important program are raised through individual and community contributions. Each dollar donated to the Gift of Warmth Program is matched by NIPSCO with one dollar of its own. Catholic Charities pays for half of the qualified recipient's overdue gas bill, while NIPSCO pays the other half. Dollar for dollar the team hopes to assist over 150 families pay their heat-

ing bill this season. The matched funds are offered to those who qualify for the program following application and income guidelines.

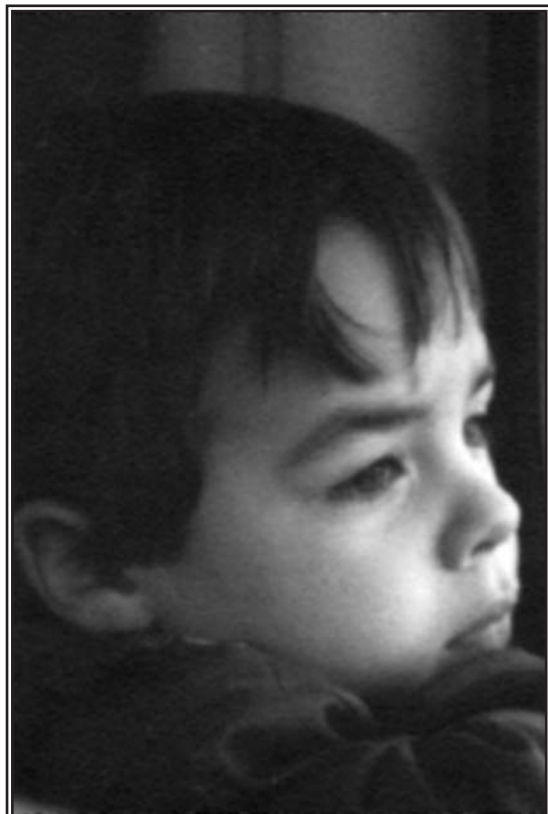
"The money goes to gas bills, not for reinstallation. The family must be either up for disconnection or already disconnected," says Young.

This annual program runs during the early part of each year, usually in January and February, after other community agencies' efforts have ended. "It's a community agreement that we all try to stretch the funding and keep the assistance going as long as we can," says Young.

CANI, another area agency, is currently offering gas heating assistance and will overlap the start of the Gift of Warmth Program.

Catholic Charities receives calls throughout the year for general assistance, and, with so many in need this winter, calls are currently mounting. "It's going to be a really hard winter, with a lot of people having their gas turned off," says Young.

It's Christmas! ...is his gift in your heart?



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<http://www.ccfwsb.org>

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To contribute to the Gift of Warmth Program

call Iva Parrish at (260) 422-5625 ext. 224
or mail checks specifically designated for
the Gift of Warmth Program to:

Catholic Charities

315 E. Washington Blvd.

Fort Wayne, IN 46802

To make an appointment for assistance with gas
heating bills, call Jaquel Tabron at (260) 422-5625
ext. 277, Thursdays only, beginning at 8 a.m.

West Region Administrator

Catholic Charities seeks a dynamic, self-starting individual to oversee the agency's operations in a five county area, based in South Bend, Indiana. Responsibilities involve aggressively seeking funding for programs, promoting the agency and its services, and maintaining relationships with parishes, community organizations, and community leaders. This individual will also be responsible for overseeing the Brief Services program and Food Pantry, which includes direct client service.

Qualifications include a Master's degree in Social Work, Public Administration, or related degree, with a least five years of progressively responsible supervision experience, experience in grant writing, contracting, and public speaking, practicing Catholic, knowledge of and commitment to the Catholic Church's social teachings, the ability to represent the agency in a variety of settings, proficient in Internet, word processing, spreadsheet and e-mail applications (prefer Microsoft Office), and a valid driver's license. Starting Salary: \$37,180.

Please send resume by December 20, 2007 to:

e-mail: dkrabach@ccfwsb.org

EOE

International adoption support

BY LAUREN CAGGIANO

ROANOKE — The Rothenbushes are doubly blessed.

Holly and Ben Rothenbush of Roanoke always knew they wanted to adopt a child; it was just a matter of time before they acted upon it. The timing was right about a year ago — Holly had completed her master's degree and was ready to take on the demands of child rearing. Unfortunately, their efforts to conceive were fruitless, but the couple didn't lose faith.

After talking with a friend who was in the process of adopting an international child, the couple decided to pursue the medical mission route.

According to Linda McGahey, the couple's adoption specialist at Catholic Charities, the process works in reverse, in that in all other international and most domestic adoptions, prospective adoptive parents complete the home study first, the child comes later.

According to Rothenbush, a marriage and family therapist herself, oftentimes these foreign children are developmentally delayed and require rehabilitation and a high degree of attention.

"Children coming from the orphanages often have developmental concerns, due to lack of stimulation," she said.

In December of last year, the Rothenbushes talked to the head of the adoption organization, and by January they were matched with a Filipino child — Tate.

Life has been full of surprises for the couple. Not long after signing the paperwork, Holly,

28, found out she was pregnant and due in October. The couple was excited about the double blessing and continued with the adoption process.

"It was something that fell into our laps," she said about the twist of events.

Tate arrived on March 24 to the excited couple, coincidentally on the eve of her sister's wedding. Tate's arrival made the celebration all the more exciting, she said.

Now with a five-week-old infant, Cruz, and the 21-month-old Tate, the mother has her hands full.

"It's a struggle some days," she said, but she would "do it again in a heartbeat."

Rothenbush offers some words of advice for couples considering adoption. First, she stresses the value of exploring the adoption options. Being informed is important, she said.

"Make sure you get the facts straight," she said. "There are so many different parts of the adoption process. Sort out the process before (you get involved) ... there are so many things that sneak up behind you."

Culture plays a crucial role in the child's development, so it's important to be aware of the child's culture beforehand, Rothenbush said.

The couple recently completed the home study phase through Catholic Charities. The process involved a background check and a great deal of paperwork, Rothenbush said, but McGahey was there to guide them along the way.

According to Rothenbush, McGahey was a source of relief for the couple, encouraging them and quelling fears.



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY THE ROTHENBUSH FAMILY

Ben and Holly Rothenbush are shown with their son Tate, a child they are adopting from the Philippines with the assistance of Catholic Charities in Fort Wayne. The Rothenbushes also have a child Cruz, not shown in the photo.

"Our role is to be an educator and a supporter," McGahey said about Catholic Charities' involvement in the adoption process. Especially in the case of international adoptions, the social worker educates the couple about the child's needs and the value of promoting cultural heritage.

McGahey, who has 30 years of experience in social work, said she finds a great sense of fulfillment in her job.

"It's seeing families created or added to," she said about her favorite aspect of the job.

The couple is waiting to hear back from the Filipino government for approval. Rothenbush said there is no specific time frame, but the approval process can take up to a few months.

In the meantime, Rothenbush is already thinking about the future.

"I would like to be able to have that opportunity (again) ... if not domestically," she said about the possibility of adopting another medical mission child. "Tate has been such a blessing in our lives."



Tate is shown with 5-week old sibling Cruz in this photo at the Rothenbush home in Roanoke. The Rothenbushes are working with Catholic Charities to proceed with the adoption of Tate from the Philippines.

Indiana Family Week recognizes Catholic Charities director

INDIANAPOLIS — The Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA) honored Deb Schmidt of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, with the Indiana Family Champion Award Nov. 19. The award was given out in correlation with Indiana Family Week as proclaimed by Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels.

"Thanksgiving is a time to reflect and honor the importance of families and renew our commitment to strengthening them throughout the year," said Daniels.

Indiana Family Week coincides with National Family Week, which is coordinated through the Alliance for Children and Families. This week is a celebration of Indiana families, as they are an essential part of the cultural, social and spiritual fabric of this state.

"Deb Schmidt's dedication to creating successful families has had such a positive impact on Hoosiers," said Family and Social Services Administration



DEB SCHMIDT

Secretary Mitch Roob. "During Indiana Family Week, it is my honor to present this award and recognize her commitment to keeping Indiana families strong."

The Indiana Family Champion Award was given to five individuals across the state who demonstrated tremendous dedication to helping Hoosier families. Other award winners include Jenny Hamilton of LifeStream Services, Inc. in Yorktown; Cara Logan of Covering Kids and Families of LaPorte County; Laura Medows of Indiana Health Centers, Inc. in Grant County and Connie Banks of Generations in Vincennes.

Operations Director

Catholic Charities seeks an individual to direct the following aspects of its operation: Facilities, Finances, Human Resources and Technology based in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Qualifications include:

- Master's Degree in business or related field.
- Five years of supervisory experience.
- Ability to multi-task, work under stress, and navigate multiple, competing, ever-changing demands.
- Experience with not-for-profit accounting, government grants, and an A-133 audit.
- Knowledge of and experience complying with federal, state, and local employment law.
- Experience maintaining computers (hardware and software) and managing a network.
- Ability to represent the agency in a variety of settings
- Ability to travel throughout the diocese frequently, and elsewhere occasionally.

Please send resume in Word format with salary requirements by December 15, 2007 to clavich@ccfwsb.org

EOE

Report shows that Catholic Charities served 8 million in 2006

BY SHELLEY BORYSIEWICZ

WASHINGTON — The holiday wish list of America's poorest families is long, as those living below the federal poverty line increasingly sought help at Catholic Charities agencies, which served one of every 10 people living in poverty in 2006, according to a report by Catholic Charities agencies released recently on Capitol Hill.

The report, *Poverty in America: Beyond the Numbers*, provides a state-by-state look at the types of services local Catholic Charities agencies provide to address the pervasive issue of poverty in this country. The report is based on the findings of Catholic Charities USA's 2006 Annual Member Survey.

More than 1,700 local Catholic Charities agencies and institutions served nearly 8 million people of all faiths in 2006, including 4.1 million living below the poverty line. Catholic Charities agencies are serving a rising percentage of people who live below the federal poverty line, which in 2006 was \$20,000 for a family of four. The report found that 52 percent of

Catholic Charities clients in 2006 were from below the federal poverty line — up from 43 percent in 2002.

The survey of local agencies shows that there are a growing number of people who are turning to Catholic Charities for food. In fact, local Catholic Charities agencies saw a 12 percent increase in the need for food service programs in 2006. Between 2002 and 2006, the number of clients receiving food services — such as soup kitchens, food banks and food pantries, home delivered meals and congregate dining — increased by 2.7 million, or nearly 60 percent.

As the need for food assistance continues to rise, local agencies say they continue to struggle to meet the needs of food service requests. In 2006, agencies responding to the survey said they were unable to serve nearly 1,800 clients requesting prepared food, and nearly 91,000 clients requesting distributed food.

"The holiday season should be a time of joy and celebration, but instead it is often difficult for the hungry, the homeless and the working poor who are often burdened with high utility costs and

unexpected medical bills that can demolish their tight budgets," said Father Larry Snyder, president of Catholic Charities USA. "This information from our agencies shows that every season should be a season of giving because the need is still there and it is continuing to grow."

Other key findings include:

- More than 45 percent of Catholic Charities' clients were either under 18 or over 65.
- Services to build strong communities — ranging from education and enrichment to social support and health-related services to neighborhood activism — reached 7 percent more people in 2006, for a total of more than 3.6 million.
- Nearly 1.1 million people received services that strengthen families, including counseling and mental health services and immigration services.
- Requests for temporary shelters increased 24 percent over the past five years. In 2006, Catholic Charities managed more than 176 temporary shelters (nearly 7,800 beds). Yet they were unable to serve more than 31,000 people because all available beds were full.

Catholic Charities seeks change through Campaign to Reduce Poverty in America

The report illustrates how Catholic Charities agencies are working to address the pervasive issue of poverty in this country.

"We understand the consequences of poverty firsthand, and also know the solutions for helping individuals get on a path to self-sufficiency," Father Larry Snyder, president of Catholic Charities USA, said. "That's why we launched our Campaign to Reduce Poverty in America earlier this year."

The campaign's goal is to cut the U.S. poverty rate in half by 2020, and Catholic Charities USA and local agencies are joining together to urge policymakers to give the needs of the poor a higher priority in budget and policy decisions in four key areas: housing, hunger, nutrition assistance and economic security.

"At Catholic Charities, we understand the causes, scope and ramifications of poverty," Father Snyder said. "While certain choices and behaviors can lead individuals into poverty, far more often the greater fault lies with the social and economic structures that shape the opportunities for the poor."

"The Campaign to Reduce Poverty in America is critical for a long-term solution," Father Snyder said. "Only through partnerships between government and community leaders, will we develop the capacity and the scale necessary to attack poverty in a comprehensive and sustainable way. With the help of people across the country, as volunteers, as contributors or as supporters of this campaign, we can make a real difference in the lives of so many of the most vulnerable among us."

BURMA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

315 E. Washington Blvd. in Fort Wayne. Business hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Thursday, 8 a.m. to noon on Friday. Monetary donations also help purchase these items. Anyone interested in donating should call Jaquel Taeron at (260) 422-5625 x277.

A tax receipt can be provided.

Jobs

Refugees come into the country owing the federal government money, and federal aid such as Medicaid runs out after eight months. This means they have to find work quickly. Catholic Charities has developed a network of refugee-friendly employers, but the community can help find employers as well by suggesting businesses and business owners who might be willing to hire refugees. Noting that refugees are good workers, Catholic Charities has a list of employers who have had success employing refugees that employers considering hiring refugees may contact for reference. The refugee job development coordinator for Catholic Charities is Alyssa Patterson. She can be reached at (260) 422-5625 x231.

Volunteers

The need for volunteers at Catholic Charities to help with refugees is almost endless. Individuals are needed to teach English as a second language, often one-on-one with a family. They are needed to help children, who often can't even read their own language, with their homework. Adults need tutored

in order to take the BMV written and road tests and acquire driver's licenses.

Volunteers are also needed to help teach refugees the American lifestyle. This includes laws and customs, how to operate a stove and other appliances, what not to put down the toilet, how to clean and with which cleaning products. These skills help refugees become more quickly accepted in American society.

Volunteers are also needed to sort through donations, help prepare and furnish living spaces and transport donations in trucks. Volunteers with special paperwork skills can help with documentation. Seasoned community volunteers can even train and coordinate other volunteers. Volunteers are also needed to transport refugees to work, the grocery store and the doctor's office. They are needed to serve as mentors and friends who show refugees around, make them feel welcome and include them in the activities of the community. In all of these ways, average people can help Catholic Charities make the long transition for refugees complete.

For more information on volunteering, contact Paula Spall at (260) 422-5625 x265.

For more information on Catholic Charities' programs and opportunities to help, please visit their Web site at www.ccfwsb.org.

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EDITORIAL

Reprogramming skin cells offers moral, optimistic option

The announcement last month that scientists have found a way to make human skin cells behave like embryonic stem cells is very good news, indeed. Shinya Yamanaka of Kyoto University in Japan and Junying Yu and James Thomson of the University of Wisconsin-Madison have discovered a method for reprogramming skin cells to act like embryonic cells.

While more study is needed, it seems likely this new development will put to rest the argument that it is acceptable to destroy human embryos in order to harvest their stem cells, because that is the most promising way to cure devastating diseases like diabetes and Parkinson's.

The Catholic Church has consistently taught that destroying human life — even in its earliest embryonic stage — never can be justified, even if it were the only way to obtain some perceived good. On an Oct. 10 visit to Korea, Pope Benedict XVI reminded his audience that "... under no circumstances may a human being be manipulated or treated as a mere instrument for experimentation."

Nevertheless, a very strong lobby was mounted in the past few years that pushed for government funding for research that uses "left-over" embryos from fertility clinics or embryos created through cloning, specifically for the purpose of harvesting their stem-cells. The stem cells of embryos were particularly sought after because they are "pluripotent," able to be coaxed into different kinds of body cells.

Embryonic stem-cell research has been fraught with scientific as well as moral problems, however, and in the several years it has been conducted, not one treatment benefiting a patient has been produced. On the other hand, adult stem-cell research, which uses expendable sources from born humans — like umbilical cord blood and bone marrow — has shown great promise and has produced helpful treatments for thousands of patients.

Still, embryonic stem-cell research ironically has remained the Holy Grail for many researchers, who have managed to ignore or belittle the successes of adult stem-cell research. Lobbying efforts aided by celebrity endorsements have produced funding allocations for embryonic research at the state level into the billions of dollars, even though the research on embryonic cells has yet to produce a single cure. Funding at the federal level for embryonic research has been restricted by the vetoes of President George W. Bush because of the moral issues involved.

Now we have the welcome news that this new method of stem-cell research is effective without being morally objectionable: It doesn't create or destroy human embryos, nor does it involve harvesting eggs from women — a part of the cloning process that involves medical risk to the egg donor as well as moral objections.

As might have been predicted, this good news has proponents of embryonic stem-cell research on the defensive, for they have invested years, millions of dollars and their reputations on embryonic research. Some of these researchers and their backers continue to insist that embryonic stem-cell research should go forward, in spite of the new breakthrough.

It's time for these people to wake up and smell the coffee: Embryonic stem-cell research hasn't fulfilled its hype and wild promises, and it's time to put the money and energy into research that actually is working and does not offend the moral sensibilities of most people. The embryonic stem-cell researchers would do well to follow the example of Dr. Ian Wilmut, the British scientist who cloned Dolly the sheep and who has said that he plans to give up the cloning technique that he had used for Dolly and concentrate instead on this new stem-cell research, for both practical and social reasons.

It's also time for people to realize that, as the National Catholic Bioethics Center noted in a statement about the new breakthrough: "... it is never necessary for laboratory researchers to cross fundamental moral lines in order for science and medicine to make real and enduring advances."

U.S. should prohibit human cloning

Most Americans probably would be surprised to learn that the United States has no laws against human cloning. Bills prohibiting human cloning have been introduced in the U.S. Congress by Sen. Sam Brownback and Rep. Dave Weldon, but the bills are languishing in committees.

The various reactions to the recent breakthrough in stem-cell research noted above serve as an important reminder that some scientists are determined to pursue human cloning, both for research and reproductive purposes, no matter what. Thus, it is urgent for the United States to join the approximately 25 other nations, including Canada, France and Germany, that already have laws prohibiting human cloning.

Today's Catholic editorial board consists of Bishop John M. D'Arcy, Ann Carey, Don Clemmer, Father Mark Gurtner, Father Michael Heintz, Tim Johnson and Vince LaBarbera.

COMMENTARY

TODAY'S CATHOLIC welcomes letters from readers. All letters must be signed and include a phone number and address for verification. Today's Catholic reserves the right to edit for clarity and length. Address letters to: Today's Catholic • P.O. Box 11169 • Fort Wayne, IN • 46856-1169 or e-mail to: editor@fw.diocesefwsb.org

Silent annunciations

Before we leave Gabriel's annunciation to Zechariah, certain questions must be answered. Why did Zechariah, who is described as "observing all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blamelessly," not accept the words of Gabriel? While no definitive answer can be given, it would appear that he adopted a type of legalistic spirituality, which focused on careful observance, down to the minutest detail, of the precepts of the Law. This was prominent in the tradition of the Pharisees.

But true faith moves beyond such an approach. It emphasizes clinging to the Lord for one's support, security and spiritual growth as written in Isaiah: "Unless your faith is firm, you shall not be firm."

It would be an anachronism to say that Zechariah was a child of the Enlightenment, demanding proof. Such, in a way, seems natural. Even St. Augustine in his Confessions noted: "I wished to be made just as certain of things, as I was certain that seven and three are 10." We must never forget, however, that true faith does not offer proof. It always demands greater trust.

I had grasped God's garment in the void but my hand slipped on the rich silk of it. The 'everlasting arms' my sister loved to remember must have upheld my leaden weight from falling, even so, for though I claw at empty air and feel nothing, no embrace, I have not plummeted.

— Denise Levertov

Finally, Gabriel indicates one of the essential but overlooked elements that is necessary to enter more deeply into the redemptive mystery — silence.

How silently, how silently,
The wondrous gift is given;
So God imparts to human hearts

The blessings of his heaven
No ear may hear his coming...
— "O Little Town of Bethlehem"

Part of the ascetic of Advent for all of us is to reflect upon and enfold the words of the psalmist from Psalm 37: "Be still before the Lord."



ADVENT REFLECTIONS

MSGR. THOMAS McDONNELL

Perhaps another part of the birth of Christ narratives might lead us to a deeper appreciation of the role of silence in our spiritual strivings, namely the journey of the Wise Men. Theirs was a silent annunciation but they understood its meaning as we read in Matthew's Gospel:

"Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage." How did they come to believe this truth?

Explorers of the interior life often focus upon what they call the inner word — the activity of the Spirit working in the deepest part of our deepest selves.

And to be alert and sensitive to such workings we need an inner quiet and silence. (I believe it was such alertness, which would have led to Elizabeth's conviction about the birth of John the Baptist.)

At any rate, by God's grace, in the quiet of their hearts, the Wise

Men heard the good news of the birth of Christ. And they began their journey. One must not underestimate the hardships they encountered. But theirs was a trust in the providential care of God. Ultimately, they were rewarded with being memorialized as being an intrinsic part of the birth narratives. We must never forget, however, that their journey to Bethlehem began in silence and alertness to the promptings of God. Two thousand years later, we must learn to imitate them.

As often happens, the description of the Wise Men's journey has one puzzling point. Why did they lose sight of the star?

Admittedly, we are in the realm of speculation. But since this is an integral part of their story, we must try to provide an answer. I would suggest that having arrived at Jerusalem; they began to turn their attention to more mundane concerns, for example, gathering supplies for the return journey, etc. Quite simply, they took their eyes off the light and began to focus on self. And sometimes, though for different reasons, we tend to do the same.

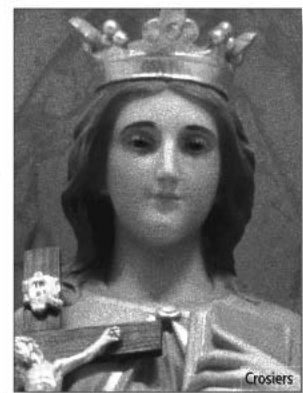
Msgr. Thomas McDonnell is a priest from the Archdiocese of Boston.

Adelaide of Burgundy

931-999

feast - December 16

Born in Burgundy, in France, Adelaide died at a convent she had founded at Seltz, in Alsace. In between, she married King Lothair of Italy and, after his death, became the second wife of Otto the Great, the first holy Roman emperor. The 20 years after Otto's death in 973 were a period of turmoil for Adelaide, as both her son and grandson had turned against her. But her final years were peaceful. Known as a conscientious and generous empress, Adelaide was called "a marvel of beauty and goodness" in a memoir by an abbot of Cluny.



Put your stamp on it: Holiday postage avoids seasonal sticking point

WASHINGTON (CNS) — During the Christmas season, when Christmas displays and the public outcry against them get almost equal billing, the tiny postage stamp dares to push the envelope, so to speak.

While some towns are battling over the use of red and green lights on city buildings, Nativity scenes in parks and what to call holiday evergreen trees, the tiny adhesive squares on billions of letters and packages this December will subtly remind postal workers and mail recipients about Christmas and other religious holidays.

This year the Postal Service has issued more than 2.6 billion holiday stamps. The majority of them are called "holiday knits" featuring Christmas images that look like hand-knit evergreens, snowmen, deer and teddy bears.

The rest of the seasonal stamps feature the Madonna and Child and commemorate Kwanzaa, Hanukkah and Muslim festivals.

According to a 2007 press release by the Postal Service, the Madonna and Child stamp has been a U.S. tradition since 1978.

What it doesn't describe is the

road it took to get there.

The series actually got its start in 1966, four years after the first Christmas stamp debuted with a wreath, two candles and the words "Christmas 1962."

The first religious Christmas stamp owes its origin in part to the lobbying efforts of the late Anthony Coviello, a parishioner at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in Waterbury, Conn.

The 1966 stamp, "Madonna and Child With Angels," started a trend of Christmas stamps featuring Renaissance paintings. The series was interrupted in 1977 when the Christmas stamp featured a praying George Washington.

The next year the Postal Service resumed the Madonna and Child stamps and the series has continued ever since, with a close call to stop production in 1995.

When a Postal Service advisory committee voted to replace the Madonna and Child stamp with a Victorian-era angel, a flurry of negative reaction from public interest groups and even then-President Bill Clinton, prompted an immediate reversal.

Marvin Runyon, postmaster

THE WASHINGTON LETTER

CAROL ZIMMERMANN

general at the time, said the Madonna and Child stamp would stay, at least while he was in office, because it had "occupied an important place" for so many years and was "meaningful to so many Americans."

And in 2007, the Madonna and Child stamp is still sticking to its spot in the right corner of millions of pieces of mail. This year's "Madonna of the Carnation" is a detail of a Bernardino Luini painting of the same name from around 1515 and housed in Washington's National Gallery of Art.

Frances Frazier, community relations specialist for the U.S. Postal Service, told Catholic News Service Nov. 28 that every year

LETTER, PAGE 15

The Lord fulfills the prophet's hope



THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

MSGR. OWEN F. CAMPION

2nd Sunday of Advent Mt 3:1-12

The Book of Isaiah provides the first reading for this Advent weekend. Isaiah, in all three of its parts, is majestic and abundant with meaning.

In particular, these verses have a quality of excitement. While Isaiah also warns and challenges, these verses rejoice that God soon will prevail. His will that the Chosen People may live and may prosper will prevail.

He will send to accomplish this wonderful development life a great and redeeming figure, who will be a descendant of Jesse, one of the great figures of Hebrew history.

All this will occur as relief after the problems created by existing order and the lukewarmness, at best, of the people's response to God's love for them.

Because this new leader will come, and because a new way of thinking also will come, the nation has reason to hope. The Lord would fulfill the prophet's hope.

For the second reading, the church gives us a selection from the Epistle to the Romans.

Other than the Lord, no one in early Christianity so influenced the future development of theology as did the Apostle Paul. The Pauline epistles are breathtakingly profound.

In Jesus, the son of God, and the redeemer, but also a human, a fact called the Incarnation by theologians, the miraculous and endless spiritual benefits of the Savior's death and resurrection reach even the most sinful of humans.

In this reading, Paul places the Incarnation and Redemption in the context of God's love.

Central in the third reading this week is John the Baptist. John's call to personal reform speaks for itself. The Gospel's description of John gives details as to what this call means. The saint is not an eccentric, as modern readings of these verses might imply, but rather he is the poorest of the poor.

For instance, honey was a favorite food in first century Palestine. Production of honey had been commercialized and refined. However, the very poor could not buy honey from beekeepers. They had to find wild honey. By the same token, the poor could not afford clothes made of cloth. Instead, they had to wear the hide of animals.

John's dismissal of his critics as vipers was especially harsh. In popular lore at the time, vipers were poisonous, insidious creatures that literally ate their way out of their mothers' bodies to be born, thereby killing their mothers.

Those who exaggerate their own abilities in the process diminish God. The Pharisees and Sadducees, in John's eyes, exalted themselves. No one is exalted. All need God. God needs no one to accomplish the divine will.

Reflection

The first and second readings reveal so well the fact that union with God is the divine plan. God wills that we be free, joyful and

indeed eternally alive. However, while God provides for us and strengthens us, we must choose to be saved. And, we must be sincere in this choice.

What does this choice entail? The third reading, from Matthew's Gospel, about John the Baptist, tells us.

We must set aside everything except life with God as we set our priorities. The Gospel's description of John was not that he had his oddities. Rather, he cast away the things of this world because, in the long run, he realized that they mean nothing.

For us, this is the challenge of living as disciples, and it is the challenge of Advent. We must set our own priorities. We must realize for ourselves what is important, and what is not important. Such discernment can be hard to achieve unless we discipline ourselves and turn ourselves directly toward God, without glancing away or hesitating.

Strengthening ourselves in this process is the purpose of Advent penance and prayer.

READINGS

Sunday: Is 11:1-10 Ps 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17 Rom 15:4-9 Mt 3:1-12

Monday: Is 35:1-10 Ps 85:9ab-14 Lk 5:17-26

Tuesday: Is 40:1-11 Ps 96:1-3, 10-13 Mt 18:12-14

Wednesday: Zec 2:14-17 (Ps) Jdt 13:18bc, 19 Lk 1:26-38

Thursday: Is 41:13-20 Ps 145:1, 9-13ab Mt 11:11-15

Friday: Is 48:17-19 Ps 1:1-4, 6 Mt 11:16-19

Saturday: Sir 48:1-4, 9-11 Ps 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19 Mt 17:9a, 10-13

CATEQUIZ'EM

By Dominic Camplisson

In December the church remembers Francis Xavier, as does this week's quiz.

- Francis is often referred to as the Apostle of
 - the Indies
 - the Steppes
 - the Matterhorn.
- And another title refers to him as Apostle of
 - Morocco
 - Catalonia
 - Japan
- He was a member of this ethnic group found mainly in Spain and France:
 - Moors
 - Basques
 - Celts
- Like many famous churchmen his family was
 - all pagans
 - of the noble class
 - Protestant reformers
- Xavier was an early member of this famous religious order
 - the X-men
 - the Franciscans
 - the Jesuits
- In fact he met and was influenced by this man:
 - John Paul I
 - St. Ignatius of Loyola
 - St. Bernard of Clairvaux
- He met him at a university in this capital city
 - Madrid
 - Potsdam (Berlin)
 - Paris
- Xavier and five others swore to devote themselves to poverty and to serve in two possible locales. One was
 - The Holy Land
 - Tibet
 - Ruthenia
- While the other more vague destination was
 - some east of longitude 33 degrees
 - wherever the pope would send them
 - in the "blighted Isles" (actual location of these is debatable)
- Xavier was sent to Goa a Portuguese enclave in this region
 - India
 - Arabia
 - Africa
- He also visited Japan, there making a study of
 - Japanese language
 - Zen Buddhism
 - bonsai cultivation
- He died on his way to this country:
 - Luxembourg
 - China
 - Russia
- According to the Jesuits' records Xavier is credited with well over half a million of these:
 - conversions to Christianity
 - miles traveled on missionary activity
 - Euros offered in his name to Jesuit causes each year in Europe
- The highest rank Xavier held in the church was
 - religious brother
 - priest
 - bishop (abbot of the order)
- Seventy years after his death Xavier was
 - declared a holy terror for his use of the Inquisition
 - absolved of the allegations of heresy for adopting Buddhist practices
 - canonized

ANSWERS:

1.a, 2.c, 3.b, 4.b, 5.c, 6.b, 7.c, 8.a, 9.b, 10.a, 11.a, 12.b, 13.a, 14.b, 15.c.

Synagogue was meeting house for prayer, study

What were the synagogues in the Bible like? Anonymous

The word "synagogue" consists of two Greek words meaning "with the leader." A synagogue means an assembly, collection or gathering. A synagogue is specifically a Jewish place of assembly for prayer and instruction.

Since the time of King Solomon 970 B.C., the focus of Jewish worship was the Temple at Jerusalem. But this temple was destroyed in 587 B.C. by the Babylonians. Many of the Jews were exiled to Babylon (in modern Iraq). Eventually the Jews were dispersed outside of Palestine to places like Alexandria in Egypt.

Father John McKenzie says a cult centered upon the temple ritual was impossible and the synagogue was organized as a substitute to maintain Jewish unity in faith and worship. Eventually King Herod the Great (d. 4 B.C.) rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem and this temple existed during the life of Christ, but it was soon destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70 and it has never been rebuilt since.

Scholars argue about the date for the origin of the synagogue.

Father McKenzie says it may go back to the time of the Babylonian exile (587-536 B.C.) or at least to the time of Ezra and the return from exile around 458 B.C.

By the time of Jesus, the synagogue was an established and essential part of Jewish life and worship. Originally the synagogue was probably a private gathering in private dwellings, but now the synagogue was a distinct building.

The temple was the place where God dwelled and where sacrifice was performed.

The synagogue, however, was a meeting house for prayer and the study of the law.

F. L. Cross says the synagogue service consisted chiefly of readings from Scripture, accompanied by prayers, canticles and sometimes a sermon. The most important piece of furniture was the ark, a cupboard in which the sacred rolls of the Law were kept. At least 10 males were required for public worship. Men and women were segregated in the seating.

Father McKenzie says the management of the synagogue and the order of the service was done by the ruler of the synagogue. The

THAT'S A GOOD QUESTION

service was actually conducted by members of the congregation or by guests, both by invitation.

The synagogue service was held on the Sabbath and feast days. B. Metzger adds that the synagogues were also used to teach the young, to house visitors and for communal meals.

The oldest remains of a Jewish synagogue are found near Alexandria in Egypt from 250-200 B.C.

The ancient writer Strabo mentions a Jewish quarter at Alexandria.

Father McKenzie says the Jewish-Roman War of A.D. 66-70 probably caused the demolition of most of the synagogues in Palestine. There are no synagogue remains earlier than the third century A.D.

The Palestinian synagogue consisted of a rectangular hall with a nave and two side aisles. The entrance had a vestibule and possibly a portico. There was a gallery on two sides and in the rear to segregate the genders. The synagogue was furnished with a chest for the scroll, a tribune on which speakers and readers stood, a table, lamps and horns and trumpets for ceremonies. The front wall was heavily decorated with hangings. Adjoining the main room were smaller rooms for work and storage.

The synagogue at Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee is the best preserved Palestinian synagogue. F. L. Cross says some ancient synagogues have mosaic floors and walls decorated with Old Testament paintings, like the synagogue at Dura Europos on the right bank of the Euphrates River halfway between Aleppo and Baghdad.

The synagogue not only helped preserve the Jewish faith, but it also helped the spread of Christianity.

Jesus attended the synagogue regularly and taught in the synagogue. In a synagogue Jesus cured a man with a shriveled hand, a demoniac with an unclean spirit

and a stooped woman. Jesus usually read the Bible and gave the homily in the synagogue, because this gave him an opportunity to proclaim the Gospel of Christianity.

St. Paul also preached in the synagogues on his missionary journeys, such as the synagogue at Damascus in Syria, the synagogue at Salamis on the island of Cyprus, the synagogues at Antioch in Pisidia and Iconium in Turkey, the synagogue at Thessaloniki in Macedonia and the synagogue at Corinth in Greece. Paul even spent three months debating with the people at the synagogue in Ephesus.

Father McKenzie notes that the synagogue service was important in the development of the Christian Mass. The Christians changed the Sabbath to a Sunday and used the prayer and Bible readings of the synagogue service. They added the celebration of the Eucharist.

Father Richard Hire pastor of St. Martin de Porres Parish, Syracuse answered this week's question.

Dance lesson

I was walking into the dance school office to pay our daughters' tuition and order some sweatshirts for a Christmas performance. The girls had just finished their first rehearsal, and I was grateful that the office was open on a Saturday. That's when I saw and heard her, standing, hands on hips, and screaming at the dance coordinator.

"You'd think that since this is a ballet school that my daughter would have time on stage dancing. She auditions. She obviously performs well because she is offered a part! But this?! This is not a part! This is ridiculous!"

The woman was youngish, thin, dressed in a way that suggested wealth and power, and probably pretty if her face wasn't contorted with anger. The dance coordinator answered her raving calmly.

"I think this is just a misunderstanding."

"It's not a misunderstanding! This is misrepresentation! My daughter works hard daily! I expected her to get a better part. But after this rehearsal I can see this is a farce! How long is she going to be on stage? Two minutes! My daughter is extremely disappointed! Extremely disappointed!"

The coordinator spoke calmly again.

"Every dancer cannot be center stage and have a major part. I'm sorry if this is not what you expected."

Obviously the woman did not hear the coordinator.

"My daughter studies ballet! She should be doing ballet! Am I out of line? Am I out of line?"

The question was rhetorical for she did not wait for an answer. I briefly thought of interjecting a "Yes! You are out of line and a bit loud to boot," but the conversation was not my business and besides,



EVERYDAY CATHOLIC

Theresa A. Thomas

she wouldn't have heard me anyway.

The woman continued to rant, arms waving wildly, as I finished my business in the office and left. Do you want to know what the part was that this prima ballerina's mother thought so unworthy? The ballerina, just five years old, was cast as a "happy cloud." I'm not kidding.

Although I felt sorry for the coordinator, the one I really pitied was the child. I wondered if mother had ever told her "no." What would happen the first time the world said "no" after years of mother only saying "yes"? What would happen during this girl's SAT test? Her first job interview? Those other situations where mother could not rescue her? Would she ever know the joy of hard work and yes, even the taste of mediocrity before success? And would she resent her mother later, not knowing if any of her successes were really hers?

Of course I'm assuming a lot here. I am not privy to this family's private life and dynamics. It is certainly possible that this is an isolated incident, but I doubt it. At minimum the outburst indicated an extremely unhealthy attitude.

I wanted to lean over to the mother and suggest that she be patient, that while it is difficult, that she should let her daughter earn her spot after much time at practice so that she would deserve it and truly appreciate it. (I also chuckled over the irony of this child being cast as a "happy cloud" when a severe storm was

obviously brewing.)

In pondering this situation I realized that sometimes I am like that mother. No, I do not go around demanding things for my children, but I often act that way towards God for myself. From an early age I had a timeline of my life in mind. By that age I would do this. By that age I would have that. I prayed for success and completion of my plans. But God had other ideas. He knew that if I got exactly what I wanted before I had worked hard that it would be detrimental to me in the long run. He knew that I was not ready even though I thought I was.

And so I struggled through early parenting issues, through first attempts at writing, through balancing the housework with being a loving parent and spouse. Those struggles strengthened me, made me a better person.

Life is a dance, you know ... with God, with ourselves, with others. We learn to give. We learn to take. We learn that sometimes God says "yes," sometimes "no," and sometimes "not yet." One lesson of this dance called life is to learn that we're not entitled to everything. Sometimes we have to work hard and, with a happy spirit, just wait and see.

Theresa Thomas, parishioner of St. Matthew Cathedral Parish in South Bend, is the mother of nine children and wife of David. Visit her Web site at www.theresathomas.typepad.com.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH

By Patricia Kasten

Gospel for December 9, 2007

Matthew 3:1-12

Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for Second Sunday of Advent, Cycle A: the mission work of John the Baptist. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

THE BAPTIST	HEAVEN	ISAIAH
CRYING OUT	PREPARE	THE WAY
STRAIGHT	CAMEL'S	LEATHER
LOCUSTS	JORDAN	VIPERS
FRUIT	ABRAHAM	TREES
FIRE	SANDALS	WINNOWER
THRESHING	WHEAT	CHAFF

PREPARE THE WAY

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

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

about this time the Postal Service gets complaints about its stamps, including objections that they are called "Christmas stamps" — even though they're listed as "holiday stamps" on the Web site.

And while some complain that religious stamps are even made available, Frazier said plenty of others complain that there are not enough of them.

This year the Postal Service hopes the 700 million Madonna and Child stamps will satisfy customer needs. It also has printed 50 million Hanukkah and 40 million Eid stamps.

The Postal Service has already identified several works of art that it plans to use for future Madonna and Child stamps and it doesn't expect to run out of images any time soon. The hard part, said Frazier, is finding different styles and varieties.

John's garment is a sign of ascetical, prophetic calling

What was St. John the Baptist's stay in the desert like?

The Gospel of Matthew says St. John the Baptist was preaching in the desert of Judea. He was clothed in a garment of camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist.

Grasshoppers and wild honey were his food. The Book of Leviticus permitted the Israelites to eat grasshoppers.

The garb of St. John the Baptist harks back to the prophet Elijah in the Old Testament who wore a hairy garment with a leather girdle. The hairy garment is a sign of ascetical and prophetic calling.

Tradition locates the desert of St. John the Baptist two kilometers west of the traditional site of his birth at Ain Karim.

G. Freeman says here you can visit the Greek Melkite "Monastery of St. John in the Wilderness," where a chapel and convent were erected by the Franciscans in 1922. Remains of

a 12th-century monastery are built over a grotto with a spring known as the "Spring of the Hermit," where John is believed to have lived in seclusion.

An alternative site for seclusion, proposed by Fr. C. Kopp, is five miles west of Hebron at Taffuh, where, in a deep narrow valley to the southwest, are the ruins of a well still known as the "Well of Baptism." Buildings belonging to a church and monastery have been identified as belonging to the reign of the Byzantine emperor Justinian (527-565).

Since John was born in the land of Judea, the wilderness of Judea is where he presumably spent his youth. Parts of this wilderness are wild and barren. It is a desolate, empty and lonely land.

G. Wigoder says, in the Desert of Judah rain is scarce and the chalk of the surface lets water run off quickly to the rift, instead of absorbing it to benefit plant life. The collecting run-off has cut



FATHER RICHARD HIRE

HIRE HISTORY

dangerous clefts and gorges. This desert has always lacked towns and stable villages. In Christian times, hermits lived in its caves.

J. Finegan mentions a possible connection between the boyhood of John and the Essene monks at Qumran in the Desert of Judah. Because Zechariah and Elizabeth were already of advanced age at the birth of John, it may be supposed that the child was left without father and mother at a relatively early time. How this child could live in the wilderness is difficult to understand, unless there were those who received him and helped him.

In fact there was a community of men living in the Judean wilderness at Qumran, of whom it was said that, although they did not marry, they adopted children and raised them in their own teachings, and it is at least possible that John was taken here as a child. This possibility encounters problems, of course, since a serious dislike existed between the people of Qumran and the regular temple priests. Zechariah, John's father, was of a priestly family.

Father J. McKenzie adds that, if John baptized in the Jordan Valley near the Dead Sea, he could scarcely have failed to have some contact with the Essenes. We need not assume, however, that John was a member of the Qumran community who became dissatisfied with it and turned to the solitary life. But it is easy to assume that some of John's disciples had shared the Qumran experience before they joined themselves to him.

Father McKenzie also mentions

the great influence the desert made on the people of the Bible. Like the sea, the desert is both a barrier and a means of communication. The desert is a reminder of the reality of danger, hardship and death. The desert was a refuge for fugitives like King David. Job says to lose one's way in the desert was almost certain death. Isaiah calls the desert a haunt of demons and dangerous wild animals.

Father McKenzie notes that the desert is an important religious image in the Bible. Moses first encountered the God Yahweh in the burning bush of the desert. The desert wandering of the people fleeing from Egypt is a type of the encounter of man with God, especially in a crisis. The prophet Elijah met God in the desert. St. John the Baptist began his preaching in the desert. Jesus spent 40 days in the desert before he began his public ministry. After his conversion, St. Paul spent time in Arabia, probably a sojourn in the desert.

The essence of Christmas

That morning, I woke up a bit earlier than usual, and even though we were in the fresher season of the year in Chad, Africa, where I was missioned, I could already feel it was going to be a very hot day. On my way to shower, I passed through my office and gave a glance at my agenda on the desk. Penciled in was Silambi 10 p.m. It didn't register at all. Why had I written that?

Silambi is a parish village about eight miles east of Moissala where I lived. I visited the people there regularly and knew them well. There wouldn't be a parish activity going on. When the sun sets, the parish offices shut down. No electricity to provide light. So why did I make that note?

Dressed and ready for the day, I stopped once again by my desk, and this time I looked at the date on my agenda calendar — Dec. 24. I

had to be in Silambi that night for the Christmas Eve Mass celebration. I laughed at myself. My first Christmas in Chad, and I'd forgotten what day it was.

Well, I had my excuses. First of all, Christmas is usually cold, even in Sicily where I come from, but Moissala's very hot. Secondly, there were no Christmas lights around the village, no Christmas trees, no stores, no Santas. Third, no holiday food. How could it be Christmas without fruitcake and eggnog?

That night I sat with people around a friendly fire under a magnificent mango tree in Silambi. Only poor people around me, they had nothing, not only on that Christmas night but



COMBONI MISSIONS
FATHER PETER CIUCULLA

God is one of us

Maybe you wonder how I can remember her words after more than a dozen years. Because she struck my heart to the core. I went to Chad to evangelize the poor, and I was being evangelized in a most profound way. I had to come to Silambi, a poor village in the heart of Africa, to be told by an old woman — with no education as we westerners know it — that the magic of Christmas doesn't come from lights, trees or shopping centers but from God himself who chooses to become one of us. She captured the essence of Christmas while that morning I was depending on Santa Claus and some tinsel for my Christmas vibes. It

came to me then, my favorite quote from "The Little Prince" — what is essential is invisible to the eye.

Now, of course, I'm back to cold weather, lights, trees and shopping centers,

and I find myself busy thinking about which gifts I have to buy. But I keep telling myself, "Peter, remember the real Magic of this season," and mingled with the Christmas music at the mall, I hear the rhythm of a drum and the voice of an old woman in Silambi.

Merry Christmas

all the nights and days of the year, but they were happy. More than that, they were peaceful and serene. To celebrate Christmas, they didn't need lights or trees or shopping centers or gift exchanges. The celebration of the Eucharist around the fire was enough to welcome Christ into their lives.

After Mass we stayed in the village to dance and drink some bili bili, a kind of local beer.

This is a magic night, the night God has decided to share life with us, the night in which God has chosen to come down to us in order to take us with him to heaven.

While we were celebrating and welcoming the baby Jesus, I asked an old woman, who did not know how to read and write, why she was so happy? She looked at me and said, "This is a magic night, the night God has decided to share life with us, the night in which God has chosen to come down to us in order to take us with him to heaven."

The coming of Jesus into our world is the occasion for a big celebration, she continued, because we are worthy in the eyes of God. We have a special value for him, and he is ready to let everything go to be with us, to be like us and to share life and death with us. God has chosen to share our own poverty.

Comboni Missionaries Father Peter Ciuculla is mission director of the North American Province of the Comboni Missionaries, a worldwide religious institute founded by St. Daniel Comboni to carry the Gospel to "the world's poorest and most abandoned people."

Meet the Priest

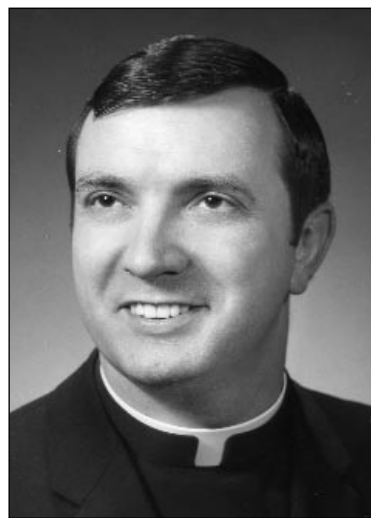
Msgr. James J. Wolf

Ordained May 31, 1969

Pastor, Sacred Heart, Warsaw

What was your primary influence in your decision to become a priest?

Family and priests I met.



What is the most rewarding part of being a priest?

Being able to bring Christ in the Eucharist and his forgiveness in reconciliation to the people.

What interests or hobbies do you have?

I like to read novels, snow ski and follow all sports.

Do you have a pet?

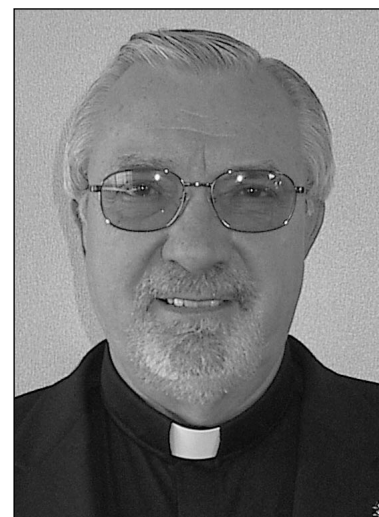
No. As I tell the school kids, I have Father Bueter living with me. I don't need one.

What do you do for relaxation?

Go to a movie or read.

What is your favorite reading material?

Action novels — Robert Parker, John Grisham, Tom Clancy, Robert Ludlum.



What is the best part of being Catholic?

Being able to receive the sacraments.

What is your favorite prayer?

Canticle of Zechariah (Lk 1:68-79) from morning prayer

What is your favorite Scripture passage?

Micah 6:8 and Lk 1:68-79

Who is your favorite pope?

John XXIII

What is your favorite food?

pan fried chicken and pizza

What is something interesting about yourself that most people might not know?

I installed the toilet seats in the women's restroom of the Cat's Meow when it was being built.

How do you prefer to be addressed?

I really don't have a preference.

Sports

ICCL hoopsters begin hardwood action

BY ELMER J. DANCH

SOUTH BEND — The 62nd basketball season of the Inter-City Catholic League (ICCL) will provide a wealth of hardwood action for more than 300 Catholic grade school youth in the South Bend metropolitan area. It includes 16 varsity teams and 15 Colors Division teams. Joe Kozinski directs the league.

Divisions and teams:

- John Bosco West — Christ the King, Corpus Christi, Holy Cross and Holy Family
- John Bosco East — St. Anthony, St. Joseph, South Bend, St. Matthew and St. Thomas, Elkhart
- St. Martin De Porres West — St. John the Baptist, St. Jude, St. Michael, Plymouth, and St. Pius X, Granger.
- St. Martin De Porres East — Queen of Peace, St. Bavo, St. Joseph, Mishawaka, and St. Monica.
- Boys Colors basketball — Christ the King Blue, Christ the King Gold, Christ the King White, Corpus Christi Red, Holy Cross Blue, St. Anthony Gold, St. Joseph, Mishawaka, Green, St. Joseph, South Bend, Blue, St. John Maroon, St. Jude Green, St. Matthew Black, St. Pius X, Granger, Blue, St. Thomas, Elkhart, Gold, and St. Thomas, Elkhart, Maroon.

Dec. 2 game results

Eight basketball games opened the 62nd successive season of ICCL Sunday, Dec. 2, with the following results:

Corpus Christi's Cougars, led by the 17-point scoring of Tate Bellegrante, topped Christ the King, 39-32, in a closely fought contest. Jake Stone collected 12 points for Christ the King.

In another tightly-fought contest, St. Anthony defeated St. Thomas of Elkhart, 36-31. Robert Mischler poured in 17 points for St. Anthony and Parker Devenney pitched in 14 points for St. Thomas.

Holy Family downed Holy Cross, 41-34. Joe Demaegd popped in 15 points and Zach Fozo added 10 points. Tre Olive tossed in 14 points and Dana Johnson added 10 points to pace Holy Cross.

St. Jude defeated St. Pius of Granger, 40-24, leading from start to finish. Michael Henry tallied 13 points for the victors. Nick Maldonado hit the nets for 11 points for St. Pius.

Queen of Peace rolled over St. Bavo, 34-15, with Nick Johnson leading the victors with 12 points.

In other varsity games, St. Matthew edged St. Joseph South Bend, 24-17, St. Michael nipped St. John the Baptist, 21-19; and St. Joseph, Mishawaka, defeated St. Monica, 66-10.

Complete schedule and contact information can be found on line at www.icclsports.org.

USF COUGARS TAKE A LOSS TO CARROLL COLLEGE IN NAIA FCS SEMIFINAL After University of Saint Francis quarterback Jeff Wedding and Bo Thompson combined to give the second-ranked Cougars a 7-0 lead over No. 5 Carroll College, the Fighting Saints retaliated with 23 unanswered points to end USF's 10th season, 23-7, on Dec. 1 in Helena, Mont. "Frozen tundra" was no exaggeration at Nelson Stadium where wind chills were minus 2 degrees when the two perennial NAIA powers got their fourth meeting.

Squires, Lady Crusaders first week CYO basketball Blue League winners

BY MICHELLE CASTLEMAN

FORT WAYNE — Catholic Youth Organization's (CYO) first week of league play saw the reigning Blue League champions, Benoit Academy, and the 2006-2007 tournament runner-ups, St. Joseph Hessen Cassel Squires, face off in the opening contest of the day at Hessen Cassel gym.

Benoit beat Hessen Cassel all three meetings last season. But this time, the Squires came out on top beating the Phoenix 56-41 in a hard-fought battle.

Squires Coach Jim Knapke attributed his team's win to their second half surge. "We came out flat, but finished strong," said Knapke.

The Squires were led by James Knapke with 25 points while eighth-grader Brian Nichter chipped in a career-high 14. J.J. Curry was the top scorer for the Phoenix with 14.

In other action at Hessen Cassel, St. Joseph, Decatur, topped St. John the Baptist, Fort Wayne, 62-30. Selking led all scorers with 23 for St. Joe Decatur while Starks added 12 and Richards 11 for the Eagles. Next up, the Decatur girls routed the Lady Eagles from St. John Fort Wayne, 49-8. Rinley pumped in 12 points and Hake had six.

In the final two games, St. Therese took on Queen of Angels. St. Therese claimed the girls' honors in a tight game, 27-24, and Queen of Angels were victors in

the boys match up 36-30. Top scorers for their teams were Dorman (12), Berg (19), Luegring (11) and Stout (20).

The Lady Crusaders from St. Therese finished on top of the Blue League last season and were runner-up to Benoit Academy in the 2007 tournament. Leading most of the game, St. Therese was pleased to start off 1-0 victory over Queen of Angels.

"We could not stop Ave Stout, but played very well as a team," explained Coach Linda Luegring. "We are small in numbers and stature, but pass the ball well and are very unselfish," added Luegring, who is also coaching the fifth and sixth grade team at St. Therese this season.

"With Holy Cross College I went to New Orleans to help rebuild a home after Katrina. I went to Ghana to learn about modern Africa and the history of the slave trade. I learned where we have been, and where I am going. The choice I made to come here made it all possible."

— Steve Henderson, '08, Student Government Association President



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THE CUTTING EDGE

SISTER MARGIE LAVONIS, CSC

When I was in graduate school at Boston College I was introduced to process theology. The main premise or thought of this theology is that we can "influence" God by fulfilling our own potential. Needless to say, for a person who was taught that God is, was and always remains the same, this blew my mind. Process theologians conclude that since we are part of God through our membership in the body of Christ, when we grow, a part of God also grows. Wow, what a responsibility.

Years later, as I reflect on this concept, I can see a lot of truth in it in the sense that when we develop our potential we enrich

the body of Christ. A related concept is that Christ is born again and again through his followers.

Father Ronald Rolheiser, in his wonderful book "Holy Longing," which I highly recommend to anyone serious about spiritual growth, talks about incarnating or birthing Christ. He reminds us that it is through our acts of love that Jesus is revealed over and over again to our world. God is love and, in a sense, the more we live in a loving manner the greater God becomes. When we love, love grows.

As the celebration of Christmas, the incarnation of Jesus, approaches, it would be well to take some quality time to reflect on how we are or are not giving birth to the God who is love in our daily lives? Do we incarnate God in the way we live our lives?

I believe it was one of the great saints who said that Christ has no hands and feet but ours, etc. Jesus told us over and over again that he came to reveal God's love. During his earthly life he commissioned his followers to carry on his mission. It was the central theme of his ministry.

During the week after Christmas day

many of the daily Scripture readings for Mass are from the letters of St. John. The main message of these letters is that God is love. He tells us that it is only when we abide in love do we abide in God. He goes on to say that if we claim to love God but hate our neighbors we are liars. Those are strong words but apt in the light of all the war and violence around us. Unfortunately he did not say to love only the people we like, care about or appeal to us.

God's word challenges us to live the Christmas spirit all year long. The spirit of loving, of giving of ourselves, of incarnating God should become a habit for all who call themselves Christian. It is not reserved for certain times of the year. The poor always need food and clothes. Homeless centers always need people to help with meals and other activities. Nursing homes are always filled with lonely people who appreciate visits from those who will sit and listen. Friends like to hear from us at other times of the year also. The spirit of kindness and generosity should be a regular part of who we are.

God waits every day to be given birth in



YOUNG ADULT PERSPECTIVES

our world. We are God's body. God becomes flesh in us and in our actions.

During this beautiful season let us reflect on how we will continue to give birth to the God of peace and love throughout the New Year. The only New Year's resolution a Christian needs to make is to be a more loving person all year long.

Sister Margie Lavonis, CSC, a former campus minister and vocation director, works for the Sisters of the Holy Cross communications department. mlavonis@cscsisters.org.

The lesson buried in a boastful Christmas letter

Chestnuts roasting on an open fire, raw pride nipping on your prose. Stunning feats being sung in a card and kids dressed up like dynamos.

The Christmas song we compose in the annual family letter can sound awfully sour compared with the lyrics Nat King Cole crooned.

In our modern rendition, the "eyes all aglow" belong to proud parents, not tiny tots. And those reindeer really know how to fly; they made the honor roll.

I'm as guilty as you. We roll our eyes at the boastful letters, then we roll up our sleeves, racking our brains for the year's most impressive accomplishments. We wrap them in muscular language, trying to recall the active verbs of resume rhetoric like "execute" and "implement."

Whenever possible, we reference ranks: captain, senior consultant, most valuable, best in class.

To back it up, we quote from a panel of experts: the teacher, the coach, the priest, the principal, the boss.

Then we quantify our success: winning first place in soccer, scoring a 33 on the ACT, shaving two minutes off a run, taking a 10-day trip to seven countries, overseeing 20 employees.

In the end, our attempt to update friends reads more like a request for a job promotion.

Of course, it's hard to avoid some of these techniques. They help us fill a blank page in comprehensible terms.

But on a deeper level, this holiday custom provides us with a unique opportunity for self inventory. How we sum up a year can be incredibly telling — if you read between the lines.

When my mom asked me to write my portion of our family Christmas letter, I made note of the notables. Easy enough. Then I read through it, surprised to discover that the entire paragraph pertained to my education and career. The lingering questions being: Do I have friends? Hobbies? A life outside work?

It was a reality check. I'm reworking the paragraph — and the lifestyle.

Our achievement-centric society takes hold at a young age. By the time you finish your schooling, there's pressure to not just begin a career, but to excel at it, to quickly earn the kind of accolades for which Christmas letters are notorious.

But the measurements we find handy and acceptable are often faulty. And the feats we deem admirable and important are often meaningless. In the scheme of things, that is.



TWENTY SOMETHING

BY CHRISTINA CAPECCHI

Because the scheme is incredibly broad, spanning back to a baby born two millennia ago. His arrival did not involve a new Lexus or an upscale B&B. Just a bumpy donkey ride and a dusty manger. He did not go on to be voted Most Popular. Truth is, he was kind of a loner, befriending lepers and defending an adulteress.

Jesus didn't see the Pharisees for their status and power; he saw their hypocrisy. He never paraded virtue; he prayed in private. He took no stock in society's arbitrary metrics, and he made that known. St. Peter wrote, "With the Lord, one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day."

Our only true judge couldn't care less about our rung on the corporate ladder. Rather, he asks us to be good and faithful servants, to feed the hungry and welcome the stranger in our midst.

This December, as bonuses are awarded and progress is chronicled on holly berry stationery, remember this: What really counts cannot be counted.

Christina Capecchi is a freelance writer from Inver Grove Heights, Minn. E-mail her at christinacap@gmail.com.

University of Saint Francis sleep out rallies community support

BY LAUREN CAGGIANO

FORT WAYNE — Students from the University of Saint Francis experienced a taste of homelessness firsthand Nov. 9.

In solidarity with the homeless population, about 40 University of Saint Francis students participated in a sleep out in "shanty houses" in front of Padua Hall residence hall from 8 p.m. Friday, Nov. 9, to 9 a.m. Saturday morning, Nov. 10. In an effort to involve the greater Fort Wayne community, the students asked for donations of blankets and coats to contribute to the needy through local shelters.

Resident assistant Michael Bechill, 21, a senior biology major from Wauseon, Ohio, was one of the organizers of the event. The resident assistant worked with a team of students to promote and organize the logistics of the event, in particular the box collection. According to Bechill, Stucky Brothers generously donated the boxes for the sleep out.

Bechill said the event was a success and was pleased with the student body's response, as well as the community's outreach.

"The response was huge," Bechill commented. "We received over 100 blankets and coats. People were honking their horns in support all night and someone even dropped off a bunch of hamburgers for us to eat. I was floored by the support."

Likewise, the resident assistant said he was pleasantly surprised by the solidarity exemplified by the Fort Wayne community.

"Coming from a small town I



LAUREN CAGGIANO

Students at the University of Saint Francis garnered community support as they participated in a sleep-out rally in solidarity with the homeless population Nov. 9.

am often skeptical of the 'community' in a larger city," he said. "I now see that community is alive and very well in Fort Wayne."

Participating in a sleep out is one way to promote social justice, but there are other ways to live your faith, according to Bechill.

"The best (way to make a difference) is talk," the student suggested. "Often people ignore things right in front of their eyes because it is easy to turn the other way. This event proves that people care and everyone can make a difference."

For more information about how you can help combat homelessness, visit www.nationalhomeless.org.

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

WHAT'S HAPPENING carries announcements about upcoming events in the diocese. Send in your announcement at least two weeks prior to the event. Mail to: Today's Catholic, P.O. Box 11169, Fort Wayne 46856; or e-mail: fhogan@fw.diocesefwsb.org. Events that require an admission charge or payment to participate will receive one free listing. For additional listings of that event, please call our advertising sales staff at (260) 456-2824 to purchase space.

ADVENT LESSONS AND CAROLS

Fort Wayne — St. John the Baptist Parish, 4500 Fairfield Ave., will host a service of lessons and carols for the Advent season, Sunday, Dec. 9 at 4 p.m. Prelude music will begin at 3:40 p.m. Taking part in the service will be the adult choir, St. John ringers, children's choir, Daniel Quinn, classical guitarist, and Tim Alberding, guitarist/vocalist. All persons are welcome to attend and a time of refreshments will be held following the service.

Day of Reflection

Mishawaka — A day of reflection will be held at Our Lady of Angels Convent, (across from Marian High School) on Wednesday, Dec. 19, from 9:30 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. The theme for the day is "The message of Christmas." Please bring your Bible. The cost of the day is \$15 and includes lunch. Register by Friday, Dec. 14, to Sister Barbara Anne Hallman at (574) 259-5427.

DEVOTIONS

Journey through Advent

Fort Wayne — Secular Franciscan Bob Deck will offer an Advent day of recollection Saturday, Dec. 15, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Lunch will be potluck style. A freewill offering will cover the cost. Bring a Bible and a pencil. Call (260) 490-9571 to register by Dec. 14.

MISC. HAPPENINGS

Montreal Pilgrimage

South Bend — Christ the King Parish is organizing a pilgrimage to St. Joseph's Oratory in Montreal June 16-20, 2008, and will cost \$475 per adult (based on a double-occupancy room). Registration forms can be found online at www.christ-thekingonline.org. A \$50 deposit will reserve your seat. For information call Linda Fitzpatrick (574) 272-3113 ext. 315 or Deacon Steve Lacroix at ext. 316.

Christmas potluck

Fort Wayne — The National Catholic Society of Foresters St. Antoinette Court 870 will have a Christmas potluck Sunday, Dec. 9, from noon to 4 p.m. at the Sacred Heart School basement, 4643 Gaywood Dr. Call (260) 447-2357 for information.

LuersKnight Christmas brunch

Fort Wayne — A Christmas Brunch at the home of Mike and Kathi Stronczek, 4220 Old Mill Rd., will be Sunday, Dec. 9, from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. for holiday fellowship, and to support the LuersKnight auction. RSVP to Bishop Luers at (260) 456-1261.

Cookie walk supports Rosary Society

Mishawaka — The St. Monica Rosary Society will have a cookie walk in the church lower level on Saturday, Dec. 15, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Large assortment of cookies will be available for \$4 a pound.

Cookie walk supports eighth graders

Fort Wayne — St. John the Baptist, 4500 Fairfield Ave., will have a holiday cookie walk and craft fair Sunday, Dec. 9, in the PAC (Gym) from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Treats sold by the pound.

DONATIONS

Mustard Seed Furniture Bank can use your donations

Fort Wayne — The Mustard Seed Furniture Bank accepts donations of bedroom and living room furniture, tables, chairs, bed linens and towels. Items must be in working order and free of rips, tears, stains, burns and animal hair. Donations may be picked up by calling (260) 471-5802. The Mustard Seed is dedicated to providing household furnishings to those in need.

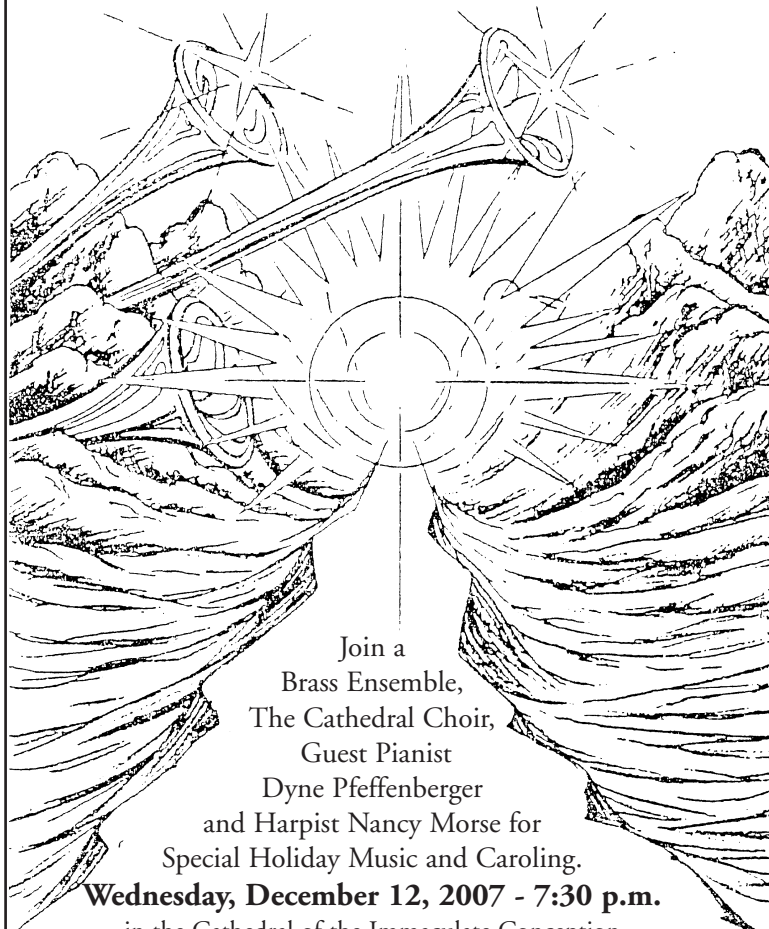
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Catholic homeschooling family in southwest Allen County with seven children desires services of a young woman 18-30 years old to care for two year old twin boys during school hours. Duties also would include driving children to activities and light housework. Applicants could apply for a full-time, live-in position (private bedroom and bathroom) with room and board included, part-time live-in during school week, or school day mornings only. Position begins January 7, 2008 for minimum of five months and up to eighteen months.

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or e-mail sally@familink.com for more information.

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Bernard Teusch, 62, Ss. Peter and Paul

Sister Mary Lawrence Rochel, O.L.V.M., 89, Victory Noll Chapel

Mishawaka

Albert Hums, 85, St. Joseph

Notre Dame

Brother Marius Wittner, CSC, 88, Holy Cross Village

South Bend

Loretta P. Czarniecki, 83, St. Casimir

Susan L. Beutel, 45, St. Jude

Betty L. Wasoski, 71, Corpus Christi

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An ecumenical Christmas gift

Catholic-Lutheran vespers celebrates sixth year

BY DON CLEMMER

FORT WAYNE — When Bishop John M. D'Arcy stood up to speak at the sixth annual Catholic-Lutheran vespers service at Our Lady of Good Hope Church, he was somewhat taken aback. Lutheran Bishop James Stuck of the Indiana-Kentucky Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America had just completed his remarks and had quoted from a homily Bishop D'Arcy had given seven months earlier at the Mass marking his 50th anniversary as a priest.

"As I listened to you, I thought, 'I have to speak more to more Lutherans,'" Bishop D'Arcy said to Bishop Stuck. "How many people remember a homily you gave seven months later?" The congregation of Catholics and Lutherans, laughed approvingly, providing just one example of the feelings of good will that have come to permeate this annual event.

Bishop Stuck had recalled Bishop D'Arcy saying that the priesthood was a gift given by God, not for the sake of the priest, but for the church.

"I needed to hear that message," Bishop Stuck said, "that I am a gift given by God for the sake of the people I serve. You are

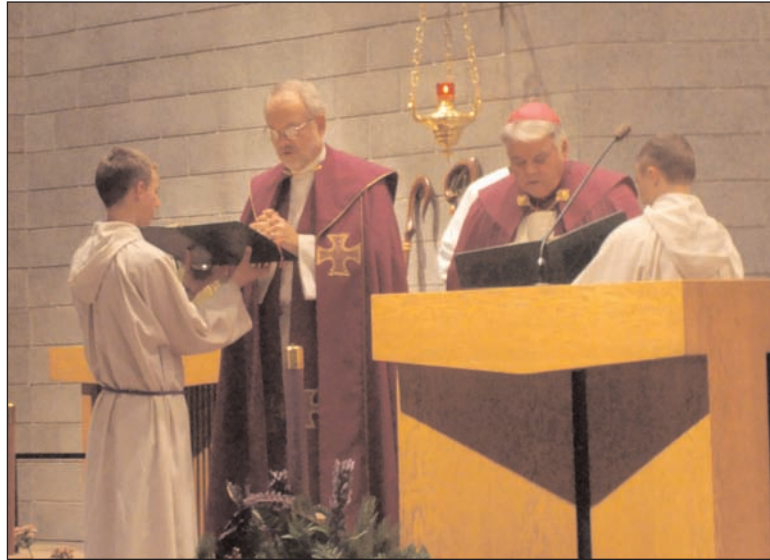
a gift," he said to the Catholic priests and Lutheran pastors seated in the first few rows, "given by God for the sake of the people you serve. The church is a gift given by God for the sake of the world. We are a blessing to one another, and we are a blessing to the world." He concluded, "This evening is about exchanging gifts, exchanging Christ, with one another."

Lutheran Pastor Martin Gehring of Risen Savior Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne, who read one of the psalm prayers during the vespers service, said events like Catholic-Lutheran vespers help the faithful see each other as a blessing.

"Anything we can do together," Pastor Gehring noted, "that exchange of gifts, the recognition of common faith heritage. It comes as no surprise that in our society, especially now, when everything's so divisive, even just little efforts like this, just to heal some of those prejudices, to come together, spend time, the more symbols we can generate like that, the better."

On the subject of every little bit making a difference, Bishop D'Arcy compared the ecumenical process to the words of Jesus on the kingdom of God being like a tiny mustard seed that grows into a large tree.

"He's trying to tell us that this is the way God's work progresses," Bishop D'Arcy said. "This



DON CLEMMER

Lutheran Bishop James Stuck and Bishop John M. D'Arcy offer prayers during the sixth annual Catholic-Lutheran Advent vespers service on Dec. 2. Bishop D'Arcy noted that praying together is an essential part of the ecumenical process.

night each year, is like the mustard seed, if we allow it, through grace, to affect how we treat one another and to pray that we come closer."

Bishop D'Arcy noted the value of doing together each of the parts of the vespers service — praying psalms, hearing the word of God, reciting the creed, reciting the Our Father, praying to the same Savior, all of it in the spirit of Advent, of opening one's heart to the coming of Jesus at Christmas.

"It always seems fresh and new when this happens," Bishop

D'Arcy added.

The event seemed fresh and new for some at Our Lady of Good Hope Church, where Father Mark Gurtner was asked earlier this year to host the service. Father Gurtner noted, "Probably for most of our parishioners, this was their first ecumenical event."

One person responsible for bringing this ecumenical experience to Our Lady of Good Hope was Father John Pfister, who is part of the committee that plans the vespers service every year. He

sees the vespers service as a good investment of time, energy and prayer, saying "I think creating good will is really important. I think the time that we threw rotten tomatoes at each other is past for most of us."

In attendance but not participating in the vespers service was Lutheran Pastor Vernon Graham, a longtime leader in the ecumenical group Associated Churches of Fort Wayne. Pastor Graham is optimistic as he has seen how ecumenism grow throughout his career.

"I'm excited. When I first came to Associated Churches 20 years ago, there was one Roman Catholic Parish, and that was St. Mary's," noted Pastor Graham. "There are 12 Roman Catholic parishes that are part of Associated Churches now, including this one."

Pastor Graham noted that, short of receiving Communion together, reaching out to the community together and events like Catholic-Lutheran vespers are what is means to be the body of Christ.

Additional photos and video from the sixth annual Catholic-Lutheran vespers service is available on the Today's Catholic group at www.facebook.com.

Youth pilgrims at Sacred Heart Parish offer original CD

BY KAY COZAD

WARSAW — For over 10 years Ida List has passionately ministered to the youth of Sacred Heart Parish in Warsaw. Currently, after years of combining junior high with high school age, the ministry's focus has turned to students in grades 9 through 12.

Shifting youth gathering nights from Wednesday to Sunday has increased attendance, says List. The youth group, with its inspired moniker "CROSS," which stands for "Catholics Reaching Out Seeking Salvation," meets weekly now for an hour and a half. Presentations offered by guest speakers — the likes of Youth Ministry and Spiritual Formation Director Cindy Black and Fred and Lisa Everett of the Office of Family Life — focus on contemporary moral issues, such as stem-cell research, theology of the body and abortion. Snacks are provided after which small group discussion brings the issues alive.

During List's tenure there, the youth ministry has hosted three World Youth Day ventures traveling to Rome, Toronto and Germany. The upcoming World Youth Day will be hosted in Australia, half a world away from the Midwest.

List had originally decided not to attend but says, "The kids want-

ed to go to Australia. I told them it would not be a vacation, but more of a pilgrimage. There would be hardships in this travel."

The idea of the pilgrimage, she says, is to provide the opportunity to increase the students' spirituality. Following an advertisement in the church bulletin, 16 adults and youth, the largest group from the parish to travel to World Youth Day, have signed up. Simple accommodations have been arranged, including stays in churches and schools.

"That's to save on cost and to give the pilgrimage feel," says List. The pilgrims are allowed to take only that which they can carry on their backs.

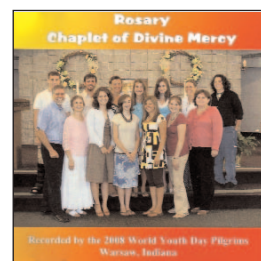
Efforts to fund the trip have taken the shape of a prayer CD. "I wanted to come up with something to benefit other people, not just the group who will travel," says List.

Her idea was to record the four mysteries of the rosary. "I love the rosary. It's been a very strong family prayer — both growing up and now. I've introduced it to the teens and now I would like to introduce it to others," says the youth minister and mother of four.

Original guitar music graces the CD, composed by Betsy Hoffman along with unique antiphons fol-

lowing each of the mysteries.

Chris Sanchez, a parishioner at Sacred Heart and owner of a local video and sound production company agreed to record the CD while Rick Zydeck of Photography



Recorded by the 2008 World Youth Day Pilgrims Warsaw, Indiana

Unlimited assisted with the duplication of the CDs and printing.

Bob List, Ida's husband, designed the cover and label layouts using his own original photography. Use of the image of the Divine Mercy

chaplet required obtaining a copyright. Once the Marians of the Immaculate Conception, who hold the copyright, heard the CD, they not only approved the copyright release but thanked the group for promoting the chaplet. Members of the pilgrim group lead specific mysteries with the entire group offering the responses.

"It's the full rosary with all four mysteries, original music and the chaplet in chant. When I listen to it, it brings tears to my eyes," says List.

To purchase the original prayer "Rosary, Chaplet of Divine Mercy" CD, make checks payable to Crusades/WYD, 125 N. Harrison, Warsaw, IN 46580. The cost is \$20 plus \$2 shipping charges.



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