

TODAY'S CATHOLIC

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Our Lady of Guadalupe's message remains alive across five centuries

BY DENNIS SADOWSKI

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Nearly 500 years after Mexican peasant Juan Diego was greeted by Mary and urged to share a message of hope and comfort as promised by God's compassion, Our Lady of Guadalupe continues to inspire new generations of faithful believers in their daily routines and struggles.

That assurance, rooted in prayer and common experiences, guides daily individual devotion and communal gatherings that build toward grand observances of the apparitions centered annually on the Dec. 12 feast day.

And while Our Lady of Guadalupe is rooted in the Mexican culture, those who have studied the phenomenon and her message as it is lived today are finding that the patroness of the Americas, as she is known, can strengthen bonds of community in a disjointed world.

"In the United States she belongs to everyone. Even American Catholics have embraced her as a symbol of faith and devotion," said Hosffman Ospino, assistant professor of Hispanic ministry and religious education at Boston College.

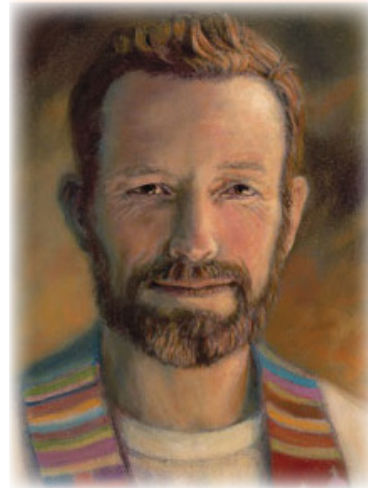
Ospino, a native of Colombia,

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CNS/Paul Haring

The original image of Our Lady of Guadalupe is seen as Pope Francis delivers his blessing Feb. 13 at the conclusion of Mass in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City. The message of Our Lady of Guadalupe is as relevant today as it was nearly 500 years ago, say scholars.



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Oklahoma City priest becomes first U.S. martyr

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It's priests vs. seminarians on the court Dec. 27

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Pope recognizes martyrdom of Oklahoma priest killed in Guatemala

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis has recognized the martyrdom of Father Stanley Rother of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, making him the first martyr born in the United States.

The Vatican made the announcement Dec. 2. The recognition of his martyrdom clears the way for his beatification.

Father Rother, born March 27, 1935, on his family's farm near Okarche, Okla., was brutally murdered July 28, 1981, in a Guatemalan village where he ministered to the poor.

He went to Santiago Atitlan in 1968 on assignment from the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City. He helped the people there build a small hospital, school and its first Catholic radio station. He was beloved by the locals, who called him "Padre Francisco."

Many priests and religious in Guatemala became targets during the country's 1960-1996 civil war as government forces cracked down on leftist rebels supported by the rural poor.

The bodies of some of Father Rother's deacons and parishioners were left in front of his church and soon he received numerous death threats over his opposition to the presence of the Guatemalan military in the area.

Though he returned to Oklahoma for a brief period, he went back to the Guatemalan village to remain with the people he had grown to love during the more than dozen years he lived there. He was gunned down at the age 46 in the rectory of his church in Santiago Atitlan.

Government officials there put the blame on the Catholic Church for the unrest in the country that they said led to his death. On the day he died, troops also killed 13 townspeople and wounded 24 others in the same isolated village, 50 miles west of Guatemala City.

Many priests and religious lost their lives and thousands of civilians were kidnapped and killed during the years of state-sponsored oppression in the country.

While his body was returned to Oklahoma, his family gave permission for his heart and some of his blood to be enshrined in the church of the people he loved and served. A memorial plaque marks the place.

Father Rother was considered a martyr by the church in Guatemala, and his name was included on a list of 78 martyrs for the faith killed during Guatemala's 36-year-long civil war. The list of names to be considered for canonization was submitted by Guatemala's bishops to St. John Paul II during a pastoral visit to Guatemala in 1996.

Because Father Rother was killed in Guatemala, his cause should have been undertaken there. But the local church lacked the resources for such an effort. The Guatemalan bishops' conference agreed to a transfer of jurisdiction to the Oklahoma City archdiocese.

News of the recognition was welcomed in Oklahoma.

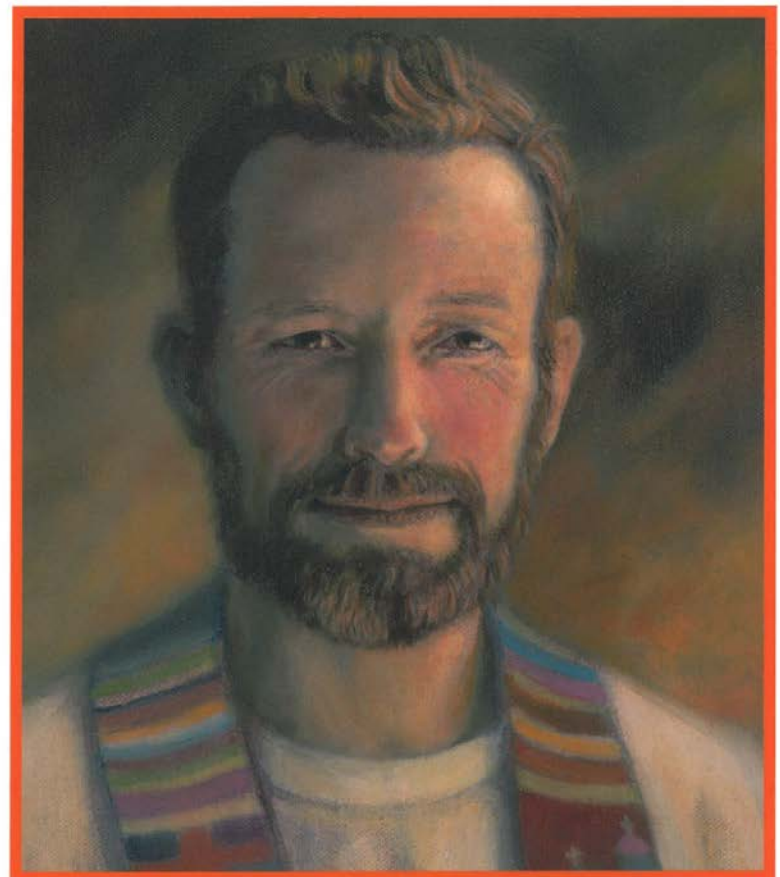
"This comes as a great joy to all of us here not only in Oklahoma, but I think it's a great blessing to the church in the United States," Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City told Catholic News Service Dec. 2.

He also called the recognition of the priest's martyrdom a gift to the Catholic Church in Guatemala.

Archbishop Coakley recalled how both he and Father Rother are alumni of Mount St. Mary Seminary in Emmitsburg, Md. He remembered a ceremony at the school a few

The SHEPHERD Who Didn't Run

Fr. Stanley Rother, Martyr from Oklahoma



María Ruiz Scaperlanda

María Ruiz Scaperlanda's book about Father Rother's martyrdom can be purchased from Our Sunday Visitor. Visit www.osv.com/Shop/Books.aspx.

months after the priest's death, in which a plaque was erected in his honor.

"His witness has marked me from my earliest days in priestly formation," the archbishop said. "It's a blessing to be the archbishop now who has the opportunity to bring to fruition the work on my predecessor, Archbishop (Eusebius J.) Beltran."

Now-retired Archbishop Beltran was head of the archdiocese when the sainthood cause for Father Rother was officially opened in 2007.

María Ruiz Scaperlanda, author of a 2015 biography of the priest, "The Shepherd Who Didn't Run: Fr. Stanley Rother, Martyr from Oklahoma," wrote in an email that the martyrdom recognition was "an incredible gift not only to the United States, but to the universal church."

"I am delighted and grateful that more people will come to know and be changed by his beautiful story," Scaperlanda said, "not

only because of his death as a martyr. But even more significantly, because his life and his priestly service remain a testament to the difference that one person can, and does, make."

Scaperlanda described Father Rother's martyrdom as a "reminder that we are all called to holiness in our ordinary lives, and that holy men and women come from ordinary places like Okarche, Oklahoma."

Describing the priest as a faithful man, Scaperlanda said he was called to serve in the fields of Santiago Atitlan, Guatemala, alongside his Tz'utujil Mayan parishioners. "This is what his community remembers — that he was one of them," she wrote. "And when their village suffered oppression and killings from a violent and brutal civil war, he remained one with them. He was truly the shepherd who didn't run."

GUADALUPE

Continued from Page 1

said Catholic Latinos outside of Mexico have come to embrace the Guadalupe story because of their shared faith. That Mary presented herself to the indigenous Juan Diego, who was canonized in 2002, indicates that God cares for struggling and marginalized people everywhere, Ospino said.

"She appeared to someone who looked Latino, who was Mexican, and at a time in history when the situation of Juan Diego and the people was difficult," he said.

Mexico in 1531, the year of the apparitions, was undergoing massive changes after the Spanish conquest of the Aztecs a decade earlier. Catholicism was taking root and indigenous religions were disappearing. Speaking in his indigenous language, Mary asked the future St. Juan Diego, an Aztec and Catholic convert, to convey to church leaders her desire for a church to be built on Tepayac Hill in what today is Mexico City. The Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe near the site, completed in 1976, is the most visited Catholic church in the world outside of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

It took three visits by the saint-to-be to convince the local bishop that he indeed had seen Mary. It was on the third visit that the miracle attributed to Our Lady of Guadalupe occurred, when he unfurled his poncho, or tilma, to present to the bishop the Castilian roses in full bloom that had inexplicably appeared on the hill despite freezing temperatures. More impressively,

the tilma bore an image of Mary exactly as Juan Diego had described her: olive skin, pregnant with Jesus, adorned in a turquoise mantle and surrounded by rays of light.

Such an image of Mary adorns the homes of countless Mexican and Mexican-American families and serves as much as a cultural symbol and as religious one, said Oblate Father Bob Wright, professor of systematic theology at the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio.

"You cannot separate the two of them," he told Catholic News Service.

Such an attachment is readily apparent in the hundreds of celebrations of the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, which feature the singing of "Las Mañanitas" (early morning song) and traditional dances along with a festive Mass, all followed, of course, by hearty food and drink.

Father Wright described the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe as "universal to everyone, a mother figure who looks after us, that you can turn to ... just as Jesus himself you can turn to."

A colleague, Oblate Father Fernando Velazquez, associate professor of missiology at the Oblate school, said devotion to Mary is carried out in daily life by many of Mexican heritage. It is customary, he said, for mothers or grandmothers to send children to school with a brief prayer that Mary and God's mantle protect them throughout the day.

Perhaps it is no other group than women who have embraced a devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe. From family prayer to weekly praying of the rosary among a group of women to sharing a statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe in processions from home to home, women have led the practice of prayer before Mary.

Nancy Pineda-Madrid, associate professor of theology and Latino/Latina ministry at Boston College, is writing a book on the religious symbolism of Our Lady of Guadalupe and how the message of a five-century-old apparition can be liberating for women today.

She called the appearance of Mary then a Pentecost moment for the church, serving to "transform fear and pain and suffering into a hope for life."

Celebrations of the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe this year in the U.S. may take on a more somber tone among Latinos who say they feel unwelcome because of increasingly sour rhetoric and strident calls for the deportation of millions of immigrants in the country without legal permission.

Because of the concerns arising from such talk, Renata Furst, associate professor of Scripture and spirituality at the Oblate school, finds that Mary's message remains deeply relevant today. She said it helps people understand how important it is to be grounded in their culture and its values while seeing "the way God is recreating them" to respond in a changing world.

"The image of Our Lady of Guadalupe is extremely valuable for reading back into the Bible," said Furst, who grew up in Honduras. She has observed that the images of a black Christ that appear in the border region of Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras reflect a fusion of culture and faith in a way that people could better understand. So it is with Our Lady of Guadalupe and other lesser-known apparitions of Mary in the Americas.

"You might look at Our Lady of Guadalupe as the source of this integration," Furst said. "It is as though God is bubbling from the bottom up as opposed from the top down."



Public schedule of Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades

Sunday, December 11: 12 p.m. — Blessing of new Narthex and Guadalupe Shrine, followed by 12:30 p.m. Mass, Saint Joseph Church, LaGrange

Monday, December 12: 8 a.m. — Mass and Pastoral Visit, Saint Adalbert School, South Bend

Wednesday, December 14: 10:30 a.m. — 3 p.m. — Advent Day of Recollection for Priests, Saint Martin de Porres Parish, Syracuse.

Wednesday, December 14: 6 p.m. — Mass and Dinner with Legatus Chapters of Fort Wayne and South Bend, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Warsaw

Thursday, December 15: 6:30 p.m. — "An Evening with Bishop Rhoades: A Conversation on the Mystery of Christmas" with young adults, Archbishop Noll Center, Fort Wayne

Friday, December 16: 5:30 p.m. — Mass celebrating 10th anniversary of Redeemer Radio, Saint Mary, Mother of God Church, Fort Wayne

Our Lady of Guadalupe celebrations in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend

A number of events are scheduled to take place during the next few days at parishes of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend that have Spanish-speaking populations. Members of the Anglo community are warmly invited to celebrate the apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe to St. Juan Diego with Mass, the traditional Mañanitas song and more at any of the locations. Most events will take place in Spanish.

Parish and city	Date and activity
Our Lady of Guadalupe, Warsaw	Dec. 11, midnight: Mass and Mañanitas Dec. 12, 6 p.m.: Mass
Our Lady of Hungary, South Bend	Dec. 4-12, 6 p.m.: Novena Dec. 12, 6 p.m.: Rosary, apparition play, Mass, folkloric dancers and reception
St. Adalbert, South Bend	Dec. 3-11, 6 p.m.: Novena (in the chapel) Dec. 11, 11:15 p.m.: Rosary, followed by Mañanitas and Mass Dec. 12, 5:30 p.m.: Folkloric dancers, followed by apparition play, Mañanitas and Mass at 7 p.m. After Mass: dinner and raffle
St. Anthony of Padua, Angola	Dec. 12, 5 a.m.: Mañanitas; 8 a.m., Mass in English; 4 p.m., procession; 5 p.m., Mass; 6 p.m., reception
St. Dominic, Bremen	Dec. 3-11, 6 p.m.: Novena Dec. 12, 6 p.m.: Mass
St. Vincent, Elkhart	Dec. 3-11: Rosary novena in homes Dec. 11, 6 p.m.: Procession from St. Thomas to St. Vincent de Paul, followed by reception Dec. 12, midnight: Mass, followed by Mañanitas
St. Patrick, Fort Wayne	Dec. 3-11, Novena Dec. 11, 8 p.m.: Apparition play (Lyceum,) 10 p.m., serenade (church); midnight, Mass
St. Joseph, Fort Wayne	Dec. 3-11, Novena: Dec. 3, 7, 8 and 10 at 6:30 p.m., Dec. 4 and 11 at 1 p.m. and Dec. 5, 6 and 9 at 6 p.m. Dec. 12, 5 a.m.: Mañanitas; 6:30 p.m. Mass, followed by folkloric dancers, music and reception in the school
St. John Evangelist, Goshen	Dec. 11, 7:30 p.m.: Folkloric dancers; 9 p.m., apparition play; 10 p.m., singer Alejandro Pasaral Dec. 11, 11 p.m.: Mass; midnight, Mañanitas
Immaculate Conception, Kendallville	Dec. 3-11, 6 p.m.: Novena Dec. 8, 6 p.m.: Bilingual Mass Dec. 12, 5 p.m.: Mañanitas 5 p.m.; 6 p.m., Mass
St. Joseph, LaGrange	Dec. 11, 12:30 p.m.: Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades blesses new Narthex and Guadalupe Shrine Dec. 12, 5 a.m.: Mañanitas; 7 p.m., Mass
St. Patrick, Ligonier	Dec. 11, 10:30 p.m.: Mass; 11 p.m., apparition play; midnight, Mañanitas Dec. 12, 5 p.m.: Procession; 6 p.m.
St. Robert Bellarmine, North Manchester	Dec. 1-11, 7 p.m.: Rosary in the church Dec. 12, 6 p.m.: Rosary; 7 p.m., Mass followed by mariachi music and reception
St. Michael, Plymouth	Dec. 3, 6 p.m.: Procession to the Shrine of OLOG Dec. 3-11, Novena Dec. 12, midnight: Mass; 5 p.m., Knights procession to the church, followed by play; 7 p.m., dancers followed by Mass and reception

Exhibit of papal visits to the Holy Land open

Images of visits to the Holy Land of Israel by Catholic popes are on display in Fort Wayne through Dec. 15 in an exhibit titled "The Popes' Visits to the Holy Land: Building Bridges of Faith."

The 44 historic images depicting stirring scenes as well as quiet, intimate moments during papal visits to the Holy Land from 1964 to 2014.

Jointly sponsored by Aviv Ezra, consul general of Israel to the Midwest, and Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, the exhibit is designed to engage the broader community and illustrate the positive interreligious dialogue between Catholics and Jews. The diocese's co-sponsorship is an expression of support for the exhibit. Executive Director of the Jewish Federation, Jaki Schrier, called it "the Jewish community's early Christmas gift to the Catholic community."

"I am deeply grateful to the Jewish Federation of Fort Wayne for co-sponsoring the exhibition of the historic visits of our recent Popes to the Holy Land.



Stephanie A. Patka

Dr. Donald Friedman, president, Jewish Federation of Fort Wayne, views the gallery following an opening reception on Dec. 5. Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades gave a welcome, along with Itay Milner, deputy consul general of Israel to the Midwest. The keynote speaker was Rabbi Yehiel Poupko, who spoke on "The Advancement of the Roman Catholic Church's Relations with the Jewish People under the Stewardship of John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis."

I am looking forward to seeing the exhibition and encourage the Catholics of our diocese to join our Jewish brothers and sisters in visiting the exhibit," said Bishop Rhoades.

The public can view the exhib-

it at the Rifkin Campus, 5200 Old Mill Road, Fort Wayne.

For more information click on the event page at www.jewishfortwayne.org

USCCB leaders seek prayers for migrants, refugees on Guadalupe feast

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Prayer services and special Masses will be held in many dioceses across the country as the U.S. Catholic Church has asked that the Dec. 12 feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe be a day of prayer with a focus on migrants and refugees.

Our Lady of Guadalupe is the patroness of the Americas.

"As Christmas approaches and especially on this feast of Our Lady, we are reminded of how our savior Jesus Christ was not born in the comfort of his own home, but rather in an unfamiliar manger," said a Dec. 1 statement from Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The day of prayer is intended to be a time to place before a merciful God the hopes, fears and needs of all those families who have come to the United States seeking a better life.

"So many families are wondering how changes to immigration policy might impact them," Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles, USCCB vice president, said in a Dec. 1 statement. "We want them to know the church is with them, offers prayers on their behalf, and is actively monitoring developments at the

diocesan, state, and national levels to be an effective advocate on their behalf."

The USCCB suggested that Catholics unable to attend such a service or Mass Dec. 12 or who live in an area where one is not being held should "offer prayers wherever they may be." The USCCB's Migration and Refugee Services office has developed a scriptural rosary called "Unity in Diversity" that includes prayers for migrants and refugees. It can be accessed at the Justice for Immigrants website at <http://tinyurl.com/hldg3o9>.

Another resource suggested by the USCCB is "Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope," the 2003 pastoral letter issued jointly by the bishops of the United States and Mexico. Summary versions of the pastoral are available online in English at <http://tinyurl.com/zpd4tex> and in Spanish at <http://tinyurl.com/hy2e69m>.

A USCCB announcement on the day of prayer said the bishops' conference would develop additional pastoral resources.

"To all those families separated and far from home in uncertain times, we join with you in a prayer for comfort and joy this Advent season," Cardinal DiNardo added.

What the pro-life community wants from the Trump administration

BY CARDINAL TIMOTHY M. DOLAN

The last several years have clearly been challenging for the pro-life movement. The abortion industry, exposing its false rhetoric of choice, increasingly seeks to coerce Americans to be complicit with abortion, even insisting that abortion is a social good to be celebrated, subsidized and uncontrolled.

Its coercive agenda seeks to force taxpayer funding of abortion by repealing the popular, long-standing and bipartisan federal policy known as the Hyde Amendment. It includes a campaign to force health care providers and plans to participate in or pay for abortion.

The abortion industry even succeeded in getting the Supreme Court to invalidate common-sense abortion clinic regulations that protect the health and safety of women seeking abortion.

Sadly, the Obama administration has been an ally to abortion advocates in advancing such oppressive policies. It imposed the so-called HHS mandate forcing even religious organizations to cover contraceptives, sterilization and abortion-inducing drugs in their health insurance plans.

It refused to enforce federal conscience protections on abortion and it is currently proposing regulations intended to prohibit states from denying funding to Planned Parenthood through the Title X family planning program.

Given all of this, it is fair to say that the presidential elec-

tion offers the pro-life movement some cautious optimism. At least at the level of rhetoric, President-elect Donald Trump indicated support for renewed opportunities to protect women and children from abortion and to protect pro-life Americans from forced complicity in it.

The president-elect said he would make the Hyde Amendment permanent law, would sign a ban on late-term abortions, would defund Planned Parenthood and would nominate pro-life justices to the Supreme Court.

On his transition page, www.greatagain.gov, he promises to "protect individual conscience in health care" and "protect innocent human life from conception to natural death, including the most defenseless and those Americans with disabilities."

We certainly hope that the policies pursued by the president-elect and his administration will match these promises. In particular, we are eager to see immediate enforcement of federal conscience protections on abortion and elimination of the contraceptive mandate.

We also hope to see progress toward a majority of Supreme Court justices who will reform the injustice and travesty of *Roe v. Wade*.

Pro-life Americans cannot be complacent in the months and years to come. It will be essential that we hold our new president and his administration accountable to the pro-life promises they've made.

As for Congress, it appears that the election left intact a pro-life majority (at least with regard to abortion) in both the House and Senate (albeit a somewhat slimmer majority).

The House has a solid pro-life majority and, as in recent years, should be able to advance pro-life policies. The Senate will continue to be a challenge for advancing pro-life legislation because of its 60-vote threshold for overcoming a filibuster.

Unfortunately, one tragic outcome of the Nov. 8 election was the legalization of doctor-prescribed suicide by the voters in Colorado, making it the fifth state to formally legalize the practice. And just one week after the election, the District of Columbia became the next jurisdiction to embrace assisted suicide.

Proponents have made no secret of their strategy to advance assisted suicide one state at a time. They are well-funded, persistent and working in every state to advance their deadly agenda.

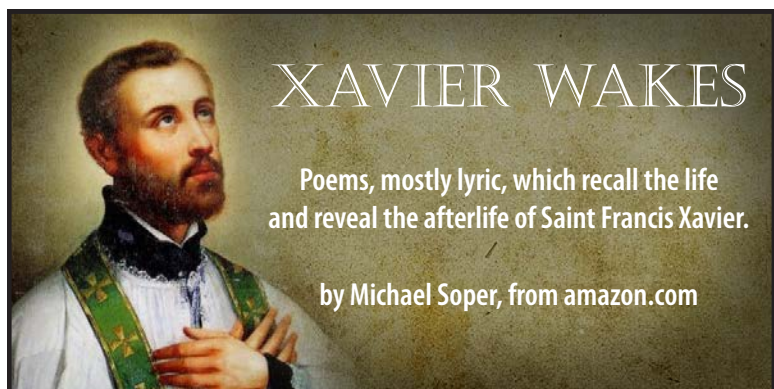
The pro-life movement must match or exceed their efforts and put a stop to this encroachment of the culture of death, offering in its place a renewed commitment to real compassion and solidarity through quality end-of-life care.

Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York is the chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities.



CNS photo/David Maung

A statue of the Our Lady of Guadalupe is carried in a truck during a procession to the U.S.-Mexico border fence in Tijuana, Mexico, where Mass was celebrated. The Mass and a procession with a statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe were a call to remember and pray for migrants and were led by Archbishop Francisco Moreno Barron of Tijuana.



Poems, mostly lyric, which recall the life and reveal the afterlife of Saint Francis Xavier.

by Michael Soper, from amazon.com

Advancing the freedom to serve

BY ARCHBISHOP WILLIAM E. LORI

Religious freedom issues have certainly been in the news in the U.S. over the past several years — from the Little Sisters of the Poor to the freedom of organizations to hire people who aim to serve the mission of the organization.

The federal government has played an unfortunate role in attempting to coerce people of faith to violate their consciences. Take the mandate from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, also known as the "HHS mandate," that forces Catholics like the Little Sisters to facilitate drugs and devices that can cause an abortion, among other morally objectionable "services."

If the Little Sisters — who run nursing homes for the elderly poor — do not comply with the HHS mandate, the federal government could impose financial penalties against them in the millions of dollars.

The Little Sisters have admirably served others here in the U.S.

since 1868. They should be able to continue their good work as they always have without facing the prospect of draconian fines.

In another example, the federal government seeks to restrict the hiring practices of faith-based organizations that partner with the government to provide needed services, especially to our military service members around the globe.

Chaplains in the military contract with providers of religious goods — such as eucharistic supplies like chalices — in order to allow the men and women who serve our country to continue to practice their faith, including when they are in harm's way.

President Barack Obama's Executive Order 13672 would restrict faith-based organizations from being able to hire people who agree with the mission of the organization if they have a contract with the federal government. Faith-based organizations should not be excluded from working with the government to provide much-needed services.

President-elect Donald Trump can alleviate the current finan-

cial and regulatory burden that weighs heavily on people of faith.

First, the president-elect can — and should — rescind executive orders that effectively exclude faith-based organizations from partnering with the federal government, such as Executive Order 13672.

Second, the president-elect should direct the head of HHS to place an immediate moratorium on the HHS mandate. Then the next administration should rescind the HHS mandate. Contraceptives are not preventive "health care," and indeed are associated with adverse health outcomes.

Rescinding the HHS mandate would ensure that people of faith like the Little Sisters can, without threat of massive fines, offer health insurance that comports with their religious values.

The president-elect should also direct HHS to stop enforcing its "transgender mandate" issued under the purported authority of Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act. Catholic hospitals are currently being sued by those seeking coverage of "gender reas-

Archdiocese, Cardinal Tobin bid farewell

BY SEAN GALLAGHER

On Dec. 3, 2012, then-Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin said that he and the faithful of central and southern Indiana were “under an obligation of love” to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

He said this in a Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis during which he was installed as the sixth archbishop of Indianapolis.

Four years later to the day, looking back on his time of ministry to and with the Catholics of the Church in central and southern Indiana, he said during another liturgy at the cathedral that “we fell in love then, and we remain that way today.”

This Mass was originally planned as a celebration of Archbishop Tobin being inducted into the College of Cardinals on Nov. 19. But when it was announced on Nov. 7 that Pope Francis had appointed Archbishop Tobin to lead the Archdiocese of Newark, N.J., the Dec. 3 liturgy became a bittersweet farewell for him and the 1,000 Catholics from across central and southern Indiana who gathered in the cathedral to worship with him, and offer him their heartfelt prayers as he goes forward to lead the Church in northern New Jersey.

Both Masses four years apart were celebrated on the feast of St. Francis Xavier, the 16th-century Jesuit missionary to Asia who is the principal patron of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

In his closing remarks at the end of the Mass, Cardinal Tobin, his voice filled with emotion, made his own the words of St. Paul in his First Letter to the Thessalonians to describe his love for the Catholics of central and southern Indiana, and the mission he was given in ministering to and with them.

“With such affection for you, we were determined to share with you not only the Gospel of God,



Photo by Sean Gallagher

Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, center, celebrates a Dec. 3 farewell Mass at Ss. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis. Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades is center left.

but our very selves as well, so beloved have you become to us” (1 Thes 2:8), Cardinal Tobin said.

The love Cardinal Tobin elicited from the faithful who gathered in the cathedral on Dec. 3 was palpable.

“I love this man,” said Benedictine Sister Harriet Woehler, a member of Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove. Cardinal Tobin made an impression on her.

“What he’s done in these four years is unbelievable for me,” Sister Harriet said. “He reminds me of the Holy Father — what he’s done for the world, and what this guy has done for our archdiocese.”

For his part, Cardinal Tobin expressed amazement in his homily at seeing all that Catholics across central and southern Indiana have done over the past four years to witness effectively to the Gospel.

“I have been privileged to see witnesses across the 39 counties of this archdiocese, people who quietly bear witness, give testimony to Jesus Christ in prisons, in hospitals, on college campuses, in [religion] classes, in our Catholic grade and high schools,” he said. “I’ve seen the

witnesses of this archdiocese in the food kitchens, in the shelters, the outreach of Catholic Charities and the welcoming of refugees and strangers.

“I’ve seen the witness, and I think it’s no accident that for the four years that I’ve presided over Easter Vigils here in the archdiocese, we’ve welcomed 1,000 or more new Catholics, men and women who saw the action of the disciples of Jesus and came to believe.”

During the prayer, he stood in front of the cathedral’s altar with his eyes closed in prayer while a group of people representing the congregation stood around him and placed their hands on him.

One of those people was his mother, 93-year-old Marie Tobin, who was joined at the liturgy by 10 of her 13 children.

“To be with my son when he offers Mass is the epitome of my life, the high point forever,” Tobin said. “But to be surrounded by all this love for four years—I am just so grateful. I would like to be a Hoosier myself.”

This article originally appeared in The Criterion, the newspaper of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

signment” surgeries. The federal government has issued regulations stating that such surgeries cannot be denied, or it is “discrimination.”

Doctors and hospitals should be free to use their best medical judgment to treat patients who experience gender dysphoria. Health care providers should not be told by the federal government that they must participate in procedures that have the effect of mutilating a patient’s otherwise healthy reproductive organs. Hospitals should not lose Medicare or Medicaid funding over this issue.

Third, the president-elect should rescind the Obama administration’s “guidance” and related memos on Title IX that force schools — including at the K-12 level — to treat students according to their “internal sense of gender.”

Teachers and school administrators at the local level should be free to use their best judgment — working with parents and counselors — of how to deal with extremely sensitive issues involving young children.

Further, schools with religious exemptions to Title IX should not be placed on a “shame list” run by the U.S. Department of Education simply for claiming an exemption — a right that stems from the Constitution.

Fourth, the president-elect should direct the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to stop enforcing its “gender identity” mandate on homeless shelters, such as many operated by faith-based providers like Catholic Charities.

HUD’s mandate would force women in federally funded homeless shelters to share show-

er facilities, restrooms and sleeping areas with biological men who “identify” as women. Many times, victims of domestic violence seek a safe haven in shelters. Women and girls should not have to give up their privacy or safety when they go to a shelter.

President-elect Trump has the opportunity to ensure that people of all faiths can continue to do their good work in serving their communities without having to violate their consciences or face crippling fines or onerous lawsuits. Our hope is that the next administration will ensure that Americans remain free to serve.

Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore is chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty.



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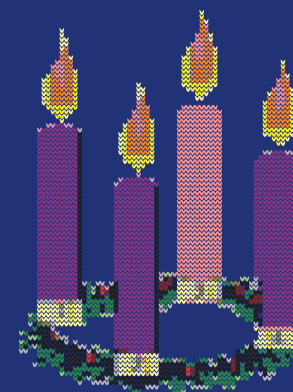
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Supreme Court agrees to take up hospitals' pension dispute

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The Supreme Court agreed Dec. 2 to hear arguments about church hospital pension disputes over whether religious hospitals and schools can be exempt from complying with federal laws covering employee pension benefits. Lower courts have ruled against three hospital systems, two of which are Catholic, that have claimed an exemption from the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974. The hospital systems have argued that the federal government interprets church pension plan exemptions to include church-affiliated organizations, but workers have argued, and courts have sided with them, that their pensions do not qualify as "church plans" exempt from the law. Billions of dollars in benefits for hospital workers are at stake in the lawsuits. The cases involve Advocate Health Care of the Chicago area, a merged network of evangelical, Lutheran and United Church of Christ hospitals; and two Catholic networks: St. Peter's Healthcare System of New Brunswick, New Jersey, and Dignity Health of San Francisco. Workers have won a number of federal appeals court decisions against church-based hospital systems claiming their pension plans were underfunded. The appeals courts have said religious organizations must comply with the law that govern employee benefits and protects retirement plans.

Syriac Catholic patriarch 'horrified' after seeing Iraqi 'ghost towns'

BEIRUT (CNS) — The Syriac Catholic patriarch said he was horrified to see widespread devastation and what he called "ghost towns" during a recent visit to northern Iraq. Patriarch Ignace Joseph III Younan wrote in an email to Catholic News Service that there was little left in some of the communities that he toured Nov. 27-29, and that "the emptiness of the streets except for military people ... the devastation and burned-out houses and churches" was shocking. About 100,000 Christians — among them more than 60,000 Syriac Catholics — were expelled from the Ninevah Plain by the Islamic State group in the summer of 2014 as the militants campaigned to expand their reach into Iraq. Patriarch Younan also called for understanding from the incoming administration of President-elect Donald Trump about the plight and ordeal of all minorities, including Christians affected by violence in the region. The patriarch told CNS about "walking through the Christian towns of Qaraqosh, Bartella and Karamles and witnessing the extent of devastation as if we had entered ghost towns!"

NEWS BRIEFS

Gatlinburg burns



CNS photo/courtesy Tennessee Highway Patrol, handout via Reuters

Burned buildings and cars are seen Dec. 1 in Gatlinburg, Tenn., in the aftermath of wildfires. Raging wildfires fueled by high winds claimed the lives of at least seven people; forced the evacuation of thousands, including Father Antony Punnackal of St. Mary Church; and damaged hundreds of buildings in the popular mountain resort town.

Some fleeing scene of wildfires describe it as escaping 'gates of hell'

PIGEON FORGE, Tenn. (CNS) — St. Mary Catholic Church was at ground zero in the wildfires that devastated parts of Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge Nov. 28, and while flames reached to within yards of the tourist city church, it appears to have been spared. Its pastor, Carmelite Father Antony Punnackal, was forced to evacuate St. Mary's as intense fires came within 300 yards of the church that sits in the heart of Gatlinburg. The church and rectory have been closed since then, but the priest has received reports that the buildings were spared from the blaze but sustained smoke damage and possible damage from high winds that fueled the flames. Some parishioners weren't as fortunate. The wildfires left a swath of destruction in and around the city of Gatlinburg, causing at least 13 deaths, more than 50 injuries, and tens of millions of dollars in property damage. Dozens of residents and visitors to the tourist destination still are missing. Three people who suffered serious burns were transported to Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville. As of midday Dec. 2, the city of 5,000 residents still was closed down,

with only emergency personnel allowed to enter as well as residents and property owners on a limited basis.

Faith leaders urge Obama to grant pardons to immigrants, prisoners

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Faith leaders and immigrant advocates urged President Barack Obama to pardon immigrants in the country without legal documentation and people with nonviolent, federal drug offenses serving prison sentences. "This is about protecting families," said Richard Morales, immigration policy director for PICO, which stands for People Improving Communities Through Organizing, during a Dec. 1 news conference in the chapel of the United Methodist Building on Capitol Hill. "There is tremendous fear in our communities. This is a moral rather than legal issue. The president does have the constitutional power to grant these pardons and he needs to act," he added. The gathering was organized by PICO, a national network based in Oakland, Calif., that was founded in 1972 by a Jesuit priest. The group is currently circulating a petition to deliver to the White House Dec. 15 urging the Obama administration to grant

these pardons. It is also urging local elected officials, governors, mayors and churches across the country to take steps to designate themselves sanctuaries, protecting immigrants from deportation, in response to President-elect Donald Trump promises to deport 2 to 3 million immigrants without documentation.

Orthodox patriarch says 'Amoris Laetitia' is about God's mercy

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Knowing the debate surrounding Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation on the family, Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople said the document "first and foremost recalls the mercy and compassion of God and not just moral norms and canonical rules. In the past few months, numerous comments and evaluations of this important document have been made," the patriarch wrote Dec. 2 in *L'Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican newspaper. "People have asked how specific doctrine has been developed or defended or if pastoral questions have been modified or resolved and if particular norms have been strengthened or mitigated," he said. "Whether it regards the challenges of marriage and divorce or sexuality or raising children," he

said, the matters treated in the document "are all delicate and precious fragments of that sacred mystery we call life." For too long, he said, people were "suffocated and blocked" from reaching out to God for forgiveness and strength by the notion of a "heavenly Father who in some way dictated human conduct."

College presidents support students with DACA status

WASHINGTON (CNS) — More than 70 presidents at Catholic colleges and universities have signed a statement pledging their support for students attending their schools who are legally protected by the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, known as DACA. The statement, posted Nov. 30 on the website of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, says it hopes "the students in our communities who have qualified for DACA are able to continue their studies without interruption and that many more students in their situation will be welcome to contribute their talents to our campuses." President Barack Obama's DACA program protects young immigrants brought into the United States by their parents as young children without legal permission. More than 720,000 of these young immigrants have been approved for the program, which protects them from deportation for two-year periods. The college leaders' statement also points out that "undocumented students need assistance in confronting legal and financial uncertainty and in managing the accompanying anxieties. We pledge to support these students — through our campus counseling and ministry support, through legal resources from those campuses with law schools and legal clinics and through whatever other services we may have at our disposal."

In Ireland, doctors, church leaders tell the horrors of life in Syria

DUBLIN (CNS) — Fifty percent of Syria's hospitals and medical centers have been destroyed or looted and their staff kidnapped, tortured or slaughtered, a leading Syrian surgeon told members of the Irish Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee. Dr. Bashir Mohammad, a cardiologist, was part of a delegation of high-profile Syrian medical and religious leaders who appealed Dec. 1 for an end to punitive European Union sanctions against his country. Mohammad was accompanied by Melkite Catholic Patriarch Gregoire III Laham; Syriac Orthodox Patriarch Ignatius Aphrem II; Syria's grand mufti, Ahmad Badreddin Hassoun; and Dr. Ahmad al Khaddour, a cardiothoracic surgeon.

Holy Cross Sisters presented with U.S. Army Civil War Campaign Medal

NOTRE DAME — Although the American Civil War ended 150 years ago, the U.S. Army Civil War Campaign Medal was presented to the Sisters of the Holy Cross in 2016 in recognition of their service as nurses for wounded Union and Confederate soldiers. The presentation was made possible through a collaborative effort led by a retired Army lieutenant colonel, a congresswoman and the U.S. Army Center of Military History.

"The Civil War Campaign Medal, a rare honor awarded in recognition of the sisters' selfless service, is a sign of our gratitude as a nation and a reminder of the price of freedom," wrote U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski of Indiana's 2nd District in a letter read by Ben Parsons, constituent liaison, at the Nov. 30 ceremony at the Congregation's motherhouse on the Saint Mary's College campus. "The compassion and care these Sisters of the Holy Cross showed for their countrymen reflect the very best not only of our state but of our entire nation. Their legacy lives on in the dedicated public service of this congregation that continues today, and these medals will serve as a lasting tribute to their brave actions."

Sisters of the Holy Cross served as Army nurses on the hospital ship USS Red Rover, a side-wheel steamer, which sailed throughout the Ohio and Mississippi River Valley for the Western Gunboat Flotilla. The sisters were forerunners of the U.S. Navy Nurse Corps. Women of Holy Cross also served in military

AROUND THE DIOCESE

First National Junior Honor Society class inducted



Provided by Meredith Santucci

Christ the King Catholic School recently welcomed eight students to its newly formed National Junior Honor Society chapter during a ceremony at an all-school Mass. This year's inductees are Ben Appleton, Alex Goffinet, Amelia Kempf, Tea Lazareto, Sydney Maurer, Sara O'Brien, Izzy Riboni and TJ Weber. This is the school's first year participating in NJHS. The 2016 inductees are all eighth graders, but moving forward, students will be eligible for achievement at the end of their sixth- and seventh-grade years for induction the following fall. Students are eligible for NJHS membership based on scholarship, service, leadership and character and must maintain a cumulative grade percentage of 96 out of 100 at the end of each trimester.

hospitals on land and cared for soldiers from the North and the South in Paducah and Louisville, Ky.; Mound City and Cairo, Ill.; Memphis, Tenn.; St. Louis and Franklin (Pacific City), Mo.; West Philadelphia, Penn.; Wheeling, W.Va.; and Washington, D.C.

The Center of Military History awarded 15 medals to the Congregation, which decided to share the medals — and the sisters' legacy of compassionate caring and education excellence — with hospitals founded by the sisters following the Civil War, as well as with Saint Mary's and other organizations connected with the Congregation. In addition to presenting the medal to the Sisters of the Holy Cross, Parsons presented the medals to other honorary recipients, including the Saint Mary's Department of Nursing Science, Notre Dame, and Saint Joseph Regional Medical Center, Mishawaka.

St. Therese Church to host Festival of Lessons and Carols Dec. 19

FORT WAYNE — St. Therese Church, 2304 Lower Huntington Rd., will host a Festival of Lessons and Carols on Monday, Dec. 19, at 7 p.m. There is no charge, but a free will offering will be taken up to benefit the St. Vincent de Paul Society of the parish. All are welcome.

"We have adapted this Festival of Lessons and Carols to reflect the season of Advent that moves into the celebration of Christmas," said Beverly Rieger, St. Therese music director.

After the service and remarks by the pastor, a reception will be held in the nearby parish hall.

Stein earns scouting's Eagle, 'Ad Altare Dei' awards

BY VINCE LABARBERA

Boy Scout Gabriel Stein recently achieved the rank of Eagle Scout, the highest accomplishment attainable in the Boy Scouting program of the Boy Scouts of America. He joins a group of just four percent of Boy Scouts nationwide granted this position of honor. The requirements necessary to achieve the rank normally takes years to fulfill, but Stein did it in about five years.

A member of BSA Troop 349, sponsored by Aldersgate United Methodist Church, Fort Wayne, for the past four years, young Stein is the son of Timothy and Sarah Stein. They attend St. Therese Church.

Requirements for the rank of Eagle Scout include earning at least 21 merit badges. An Eagle Scout must demonstrate "Scout Spirit," an ideal attitude based upon the "Scout Oath and Law," service and leadership. This includes an extensive ser-

vice project that the Scout plans, organizes, leads and manages.

Stein's Eagle project involved building a 20 x 30-foot road of 2-foot-square rubber mats at Aldersgate Church, on which children could ride tricycles. The project included constructing a storage shed to house the tricycles. Paint for the shed was donated and the church contributed money for building supplies. The matting came from a school that was redoing its playground and throwing old matting away. Stein completed the project last fall in about a week with the help his family, fellow Scouts and a few adults.

In addition to fulfilling the requirements for the rank of Eagle Scout while at Troop 349, Stein earned the "Ad Altare Dei" ("to the altar of God") emblem as a member for one year of Troop 300, which met at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church. The program was developed by the National Catholic Committee on Scouting for Boy Scouts of the Catholic faith and consists of eight sec-

tions paralleling the seven sacraments. Its purpose is to foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person by encouraging him to actively live out his Catholic Christian faith. "There are service projects connected with the award and several learning sessions with adult leaders," said Stein.

Stein joined the Boy Scouts at age 13 at the suggestion of his parents, who thought the BSA training program was good for young men. He agrees with that assessment.

"I plan to continue in scouting as an adult leader now that I'm age 18 and cannot participate as a youngster," he said. "I most enjoyed the life skills training and all that is taught about camping and outdoor survival techniques as well as biking, hiking and rock climbing."

Stein is a home-schooled high school senior and is currently taking classes at Indiana Institute of Technology. He hopes to obtain a degree in business management.



Provided by Sarah Stein

Following his Eagle Court of Honor ceremony with Troop 349, Boy Scout Gabriel Stein poses for a photo with his parents, Sarah and Timothy Stein.

Seminarians plan to dominate third Cupertino Classic

BY BEN LANDRIGAN

The time approaches once again for the highly anticipated basketball game pitting priests against the seminarians of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. This year's Cupertino Classic will take place in the gymnasium of Bishop Luers High School. The festivities commence at 6:30 p.m. on Dec. 27.

Since its inception two years ago, Cupertino has gained popularity and attention as an annual Christmastime event. In the first game held at St. Vincent de Paul Parish, Fort Wayne, the priests dominated an unprepared and seemingly unskilled seminarian team in front of a crowd of an estimated 300 fans. However, last year's game at Bishop Dwenger High School, Fort Wayne, saw a far more even competition — though the priests remained victorious — and an attendance of more than 1,800.

While numbers may not continue to grow at an exponential rate, many look for Bishop Luers to be facing a capacity crowd this year. Seminarian co-organizer Mark Hellinger is full of confidence on this point.

"We're going to max out the gym. I expect at least 1,900 people."

For a basketball game that is really much more than a sporting event, this news is exciting. Ultimately, the Classic is all about fraternity and community. The vision for the game is of a fun and entertaining gathering to build Catholic fellowship. The main priest behind the Cupertino Classic, Father Andrew Curry, pastor of St. Robert Bellarmine Parish in North Manchester, explained.

"I think the main purpose of the Cupertino Classic is to simply grow Christian friendship. The whole idea just came



Promising to bring the heat to Cupertino this year are seminarians of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. The annual priests-vs.-seminarians basketball game happens in Fort Wayne Dec. 27.

out of a group of us getting together for breakfast one day and just talking about how we should get together for a game of basketball, just have some fun, and then it kind of just grew into a bigger idea of inviting more people into that kind of spirit of Christian friendship. So, that's the first thing, just getting together and enjoying good things in the spirit of the Lord."

Father Curry also shared another aspect behind the game: The promotion of vocations.

"A second level would be, we could in a sense promote vocations to the priesthood. Being a priest doesn't mean you give up fun and good things, but that you give your life to bring Christ to others. You still have these good, human things as part of your life."

The Cupertino offers the Catholic faithful in general, and young men in particular, an opportunity to see their priests and those studying to be priests in a new environment. A large part of the game's draw comes from seeing the guys getting competitive and playing basketball, a far different atmosphere from the normal encounters at the parish.

While the Cupertino Classic is designed as a center for Christian community and fraternity, the competitive aspects of a basketball game have certainly not been lost. The priests mercilessly cruised to a 2-0 record, while the seminarians continue striving for their first victory. Father Curry

expects this year's game to be much of the same.

"I think we (the priests) are going to destroy (the seminarians). I'll be in better shape this year than I'll have ever been. I've already hit the gym early and been playing a lot of sports. I've been practicing," he said. "I

know that the Coonans (Father Terrence Coonan, pastor of Little Flower parish, South Bend, and Father Matthew Coonan, vicar of St. Vincent parish, Elkhart) and Runyon (Father Jacob Runyon, pastor of St. Jude parish, Fort Wayne) always come to win, so I'm feeling good. I would expect a very lopsided score."

Hellinger sees a much different situation developing. Perhaps inspired by the seminarians' increased level of play last year, he calls this year "the seminarians' best shot," and he remains "a firm believer in Team Seminarian."

The actual outcome will have to be decided on the court. The priests will want to control the pace of play, run an efficient offense and use their combined experience. For the seminarians, a fast pace and limited turnovers will be essential to staying in the game. Come Dec. 27, all eyes will be on the court at Bishop Luers to see who claims the win at the third annual Cupertino Classic.

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Chapel renovation draws volunteers and adorers

BY DEB WAGNER

In 1939 and 1940, parishioners and volunteers worked together to renovate a chapel built for the Sisters of Providence, who taught at St. John the Baptist School on Fairfield Avenue in Fort Wayne. The teaching sisters lived upstairs from the church. The chapel became known as the Guerin Chapel, named after Sisters of Providence foundress St. Theodore Guerin. But by the 1980s, the sisters' community had left the area and the convent sat vacant. The eucharistic adoration chapel, which was now allowed to be used by the public, became a haven for adorers. As time passed, however, their numbers dwindled and the upkeep of the chapel diminished.

In 1992 Father William Kummer expressed his desire for it to be staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week. New stained glass windows were designed and made by parishioner Jim Steinacker.

But after a few years, the parish found it difficult to staff the Guerin chapel with at least one adorer every minute of every day. It began to close at 9 p.m. every night. By 2009, Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades and Father Cyril Fernandes deemed it necessary to reduce the chapel's hours to Mondays and Tuesdays from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. An Adorers Committee was formed to revital-



Provided by Karen Walters

Among the components of the restored Guerin Chapel, St. John the Baptist, Fort Wayne, are pews repurposed from pastor Father Andrew Budzinski's home parish of St. Pius X, Granger.

ize the chapel, but it never really gained momentum.

In early 2016, a parishioner who had originally installed the building's carpet wanted to clean it in order to make the chapel look more appealing. A married couple in the parish wanted to paint the walls. In April, Father Andrew Budzinski, pastor of the

parish and someone described as an "ardent fan of eucharistic adoration," gave his support to the restoration project. Momentum began to build.

At the first committee meeting a wish list was developed and one of the items on that list was pews. Father Budzinski suggested committee members peruse a

website that sells second-hand church goods.

There was indeed a listing for church pews, from St. Pius X Catholic Church in Granger. St. Pius X was Father Budzinski's home parish for the three years immediately preceding his entrance into the seminary.

"As it turns out, the pews we received (in gratis) from St. Pius X are from the very same section I sat in: The same pews on which I discerned my vocation are coming to the St. Mother Theodore Guerin Chapel at St. John's," he said. In fact, a total of 12 pews arrived in June from St. Pius X. In addition, 12 chairs will arrive in January.

The restoration of the chapel happened without the use of parish funds, but with the talents of many volunteers. The electrical work and painting were donated. The transportation of the pews and chairs, storage of them prior to installation and workspace to reupholster and cut the pews to size were also donated by a couple who are parishioners.

The monstrance was gifted to the Guerin Chapel by the Sisters of Providence in 1992. A design framing the archway into the sanctuary was recently stenciled and painted by a doctor who donated her time to paint the exact design found on the monstrance. She also helped with the positioning of the stars on the ceiling of the chapel.

The stars and the constella-

tions painted on the chapel's ceiling are an image of what would have been seen in the night sky in Fort Wayne on Oct. 19, 1930, the date that St. John the Baptist Church was founded. The beams on the ceiling are painted with the Latin words the priest says before and after the elevation of the host during the consecration at Mass. One beam says, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world," and the other, "Blessed are those who are called to the Supper of the Lamb."

A parishioner from St. Elizabeth Ann Seton parish in Fort Wayne designed and built not only the recess niche that has become the entry way to the chapel nearest the chapel library, but also the two "prie dieu," or kneelers, in the chapel.

The library is open for use when the chapel is open, Mondays and Tuesdays from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m., and is stocked with books and some local history items that have been donated. The desk, table and wingback chairs will hopefully help visitors feel welcome and comfortable while they experience the Lord's goodness through the written word.

"Our hope is that St. Mother Theodore Guerin Chapel at St. John's returns to a 24-hour eucharistic adoration chapel through an increase in the number of adorers," said a committee member.

Retreat speaker conveys message of mercy

BY STEPHANIE A. PATKA

Standing at the registration table of the second annual Rejoice! Women's Retreat seemed more like a family reunion than women checking in for a religious conference. Women from 31 parishes around the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, totaling 112, arrived at Lindenwood Retreat Center on Dec. 2 for a weekend retreat to grow in their spiritual life, to be strengthened, encouraged, to reconnect with the Lord on a deeper level and to cultivate a greater love for Mary.

"I was really gratified with the way in which the women came to this retreat, they were



Stephanie A. Patka

Above, participants pray during the Rejoice! Women's Retreat organized by the Women's Ministry of the diocese Dec. 2-4. The keynote speaker was Debbie Herbeck, right.

happy to be here, joyful and so eager. They were here, ready to sit at the feet of Jesus," said retreat organizer Jan Torma. She reported that at least half of the women attending had come to the first retreat last year with the speaker Sister Ann Shields.

Upon recommendation of Sister Ann, nationally renowned speaker and founder of Be Love Revolution, Debbie Herbeck shared her own conversion story from Judaism to Catholicism. Herbeck spoke about her experience to show "just how merciful God has been to me in my own life." She told retreat participants that "there is nothing that you do to make God love you more and there is nothing that you

can do to make Him love you less."

A major theme of the retreat was the recognition of the role of each woman as a beloved daughter of God. Using humor and the power of story, Herbeck shared her discovery of Catholicism as a Jewish woman with examples of things that the Church "got from us." She acknowledged the difficulty that her conversion had on her parents, and said that she sees herself today as a Jewish Catholic and that she, "hasn't abandoned her faith, but through the sacraments, has enhanced it."

The Rejoice! Women's Retreat is a collaborative effort that is supported by the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. Mary Glowaski, secretary of the Office of Evangelization spoke to the importance of not only the weekend for those in attendance but also the gratitude for those who gave of their time and effort to serve the Church in this way. "What I look forward to is that we continue to encourage women to use all of their gifts: their intellect, their wisdom, their voices to serve those in our diocese and in the work of our Church throughout the world."

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EXTENDING A HAND TO THOSE IN NEED

Salvadoran thrives in U.S. with resettlement, immigration help from Catholic Charities

BY ELIZABETH FLAHERTY

At 18, Alex Coreas came to the United States. It was very difficult to leave his family, but under the circumstances, it was really his only hope.

His native El Salvador was in shambles. The country had been torn apart by civil war for many years. In the aftermath, his homeland descended into anarchy. Violent gangs ruled the cities and towns. They demanded “rent” for protection and terrorized the populace.

“It was getting really bad,” said Coreas. “It was common to see a dead body in the street.”

As he was coming of age in his late teens, the gangs started to recruit Coreas. But he wanted nothing to do with them, aspiring instead to raise a family and have a business career. He rebuffed their advances, a response that put him in great danger.

Then came a terrible earthquake that caused widespread damage in El Salvador. The United States came in to provide aid. For some, there was a



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY CATHOLIC CHARITIES

Alex Coreas poses in front of the Allen County Courthouse. He is now a Fort Wayne resident, thanks to the help of Catholic Charities.

chance to be granted a special work permit to come to the U.S. Coreas jumped at the possibility.

Visa in hand, he joined a boyhood friend who was living in Fort Wayne. He found work doing maintenance and construction jobs, always supporting himself along the way. Eventually he became a commercial carpenter, which is still his full-time job.

“There are many like Alex who come to the U.S. legally every year as refugees and asylum seekers,” said Luz Ostrognai, Coreas’ case manager at Catholic Charities. “Because these people are living in the most dire of circumstances, they typically have a great appreciation for being here.”

As the prospect of returning home diminished because of

continued unrest in El Salvador, Coreas made the decision to stay in the United States and apply for his green card. Catholic Charities helped him navigate the labyrinth of red tape. With a steady work history and proficiency with English, he was granted permanent residence status.

Day by day Coreas’ appreciation for his new country grew. The freedoms and opportunities he experienced here were in such sharp contrast to the oppressive environment in his native El Salvador.

“Compared to my country, there is no hardship here,” he said. “If you work hard and play by the rules, you can get ahead.”

Ever thankful for his new lease on life, he wanted to show his appreciation for his new country by serving in the military. Once he received his green card, he became a member of the Army National Guard.

“My respect for my new country is big. It’s been 16 years, but every day I still feel a great sense of gratitude for being here.”

Coreas has served in the Guard for the last four years as a firefighter and medical first

responder. Once a month, he spends a three-day weekend at Camp Atterbury in southern Indiana.

Eventually, with help of Catholic Charities, he became a U.S. citizen. Again, the staff helped him with all the paperwork.

“We see people like Alex all the time,” said Ostrognai. “They work very hard and make great contributions to our community. They are such an inspiration.”

Coreas is married and is the father of two children. He is also a homeowner, living on the south side of Fort Wayne. One of his ambitions is to build his own house, so several years ago he and his wife acquired a piece of property. He and some friends recently poured the foundation and will soon begin building the new home.

With all the opportunity Alex has realized here in the United States, his gratitude for this country and for Catholic Charities is always close at hand.

“They are extremely good people,” he said of Ostrognai and her colleagues. “They have helped me get my new life and be successful in what I do.”

ECHO helps single mothers continue their education and realize their potential

BY CLAIRE COLEMAN

While still in high school, 18-year-old Reyna Ramirez found herself pregnant, frightened and overwhelmed. She was living two hours away from home, with friends. Then things began to deteriorate.

“I was scared because I didn’t know what to expect,” said Ramirez. “I had no support, and I didn’t know how to be a mom.”

She decided to return to South Bend to live with her mother. It was then that she went to the Women’s Care Center for assistance. After she decided to parent her baby, the staff referred her to the Catholic Charities ECHO Program.

ECHO, which stands for Education Creates Hope and Opportunity, is designed to help pregnant teens stay in high school and complete their diploma, all while still raising their children. ECHO also helps young mothers continue their education beyond high school up to age 24.

Like many other teen moms, Ramirez faced the possibility of having to drop out. But without a high-school diploma, she would have very poor job prospects. With the right support,

however, young mothers can get the education they need to land better-paying jobs and keep their families out of poverty.

In financial terms, the Catholic Charities ECHO Program has been a great success. Moms like Ramirez have a more than 90 percent graduation rate, which compares to only 40 percent for teen moms nationally. It is estimated that every mother on assistance costs the government a minimum of \$640,000 in services over her lifetime. To date, ECHO has helped more than 800 young mothers avoid poverty.

“But the program is about more than avoiding poverty,” said Ramirez’ ECHO Case Manager, Nora Bautista. “ECHO is about helping moms achieve their potential and creating a culture of human flourishing in our diocese.”

Ramirez was fearful at first about ECHO. She thought the people at Catholic Charities would look down on her for being pregnant at such a young age. What she found, instead, was a warm welcome, much-needed assistance and a very pro-life response among the staff.

Bautista first helped Ramirez with a schedule that would allow



ECHO client Reyna Ramirez received the assistance she needed to continue her education in spite of a pregnancy. She is pictured with her son, Aziel.

her to stay in school and still look after her son. More importantly, Bautista helped her set priorities and get organized, and helped her through the many personal difficulties she faced.

“Nora is my backbone,” she said. “She has kept me focused and is always there for me.”

Over the years, Catholic Charities has established strong working relationships with high schools in Fort Wayne, South Bend and elsewhere in the diocese. Those professional relationships are vital to the success of the program because they help ECHO case managers achieve a

consensus on the plan for the student among faculty, staff and parents, and carry out the plan. Thanks to ECHO Ramirez graduated on time, but she had no plans for continuing her education beyond high school. Bautista once again stepped in and helped her investigate career possibilities. Ramirez decided she wanted to do something in the medical field, so Bautista helped coordinate her search for possible programs. She also helped Ramirez with the scholarships and financial aid necessary to pursue her goal. Eventually Ramirez decided on Ivy Tech Community College, where she enrolled in September.

Ramirez credits Bautista with helping her organize and prioritize her life so she can continue her studies and raise her son. More importantly, she feels that advancing her education will help her stay out of poverty and provide the life she wants for her family.

“To be able to have my son in my arms and provide him with a stable family — that was life changing,” said Ramirez.

Consider supporting the ECHO program by sponsoring a teen mother and her child as she completes her education. For information, call 260-422-5625.

Catholic Charities annual coat drive underway in Auburn

BY SHIRLEY JOHNSON

For more than 10 years, the Catholic Charities RSVP office in Auburn has offered free winter garments to those in need. Each year the organization passes out nearly 2,000 coats, hats, scarves, gloves and mittens to area residents.

"There is no income test to qualify for a coat," said Site Director Patti Sheppard. "We only ask that the person fill out a form for our records."

Sheppard noted that requests come from many types of people, including those who have been recently released from jail and those who are living at the local homeless shelter and are in need of a decent coat to wear to a job interview. There is also the occasional pregnant woman who has outgrown her coat. Whatever the circumstances, the office is generally deluged with requests about the time of the first significant snowfall.

Each year the drive begins with barrels located in front of Kroger stores in Auburn and Kendallville. The Downtown Auburn Business Association also collects warm outer garments through drop-off points at PNC Bank, Peekers and the Atrium Market Place. McKinney Harrison Elementary School did a coat drive this year, as did the local Knights of Columbus from Immaculate Conception parish.

The drive is publicized by word of mouth and through United Way offices in DeKalb, Noble, Steuben and LaGrange counties.



DeKalb resident Tonya Purdy sorts through donated items at the Catholic Charities RSVP office in late November.

"We even have school-crossing guards who get involved," said Sheppard. "They notice which children are walking to school without proper clothing and then pass out items to them when they see them next."

This year the DeKalb County Community Foundation supported the drive through its Voice Grants. Thanks to these grants, high school kids from DeKalb County receive money and decide on how to spend it on winter garments and other items for the agency's food pantry.

Clothing donations are accepted year-round. Donated items may be dropped off at the Catholic Charities RSVP office in Auburn, located at 107 W. Fifth St.

For those in need, items may be picked up on Monday afternoons from 4:30-6:30 p.m., on Tuesday mornings from 9:30-11:30 a.m. and Wednesday afternoons from 1:30-3:30 p.m. Winter jackets and accessories will be given out through the end of January. Most all sizes are available, and items are distributed on a first-come-first-served basis.

Anyone with questions is invited to call the RSVP office at 260-925-0917. Volunteers from Catholic Charities are available to deliver items if transportation is unavailable to the recipient.

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Mom's guide to an old-fashioned, blessed, wonderful Christmas

I've been yearning for simplicity lately. Have you? During this Advent season, I suggest we turn inward and even backward a bit, to create for our families an old-fashioned, blessed, wonderful Christmas. Here's how.

Put Christ at the center

To have a wonderful, blessed, old-fashioned Christmas we must, of course, keep Christ where He belongs — in front. Stores and advertisements on television, the Internet and radio feed modern materialism, and we ourselves sometimes inadvertently do things that take away from the true meaning of Christmas too. Even though we may be well meaning, if we prioritize the purchases, plans and meal details before considering spiritual aspects and how to guide our families toward gratitude and a deeper relationship with Christ, we will find ourselves frazzled and missing out on the best part of the season, Christ himself.

There is nothing wrong with decorating; enjoying some of the secular trappings of the holiday is fun, of course. But, if anything takes away from our ability to hone in on prayer time, preparing our hearts and leading our families in that direction, we need to ditch it!

Putting the Nativity set in a conspicuous place of honor and making time for quiet prayer and contemplation daily will do wonders for keeping the focus where it belongs, on Christ. You

can find Advent devotions in any Catholic bookstore, online or in real life, but you don't need them. Put the family Bible next to the Nativity set and spend a few minutes reading the story of Christ's birth from each of the Gospels each night with your children. Read the little children age-appropriate books while snuggled on the sofa before bed. Pray the rosary. Attend an extra Mass during the week. Take the family to confession. Make a Jesse Tree. Use an Advent calendar. Focus on being kinder and more patient and doing little acts of love for your spouse, children and those around you. It's catchy, and you'll find that Christmas cheer spreads rather quickly when you start it yourself.

Give to others

It's somewhat easy to toss in canned goods or an old coat for a food or clothing drive, often much harder to do something for someone in your own little circle of acquaintances; but oh, it is so much more meaningful! Is there a struggling college student or young person you know? Send him a cheery note of encouragement and tuck a \$10 gift card inside. Are you at the drive through of your favorite coffee or bread shop? Ask the cashier how much the person behind you owes. If it's affordable for you to do so, tell the cashier you'd like to pay for the person behind you and to simply tell them "Merry Christmas." Offer to babysit for a



TERESA A. THOMAS

EVERYDAY CATHOLIC

young mother for a couple hours so she can do some Christmas shopping. Bring some homemade cookies to the neighbors. Gather a group of friends or family members and arrange to meet at local nursing home, with prior approval of the activities director. Sing traditional Christmas carols as residents eat their meals, or go door to door and pass out candy kisses. Stay and talk. Does someone in your family play the piano? Do that for the residents too. Double your dinner recipe one night and drop off some food at the rectory with a card. Call your mother just to say "hi."

Be creative

Make colorful, construction paper chains with your children. You can make these Christmas countdown chains, and remove a link each day until Dec. 25. Some families cut red and green rectangles that will make up the links and leave them in an easy-to-access spot. Family members write any good deeds they do each time they do them, then fold and tape the link to the others. The long chain at the end of

THOMAS, page 13

Prayer box taps into spiritual hunger

The box went up on a Monday evening in August; a plain, white box nestled inside a little wooden tent, mounted atop a fence and beneath the outermost reach of a maple.

"Prayer requests," read the side of the tent, in black and all-capital letters.

The box had a slot, like one awaiting Valentines, and the message: "Please write down any prayer requests. We would love to be praying for you!"

Keanu Krech didn't know what to expect when he set up the prayer box, tucking in a pen and a rock to hold down scraps of paper. The college senior, 22, positioned the box at the edge of his childhood home, which is on a busy residential road between a highway and a gas station in South St. Paul, Minn.

But Keanu knew he wanted to extend the power of prayer as broadly as he could, with a quiet anonymity. He was putting a twist on the Little Free Library concept that began just 20 miles east, in Hudson, Wis., and now exceeds 50,000 locations worldwide, knitting together neighborhoods with a warm and fuzzy literary fiber.

He planned to share the prayer requests, if they came, with his Monday night Bible study, a small group of college-aged students.

The next day Keanu peeked inside the box and discovered a handwritten note: "For those who are walking not knowing God, heal those with addictions,



CHRISTINA CAPECCI

TWENTY SOMETHING

and for the men and women overseas fighting for our freedom."

It was a heavy start, covering so much in such little space.

The prayer box was off and running. Keanu and his friends began to pray.

In three months, the box has amassed about 100 prayer requests. Never a week has passed without someone slipping a note inside.

"Please pray for my marriage," someone wrote.

"Please pray for us that we get a roof over our family's heads before winter comes," a note stated in round, puffy lettering.

"I'm here in town with the show Cabaret. I just ran my first half marathon and have lost 270 pounds. Continue to pray for me on my health journey," a passerby wrote last month.

"Pray for me," someone wrote with a left-handed slope. "I picked up a bad drug problem and I've lost my family and everyone I love and I don't know what to do. ... Please pray that God will help me with my troubles."

Others are shorter. "Arleen's

CAPECCI, page 13

Through Jesus, God has come to heal and save us



THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

MSGR. OWEN F. CAMPION

3rd Sunday of Advent Matthew 11:2-11

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

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

many of people around him, Isaiah unflinchingly called the people to God.

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

The Epistle to James supplies the second reading. This epistle rarely appears in the liturgy and the identity of the author is unclear. The New Testament mentions four men with this name. Which, if any, wrote this epistle? Some insist that James, the foster brother of the Lord, was the author.

(Here is the other question. Did Mary have other children? Ancient Christian writers surmised that James in this reference was a son from a previous marriage of Joseph, the eventual spouse of Mary. They reasoned that this must have been the case, as they believed, with the Church today, that Mary had only one child, namely Jesus.)

Regardless, this reading solidly establishes the author's faith that Jesus will be victorious. No

power can exceed the power of the Lord. After all, the Lord is the Son of God.

While final victory undoubtedly will come, it will not necessarily come at a time that humans predict, and certainly it will not come at their bidding. The great day nevertheless will come. God will prevail. The epistle urges strong faith, but also forbearance.

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

Despising the Roman occupation of the land, pious Jews at this time yearned for a Messiah who would rid the Holy Land of the pagan intruders for whom Herod was a stooge.

John gave another description of the Redeemer. He saw the Savior not as a warrior, commanding armies to slaughter the enemies of the One God of Israel, but the compassionate, truly holy, leader of the pious. Jesus met this description, healing the

sick, giving hope, and restoring life, lovingly coming to earth as Son of God.

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

Reflection

Advent is approaching its close. Since Christmas is near, the Church looks ahead to the wonder of the Lord's birth. This is Gaudete Sunday, using a title taken from the first word of the Introit in Latin, "Gaudete," or "Rejoice."

Priests may wear rose vestments this weekend, using them instead of violet, as if the rays of dawn already are brightening Advent's somberness.

The readings make several points. Isaiah warned us, as he warned his contemporaries, that by sin we bring heartache upon ourselves. By sinning, we weave the cloth of our own misery. God never brings death. He brings life, just as Jesus brought life.

Advent penance and prayer

hopefully lead us to imitate Christ. The liturgy presumes that we are using Advent to our advantage. If we are, and if we center our lives on Christ, then our love for God and for others will brighten the darkness and terror of our times. It is that simple.

Advent is designed to fortify and focus our Christian resolve.

READINGS

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

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

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

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

Thursday: Is 54:1-10 Ps 30:2, 4-6, 11-13 Lk 7:24-30

Friday: Is 56:1-3a, 6-8 Ps 67:2-3, 5, 7-8 Jn 5:33-36

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

Personal prayer, public prayer and the presence of Christ

There is no such thing as “private” prayer. There is — and certainly should be — deeply personal prayer, but really no such thing as “private” prayer. All Christian prayer, if it is true to its name, is initiated by the promptings of the Holy Spirit received in baptism, who prays in and through the hearts of the baptized — who together are constituted as the body of Christ, the Church.

Two things are worth noting here: First, all prayer begins with God’s initiative. It’s graced — in the Tradition, the Holy Spirit is often referred to as “uncreated Grace” — and second, the Church is constituted by God’s action, not by mere human choice or conscious decision. All prayer then, personal or public, is done in communion with the body of Christ, the Church, as the Spirit draws us in Christ to an ever-deeper communion with the Father.

Public, liturgical prayer should shape, inform and nurture our personal prayer. That is, rather than accommodating our experience of liturgical prayer to our experience of personal prayer — and thus asking, for example, whether the liturgy of the Church “meets my needs” or “touches me personally,” we should allow the public prayer of the Church continually to affect our experience of personal prayer, drawing us out of ourselves and uniting us more deeply to the self-offering of Christ to the Father. Our needs, like our tastes, should themselves be the subject of ongoing conversion.

The prayer of the Church par excellence is the Mass. The eucharistic liturgy, the Church tells us, is in fact the most effective thing the Church does. As Pope Benedict made clear in his first encyclical, “Deus Caritas Est,” the entire social mission of the Church, its apostolates of active charity and social justice, for example, derive their purpose and meaning — and their eschatological effectiveness — from the sacrifice of the altar, where the fullness of love is revealed not as a human ideal but as a divine person. That’s one of the reasons Mass is offered daily and why Catholics are encouraged to participate regularly — even daily, when possible — at the Mass. Ask anyone who, over the course of time, has had the opportunity to become a daily communicant, and each will no doubt tell you that the opportunity to celebrate Mass daily has made a profound difference in their life.

At every celebration of the Eucharist, Christ is present in four distinct ways: in his Word proclaimed; in the person of the priest or bishop, who acts in persona Christi; in the assembled people of God; and most especial-

ly (“maxime” is the word used in the documents of the Church, literally, “most of all”) in the consecrated elements, the bread and wine upon which the Holy Spirit is invoked (the technical term for this is “epiclesis”) and which are substantially changed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ. It is this last, substantial presence of Christ that in fact constitutes the Church and that makes Christ present among his people. It’s not that, because we have gathered as the Church that somehow the Eucharist reveals Christ’s presence; rather, it’s because Christ reveals himself in the breaking of the bread, as He did to Cleopas and his otherwise-unknown companion on the road to Emmaus, that we acknowledge Him present in the assembled people of God.

The Third Eucharistic Prayer itself, following the Institution Narrative and Consecration, entreats that, “Grant that we, who are nourished by his Body and Blood, may be filled with his Holy Spirit, and become one body, one spirit in Christ;” it is the Holy Spirit who constitutes the Church by configuring us to Christ through our sharing in the Eucharist. St. Augustine, in one of his homilies (Sermon 272), suggests to his congregation that it is “their Mystery” that is placed on the altar and that they are to “become what they receive” — their identity (and ours) is derived from the paschal mystery. Our participation in the Eucharist is what incorporates us, quite literally, into the body of Christ, the Church.

While the Mass is the source and summit of our life as Christians, there are manifold ways of praying in the Catholic Tradition. Most notably there is the Liturgy of the Hours, sometimes called the Divine Office or the Breviary, which is the official prayer, one might say, of the Catholic Church. We might marvel at the devotion of Muslims, who pray five times daily. Yet Christians have, for centuries now and long before the Qur’an was composed, been praying as many as seven times daily.

The Liturgy of the Hours, with its rhythm of feasts, seasons, psalmody and canticles, seeks both to sanctify each day and to rescue us from the tyranny of secular time, in which time is no longer seen as a gift, but a commodity to be managed and manipulated. Deacons, priests, bishops and religious are committed to the praying of this prayer with fidelity precisely for the well being of the Church and the salvation of the world. It’s a great consolation to realize that at any one moment, somewhere in the Catholic world, this prayer is being prayed for you — and for me.

There are, of course, many



THE HUMAN CONDITION

MSGR. MICHAEL HEINTZ

other modes of prayer and devotional life that distinguish the lives of Catholics: the rosary, Lectio Divina, novenas and litanies, and a host of other ways of praying that adorn the Church. But this panoply of styles and approaches must all be seen as somehow participating in the one prayer of the Church and as always taking their orientation from and ultimately being directed to, the celebration of the Eucharist. Even when alone, one is never praying alone. There are times when a priest may celebrate Mass without a congregation, but even in such cases, we believe that the entire Church, including the angels and saints, are somehow present in that celebration. A homebound person living alone, who may devoutly pray each day, is an integral part of Christ’s body, the Church, at prayer, offering itself to the Father in union with Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit. A young married couple, in their prayer together, pray in communion with the entire Church, including all other married couples praying together, whether they realize it or not. A newly-ordained priest, saying the Divine Office alone in church one morning, is praying with the Church Universal, and all these individuals are not merely individuals when they pray: They pray as part of Christ’s Body, in communion with the whole Church on earth.

For those interested in deepening their life of prayer in and with and through the Church, I suggest two very fine books: Thomas Dubay’s “Prayer Primer: Igniting a Fire Within” and Jean Corbon’s “Wellspring of Worship,” both published by Ignatius Press and available online or in stores.

Msgr. Michael Heintz is on the faculty at Mount Saint Mary’s Seminary, Emmitsburg, Md.

CAPECCHI

Continued from Page 12

foot to heal.” “Amber’s eye surgery.” “For God to place good people in Kelly’s life.”

Now Keanu and his friends are praying for Arleen and Amber and Kelly, for the faces they will never see whose hearts have been revealed.

“I’m surprised how deep the prayer requests are, how vulnerable they are,” he told me. “I’ve read some and just cried.”

As a teen, Keanu felt the weight of depression and the tug of life’s big questions. He didn’t attend church, but he’d stay up late, laptop in bed, pouring over YouTube videos from Christians and responses from atheists in an endless loop. His head was spinning and his heart was aching.

THOMAS

Continued from Page 12

the season will be a reminder of all the loving things your family has done throughout the season. On Christmas Eve you can place the paper chain on the tree or drape around the manger scene as a gift to the Christ child.

Get out and about. Go ice-skating at a local rink. Host a cookie exchange. Invite friends over for eggnog and to play cards. Make a date with your spouse to window shop or look at the Christmas lights. If your town has a manger scene, take your kids to see it. The University of Dayton in Ohio has a large Marian library and a large crèche collection. These Nativity scenes are displayed every year before Christmas and are wonderful to see. Find out what is available in your city by checking with colleges, museums and your local park department. You might be surprised to find some wonderful displays and activities right in your own backyard.

Bake from scratch

Pull out those dusty, handwritten recipes that came from your grandmother and make treasured treats for your family. Don’t have any? Call your mom or mother-in-law and ask for some old family standbys. What’s even better, if you have young children or grandchildren, invite them to help you bake. Freeze the goodies for Christmas Eve. There is something incredibly special about making recipes that are family heirlooms that have been handed down from generation to generation. You may want to tell stories while you bake, memories of your grandmother or own childhood Christmases.

Finally, his mom called a youth minister at her parents’ Methodist church to field Keanu’s questions. They met at a coffee shop and struck up a friendship over hot chocolate. Soon Keanu was attending Sunday night worship services. Something changed in his heart: For the first time in a long time, he felt hope.

As Keanu completes his bachelor’s degree in pastoral ministry, he’s letting his faith guide the next chapter. The goal, he says, plain and simple: to love God and love others. And as long as people keep submitting prayer requests, he’ll keep praying for them.

Christina Capecchi is a freelance writer from Inver Grove Heights, Minn., and editor of SisterStory.org.

Lower expectations

The Advent and Christmas seasons can be a time of stress and high expectations. Be realistic in what you expect, whether it relates to how much you think you must accomplish or what to expect of a relative’s words or behavior. Repeat in your mind as much as is necessary, “Christmas is about Jesus’ birth. What else is, is.”

Lastly, simplify, simplify, simplify! You know your own limits. If buying gift cards instead of actual presents for some people on your list means you can spend more time preparing your heart well for our Lord, or with your family in meaningful interaction, don’t hesitate to do so. Choose those traditions that have meaning and value to you and yours, remembering the true meaning of Christmas, Jesus’ birth. Prioritize, then let go. No one can do everything perfectly and with no glitches. No one. Focus on what counts most.

If you do these things, then, when the wrapping paper litters the floor on Christmas morning, when dinner has been eaten and relatives have gone home, you can look back gladly and with confidence that you have created a most meaningful Christmas for your family. When you and your family put Christ as the center, you will experience great joy and peace, even in the hectic details and imperfections of life. What’s more, when you focus on the right things, you know that Christmas morning is just the beginning, not end of the liturgical Christmas season. Thank God. Literally.

Have a very merry, blessed, wonderful, old-fashioned Christmas!

Theresa Thomas is the wife of David and mother of nine children.

Sports

MARIAN, LUERS FACE OFF ON THE COURT At home on Dec. 3, the Marian High School Lady Knights varsity basketball team improved to 7-3 on the season with a 57-55 overtime win versus nonconference foe Fort Wayne Luers. Meghan Urbanski led the Marian Knights with 21 points and Libby Priller chipped in 11. Other scorers were Kiya Roby, 7 points; Anija Payne, 7; Christina Himelick, 5; and Makayla Weaver, 6.

CYO basketball season tips off in Fort Wayne

BY RON BUSCH

December is here, and that means "basketball" in CYO sports circles. The breakdown of leagues this year, as last year, falls into three leagues for both girls' and boys' basketball. Schools are placed according to enrollment.

The Gold League is for large schools. Based on student-athlete numbers, the Gold teams may be eighth grade only, or combined seventh and eighth grade. In last year's end-of-season tournament,

the girls' Gold League champions were the St. Vincent Panthers. The boys' Gold League championship went to the St. Charles Borromeo Cardinals.

The Blue League is for smaller schools, and likewise may include combined seventh- and eighth-grade teams, or just eighth-grade. Last year's girls' Blue League winner was St. Joseph-Hessen Cassel. The boys' Blue League tournament champ was Most Precious Blood.

The White League is reserved for seventh grade-only teams, regardless of school size. The

seventh-grade girls from St. Charles Borromeo walked off with the girls' top honors last year, while the boys' seventh-grade top White League team was St. Vincent.

Blue League coach Justin Allen, of the championship boys' team from Most Precious Blood, is excited about the upcoming season.

"We recently found out that we're being bumped up to the Gold League due to realignment in the Blue League. Our team is tough, with a mix of sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade boys.

We're eager to play the big schools and have a productive year."

One of Coach Allen's competitors in the new alignment will be St. Charles Coach Dan Sordulet's team. This is Sordulet's 20th season with the St. Charles Cardinals; last year, his team captured top boys' Gold League honors.

Coach Mark Scudder and the St. Vincent Panthers have eight eighth-grade girls this year. Last year, in the White League, his seventh-grade team won end-of-season tournament honors. This year he's following the kids up to eighth grade and will continue with the squad. He identifies them as a "fun group of kids." They are out for another successful season.

Moving forward from a successful CYO football season, the St. Charles basketball team has been impressive as well. Andrea Fisher coached last year's seventh-grade girls' team, and she's excited about this year's team as well.

"They're a hardworking group of girls that are open to coaching. I have enjoyed getting to know them. I continue to challenge them in every practice to build upon their basketball skills and cohesiveness as a team. I'm excited that the season is starting, and look forward to this



year with this group of girls." Coach Fisher's assistants will include husband Jason and daughter Victoria, a Bishop Dwenger junior and St. Charles basketball alumnus. Many of the CYO teams were involved in the

Thanksgiving weekend

Queen of Angels Invitational. This was the 24th year of the tournament, held at the University of Saint Francis. The boys and girls played double-elimination games, with 10 teams in the boys' brackets. The girls' competition featured five teams and eight games. The boys' championship went to the St. Vincent seventh-grade team, an athletic group with good shooting and ball-handling skills. Girl's tournament winner was the St. Charles eighth-grade team from St. Charles, coached by Brooke Neuhaus.

"We have a very talented group of girls playing for St. Charles," Neuhaus said. "They've gotten better over the years of playing together."

Plenty of CYO basketball action is scheduled: The weekend of Dec. 3-4 featured some 21 games at various Catholic school gyms around Fort Wayne. All the schools are looking forward to exciting play featuring more than a few talented CYO student athletes.

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RSVP to Jackie by Wednesday, December 7, 2016
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Thank You To Our Fort Wayne Sponsors!



BECAUSE OF YOU...

Mass of Thanksgiving

Thursday, December 15

St. Therese, Little Flower Parish *South Bend* at Noon

Friday, December 16

St. Mary Parish *Downtown Fort Wayne* at 5:30 pm

Receptions to follow both Masses, we hope to see you there!



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WHAT'S HAPPENING?

WHAT'S HAPPENING carries announcements about upcoming events in the diocese. Send your announcement at least two weeks prior to the event. View more Catholic events and submit yours at www.diocesefwsb.org/bulletin. 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 260-399-1449 to purchase space.

German Christmas concert

FORT WAYNE — St. Peter Church, 518 E Dewald St., will host a Christmas concert Sunday, Dec. 18, at 4 p.m. The Fort Wayne Männerchor/Damenchor will offer traditional German Christmas music in the beautiful sanctuary. No admission charge. Visit www.fortwaynemaennerchor.org for information.

Christmas concert planned

FORT WAYNE — Most Precious Blood Church, 1515 Barthold St., will have a Christmas concert Thursday, Dec. 29, at 7 p.m. in the church. Admission is free.

Visit with St. Nicholas

SOUTH BEND — Breakfast with St. Nicholas will be Sunday, Dec. 11, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the St. Patrick's Parish Center Kelly Room. Special treats, crafts and games with new breakfast plate options. Tickets are \$5 for adults, \$3 for children, pancake stack \$2 and family ticket \$15.

Knights host Sunday breakfast at Most Precious Blood

FORT WAYNE — The St. Gaspar del Bufalo Knights will be serving a breakfast Sunday, Dec. 11, from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in the gymnasium at Most Precious Blood Church, 1515 Barthold Street. Tickets are \$8 for adults, \$4 for children 6-12 and \$20 per family. Carryout will be available. All proceeds will benefit the schools of Most Precious Blood and Queen of Angels.

Pancake breakfast planned

FORT WAYNE — St. Charles Athletic Association, corner of Reed and Trier roads, will be serving pancakes and sausage on Sunday, Dec. 11, from 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in the school cafeteria. (Door #9). All the pancakes you can eat and a chance to sit on Santa's lap. Tickets are \$5 for adults; \$3 for children ages 12 and under, or \$20 for the entire family. All proceeds benefit the St. Charles Athletic Association.

Bishop Luers to offer Christmas prayer in music

FORT WAYNE — Bishop Luers High School will offer Christmas Prayer in Music Sunday, Dec. 18, at 4 p.m. in the new Chapel of Saint Francis of Assisi at the school. The Bishop Luers choirs and musicians will offer a reading and Christmas prayers in the form of music. The service is expected to last one hour. The

annual Christmas Concert will be Thursday, Dec. 15, at 6:30 p.m., where the bands and choirs will perform music of the season.

XLT Night at St. Jude

FORT WAYNE — St. Jude, St. Charles, and St. Louis youth ministries will have an XLT event on Sunday, Dec. 11. XLT is short for "exalt" and it consists of adoration, praise and worship, confession and reflection. Music and adoration starts at 7 p.m. in St. Jude Church. After adoration, a social time for high school students only will be offered until 9 p.m. Anyone may attend adoration and benediction from 7-8 p.m. Contact Vickie Lortie @ 484-6609 ext. 1012 for information.

Celebrate Advent

NEW HAVEN — Spark Your Faith of St. Louis Besancon Parish presents "A Celebration of Advent" on Dec. 11 from 6-7 p.m. in the church. Celebrate Advent with a choir concert, readings and reflections.

Young adult retreat planned

SOUTH BEND — "Set the World Ablaze" will be Saturday, Jan. 14, 9 a.m. through Sunday, Jan. 15, 1 p.m. at the Sacred Heart Parish Center. Enjoy relevant talks, music, Mass, adoration, confession and social time. Includes overnight lodging, lunch and dinner on Saturday, and breakfast and lunch on Sunday. For more information or to register visit www.diocesefwsb.org/yam-retreats.

Live drive-through Nativity

ANGOLA — St. Anthony of Padua will have a live drive-through Nativity on Sunday, Dec. 11, from 5-8 p.m. on the parish grounds, 700 W. Maumee St. Travel in the comfort of your car along a road lined with over 500 luminaries, past the Bethlehem Inn, through the fields where the angel appeared to the shepherds, past the three wise men following the star and ending at the manger. Each scene comes alive with animals including a camel. There is no charge.

DIRECTOR OF YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY AT ST. ANTHONY OF PADUA PARISH, ANGOLA

St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church in Angola seeks a full time Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry. The Youth Minister collaborates with the pastoral team to oversee a comprehensive faith formation program for older children and young adults, especially the following five areas:

- Confirmation preparation (grade 8)
- High School youth ministry
- Scouting
- Campus ministry for students of Trine University
- Young adult ministry, with focus on ages 18-29

This is a full time, salaried position. The applicant is expected to be an active Catholic who can become a parishioner at St. Anthony's and has a good mastery of the teachings of the Catholic Church. We prefer an applicant who has at least a bachelor's degree in pedagogy (certified teacher), religious education or theology. Other applicants will be seriously considered.

For a more complete job description, please write to Fr. Bob Showers OFM Conv. at frbob@stanthonyangola.com -or- write to St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church 700 W. Maumee St., Angola IN 46703.

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Columbia City

Rose M. Fearnow, 72, St. Paul of the Cross

Fort Wayne

Mary E. Doust, 91, St. Peter

Huntington

Allen D. Stetzel, 85, SS. Peter and Paul

Mishawaka

Gene Albert Goddard, 87, St. Bavo

New Carlisle

Harriet P. Vollmer, 91, St. Stanislaus Kostka

New Haven

Teresa Anne Lake, 52, St. John the Baptist

Notre Dame

Sister M. Stella Haske, CSC, 99, Our Lady of Loretto

Sister M. Anita Murphy, CSC, 90, Our Lady of Loretto

Brother Thomas P. Tucker, CSC, 81, Basilica of the Sacred Heart

Sarah K. Arvesen, 93, St. Joseph Chapel, Holy Cross Village

Joseph Bryan Harlow, 58, Basilica of the Sacred Heart

South Bend

Terry Allen St. Thomas, 47, Christ the King

Robert E. Machowiak, 69, Holy Family

Joseph Lazzara, 94, St. Joseph

Mary M. Nawrocki, 98, St. Adalbert

Shirley Niezgodski, 74, St. Joseph

Margaret H. (Clements) Moore, 87, St. Therese, Little Flower

Ralph W. Szymanski, 91, St. John the Baptist

Virginia Kaser, 81, St. John the Baptist

Sister Mary Esther Lane, SP, 101, Sister served at Central Catholic High School, Fort Wayne.

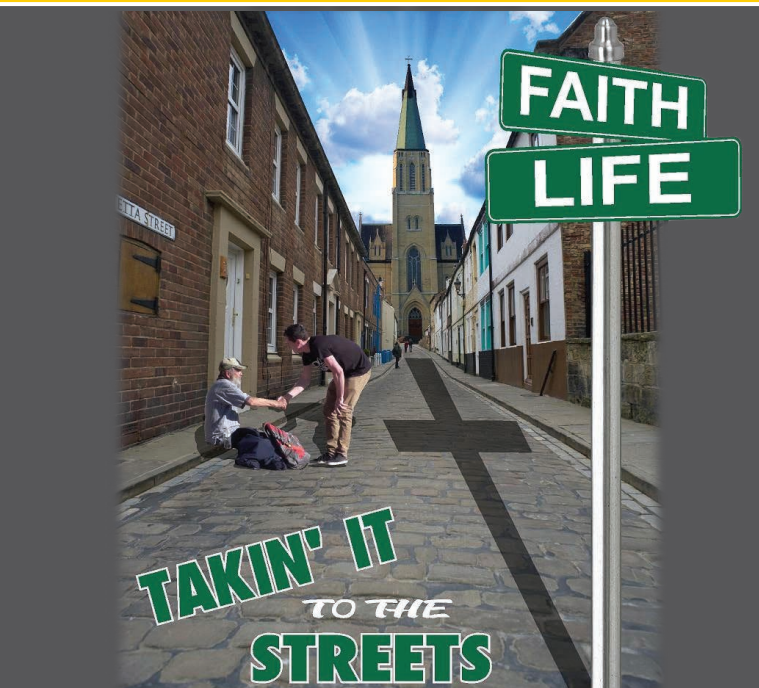
Sister Marian Ruth Johnson, SP, 90, Sister served at St. Patrick, Fort Wayne. Both services at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, St. Mary-of-the-Woods Indiana.

Submit obituaries to mweber@diocesefwsb.org

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The Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend

ADVENT joy

The joy of the Lord's coming

BY ALMA NUNEZ

As Dec. 25 edges closer and closer, there is an almost palpable sensation of excitement and happiness in the air. This excitement, for many, is caused by the thought of finally getting to see and gather with friends and family. For others, it is the hope of tasting Mom's chocolate chip cookies or Grandma's cheesecake that brings about smiles and grumbling bellies. And then there are those who are glad about contemplating the opening of those gifts glistening under the Christmas tree.

But although the 25th of December brings about these awesome and great reasons to be happy, for the Church community there is a deeper, underlying sentiment of joy as Christmas approaches.

I decided to interview some of my family members, as part of the domestic Church, to get their perspective on the meaning of joy during Advent. I asked each of them, "What is the true meaning of joy during Advent to you?"

I first asked the question of my 11-year-old sister, Aurora Nunez. "Joy is preparing for Jesus to be born," she explained. I asked her why it was joyful for her. "Because babies are cute," she responded, with giggles and a fit of laughter.

After she finally got ahold of herself, she told me a bit more seriously, but with a smile still tugging at her lips, "Jesus Christ comes and saves us from our sins, and that makes me very happy."

Aurora definitely struck a chord of truth, not just about babies being cute but also with the fact that Jesus Christ coming and rescuing us from slavery to sin should make us euphoric and jubilant indeed.

My 15-year-old sister, Carmen Stephanie Nunez, also had much to share. Pondering the meaning of joy during Advent she said, "I think of family being united, preparing for Jesus' coming. You just get really excited because Jesus' coming is closer. I'm excited for beautiful Masses and events, but most of all for being gathered together with my family and community."

Stephanie is right. A big part of the joy everyone experiences during Advent is getting to spend that time of anticipation for Jesus' coming together with one's family and community.

My mom, Alma Medina, when asked the same question, responded: "For me, the joy is about the happiness that comes along with the coming of Jesus, our Lord — even though he won't come physically, but will instead be born in our hearts. We have to let Jesus be born in our hearts, and grow in our hearts," she added with a little emphasis. "Our hearts need to be open for Him to grow."

According to my dad, Oscar Nunez, "Joy during Advent is waiting for the consummation of God's love for us. This is love at its maximum expression. It is the incarnation of God out

of love for us, for our salvation."

Overall I think that my family members had great insights on the meaning of joy during the Advent season. They established that this joy is about being together in community to experience Jesus' coming into our lives and hearts for our salvation.

I got the opportunity to converse with Father Elmer Rodriguez, a pastor from Guatemala visiting his family during the holiday celebrations, and to talk more about this joy.

"The joy of Advent is substantially different to, for example, joy during Easter. Even the pink color of the vestment used by the priest on the third Sunday of Advent expresses this joy. This joy is about the coming of the Lord. But what is the novelty in that? It is the mercy that God has for us," he said. "The joy is that the all-powerful God makes Himself present and makes Himself incarnate in the world. So the joy that He brings is caused by His closeness, the closeness of God. It is like the waiting of the groom as it gets closer and closer for him to be with his bride; in the same way, in this third week of Advent, it gets closer for us to meet with Jesus. It is a waiting with longing, excitement and lots of hope. That is the joy during Advent, the joy that brings hope."

Alma Nunez is a Saint Joseph High School junior.

