

# TODAY'S CATHOLIC

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## *Merry Christmas*

*"... I proclaim  
to you good  
news of great  
joy that will  
be for all the  
people.*

*For today in the  
city of David a  
savior has been  
born for you  
who is Messiah  
and Lord."*

Luke 2:10-11 NAB



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Kevin Haggenjos

A stained-glass window at St. Bavo parish, Mishawaka, depicts the arrival of the Savior of the world, the Word Made Flesh.



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# The face of the God who saves



## IN TRUTH AND CHARITY

BISHOP KEVIN C. RHOADES

"Let us all rejoice in the Lord, for our Savior has been born in the world. Today true peace has come down to us from heaven" (Entrance Antiphon from Christmas Mass during the Night).

The message of the angel to the shepherds on the first Christmas remains ever new: "Today in the city of David a Savior has been born for you who is Christ and Lord." The message of the birth of Jesus our Savior was spoken over 2,000 years ago, but it is a message that the Church still proclaims and will always proclaim, the message of Christmas, the message that "the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger" is the Savior, not only for people long ago, but our Savior, the Savior of people today.

Given all the advances in science and technology, especially in recent years, some may feel that we don't really need a savior. There are those who consider man to be a self-sufficient master of his own destiny. Yet, in the depths of our being, we know otherwise. Despite humanity's many advances, we still have poverty, injustice, hatred, violence, loneliness, addictions and other ills. In a word, there is still sin and there is death, from which no one can escape. Yes, we do need a Savior. So the message of Christmas has relevance and gives hope: "our Savior has been born in the world."

The Church's task, our task, is to receive the Savior into our hearts and lives and to witness to the Savior in our words and deeds. "The Church in this world is the sacrament of salvation, the sign and the instrument of the communion of God and men" (Catechism 780). We are a community saved by Christ. We draw our strength and nourishment from His Word and His Eucharistic Body. And then we bear witness to Christ our Savior in the world. We share in His saving mission to overcome evil with good, to bring light to those in darkness, healing to those who are suffering, in sum: to bear witness to the truth and beauty and joy of the Gospel of our Savior.

Christ does not save us *from* the world. He came *into* the world, so that through Him the world might be saved. In order to save us, the Son of God became one of us. He assumed our human nature in order to accomplish our salvation in it. He came in the flesh. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). He became truly man while remaining truly God. This is the mystery we celebrate at Christmas, the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God. It is the distinctive sign of Christian faith, a mystery unheard of in other religions. The Church confesses that "Jesus is inseparably true God and true man. He is truly the Son of God who, without ceasing to be God and Lord, became a man and our brother" (CCC 469). Why? Precisely: to save us! As we profess in the Nicene Creed: "For us men and for our salvation, He came down from heaven."

God revealed to Mary and Joseph that they were to name their child, conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, "Jesus," a name which means "God saves." This is Jesus' mission. Pope Benedict XVI once said that Jesus is "the face of the God who saves." He gives life and this life is grace. God sent His



CNS/Bridgeman Images

**The adoration of the Magi is depicted in a 14th century painting by Giotto di Bondone. The feast of the Nativity of Christ, a holy day of obligation, is celebrated Dec. 25.**

Son into the world to fill the world with His grace. When we gaze upon the infant Jesus in the Christmas manger, we see the face of God. We see the immortal Life which became mortal. In the face of the baby Jesus, we see God's love and humility. In Jesus, we receive the power of God's saving grace, the grace that sanctifies us.

God shows us His face, full of grace and mercy, in Jesus. When we open ourselves in faith to receive His grace and mercy, we receive a share in His own divine life. This is why God became man: in order to give us a share in His own divinity. At Christmas, we celebrate the amazing grace which the Lord's mercy bestows on us. This is the message of Christmas: the good news of salvation. And that is why we sing with the angels: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom His favor rests." This peace is the fruit of God's love which is grace, mercy, and truth. And together with this peace, we have hope, the hope which has its foundation in the gift of salvation, of being set free from the darkness of sin and death. Christmas is truly a feast of hope.

The grace, peace and joy of Christmas is for all people. Jesus was born as the Savior of the world. In the Child Jesus in the manger, we behold the Truth that sets us free and

the Love that transforms our lives. We adore Him at our Christmas liturgies. Like the shepherds who adored Jesus in the manger, we are also called to spread the good news of the birth of our Savior. The Gospel of Luke tells us that the shepherds "made known the message that had been told them about this child." We should not be afraid to share the joy of our faith with others. In fact, we have an obligation to do so: to bear witness to Jesus the Savior so that others may encounter His love, grace, and peace. As Saint Paul wrote: "God desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). The Church, as the universal sacrament of salvation, has been entrusted with this truth and must go out and bring this truth to the world. Let us not be afraid to share with others the truth of the Gospel and the joy of our encounter with Christ our Savior!

It was through the fruitful virginity of Mary that God bestowed on the human race the grace of eternal salvation. May the Mother of the Savior help us to bear witness in our world to the truth and love of her Son! May God bless you and your loved ones with joy and peace during this Christmas season! Merry Christmas to all!



# Redeemer Radio celebrates 10 years

BY CLAIRE KENNEY

**R**edeemer Radio has been in operation within the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend for a decade now, touching lives every day.

"It is truly amazing how many people's lives have been changed in the past few months from the wisdom of our guests, not to mention the past 10 years of Redeemer Radio's consistent message of love, hope and spreading truth," said Kyle Heimann, host of the station's Kyle Heimann Show, which airs weekday mornings from 6-8 a.m.

Andrea Serrani, Heimann's producer, echoed his statement of implementing a grace-filled message. "We try to leave our listeners with a little inspiration and encouragement to live the faith the rest of the day," she said.

Since its launch in December 2005, Redeemer Radio has achieved significant milestones. The station transitioned from AM to FM in February 2014. That same year it began airing a two-hour morning show and broadcasting from a second FM station located at South Bend's Little Flower Parish.

Mike Ripley, incoming board of directors chairman, detailed how such milestones created growth for the station.

"These all mark significant expansions in not only the number of people receiving the message, but also the depth at which the station is able connect with them," he said. "Our goal is to serve as an essential resource for individuals on their journey to the heart of the church. In order to serve as such, we will continue to foster unity and engagement amongst faithful Catholics within the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. However, as God has called us to do, we will increase our efforts to re-engage wavering Catholics, and we will help amplify the voice of the Catholic Church calling out to those who are seeking to learn more about our faith." He noted that this includes reaching out through various media platforms and new and exciting endeavors.

"Our goal first and foremost is to reach more souls for Christ," said Redeemer Radio Executive Director Cindy Black. "We're working on initiatives to increase listenership and ways to listen. An immediate goal for that is to launch an app very soon ... We also hope to tap into more of the local resources for content. We are blessed to have many various, strong Catholic organizations in our listening area to highlight."

Two Masses were celebrated to mark the anniversary: one at St. Mary Mother of God Church in Fort Wayne and another at St. Therese, Little Flower Parish, South Bend.

In his homily at the Fort Wayne Mass, celebrated on the third Friday of Advent, Bishop



Photo provided by Doug Jones

**Father Terry Coonan celebrates a Mass for staff members and supporters of Redeemer Radio in South Bend at St. Therese, Little Flower Parish on Friday, Dec. 18. Father Coonan noted that the Mass readings for the day mentioned the word "Redeemer."**



Mollie Schutt

**Bishop Rhoades and the Redeemer Radio Fort Wayne staff celebrated the station's 10th anniversary with a Mass and a reception at St. Mary Mother of God Church Dec. 18. In the front row, from left, are Jennifer Zurbuch, director of development; Jill O'Sullivan, business manager; Andrea Serrani, producer and programmer; Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades; Cindy Black, executive director; Jennifer Kedik, community relations director; and Erin Heckber, marketing manager. In the back row are Kyle Heimann, host of The Kyle Heimann Show; Bob Hartenstein, development; Rick Gonsiorek, 95.7 FM general manager; and Deacon Jim Tighe, senior advisor (retired).**

Kevin C. Rhoades noted that in the day's Gospel reading, "Jesus said to the Jews that John the Baptist testified to the truth. He called John 'a burning and shining lamp.' John indeed testified to the truth which is Jesus Himself, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He bore witness that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world."

Even though the Lord did not need testimony from a human being, the bishop noted, Jesus cited it "as a help for people to believe in Him, that they might be saved."

"Redeemer Radio has a prophetic mission, not unlike the mission of the Old Testament prophets and St. John the Baptist," Bishop Rhoades said. "For 10 years, Redeemer has broadcast the truth of the Gospel, the truth of the Catholic faith, and, in a sense, has prepared the way of the Lord in the minds and hearts of its listeners. Through the various programs and shows, the faith has been taught and shared. Prayers have been offered. People have been invited to learn the truths of the faith and to share in the life of the Church. I cannot thank Redeemer Radio enough for this important and holy apostolate."

"Our priests and I greatly appreciate Redeemer Radio as a very effective means of evange-

lization and catechesis," Bishop Rhoades continued. "You reach out to people whom we might never encounter in our ministry: people who are searching, people who are confused, people who are hungry for the truth of the Gospel, and people who are hurting. You touch people who are unchurched as well as Catholics who are inactive in the practice of the faith. Like John the Baptist, you prepare the way of the Lord, as people hearts and consciences can be stirred by listening to Redeemer Radio, as the Holy Spirit acts in their souls. ... Many active Catholics also listen to Redeemer Radio and receive ongoing education in the faith. So many are strengthened in their faith and Christian lives by listening to Redeemer Radio. They are challenged to grow in their faith and are encouraged and assisted to respond to the call to holiness."

"People throughout the 14 counties of our diocese are fed by the truth of the Gospel through Redeemer Radio," he concluded. "Like St. John the Baptist, may you be 'a burning and shining lamp! May you continue to prepare the way of the Lord in the minds and hearts of your listeners! May the Holy Spirit guide and direct your work! May our Blessed Mother intercede for you as you continue to serve her Son and His mission of salvation! "



## Public schedule of Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades

Monday, December 26: 4 p.m. — Mass for World Youth Day Participants, Saint Mary Mother of God Church, Fort Wayne

Thursday, December 29: 11 a.m. — Mass with Blessing of Chapel and Dedication of Altar, Our Lady of the Angels Friary, Fort Wayne

Saturday, December 31: 4 p.m. — Mass, Saint Mary Church, Huntington

Monday, January 2: 8 a.m. — Mass for university students attending SEEK conference in San Antonio, University of Saint Francis, Fort Wayne

## Diocese mourns Father Kenneth Sarrazine

"I like everything about being a priest. My priesthood is a great gift from God!"

These were the words of Father Kenneth Sarrazine as he entered retirement from the priesthood in 2012. Father Sarrazine passed away on Saturday, Dec. 17, at the age of 79, just five days shy of what would have been the 54th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood.

A Fort Wayne native, Father Sarrazine was born to Norman and Florence (Bowers) Sarrazine. He is the oldest of six brothers and three sisters. As a child, Sarrazine attended St. Louis Academy at St. Louis, Besancon Parish.

Father Sarrazine's discernment of the priesthood began at a young age. When he was in just sixth grade, he heard a talk from Msgr. Joseph Hession describing the difficult days in the seminary. Young Sarrazine took this as a challenge and began to think about the priesthood. His discernment continued in eighth grade, when he attended a retreat facilitated by a Precious Blood priest. In a 2012 interview with *Today's Catholic*, Father Sarrazine shared, "When I told my parents the priesthood was something I would like to look into, they immediately took me to the pastor and discovered a bus trip had been scheduled in two weeks to Wawasee seminary for youngsters interested in learning more about the priesthood."

Father Sarrazine attended Mount St. Mary's Seminary, Norwood, Ohio, and Our Lady of the Lake Seminary, Wawasee and was ordained a priest on Dec. 22, 1962, by Bishop Leo A. Pursley in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Fort Wayne. Why in the month of December? As it turns out, Bishop Pursley thought that he would be in Rome in the spring of 1962 for a session of the Second Vatican Council. He rescheduled that year's ordinations for December, when he knew he would be in Indiana.

Father Sarrazine's first assignment in June 1963 was as an assistant at St. Vincent de Paul, Elkhart. Ironically, the pastor at the time was Msgr. Hession. His



FATHER KENNETH SARRAZINE

pastoral assignments included assistant at St. Henry Parish, Fort Wayne (1964), and St. Jude, South Bend (1965), St. John the Baptist, New Haven (1972) and the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Fort Wayne (1975); pastor at St. Martin de Porres, Syracuse, along with St. Francis Xavier, Pierceton (1976); St. Joseph, Mishawaka (1980), St. Henry, Fort Wayne (1991); and St. Joseph, Roanoke and St. Catherine of Alexandria (1998). He was appointed chaplain of Lutheran hospital, Fort Wayne, in 2003. Father Sarrazine also served as an advocate for the tribunal for a time. He retired from the priesthood in 2012 and resided at St. Anne Home and Retirement Community in Fort Wayne.

Kay Schneider, director of religious education for 14 years at St. Joseph, Roanoke, and St. Catherine, was also principal for three years under Father Sarrazine at St. Henry.

"I don't think I have ever met more of a kind-hearted person," she said. "He was a delight to work for. Whenever I thought we needed to change something, I went to him and he supported me. And he was so generous with everyone," she recalled.

A Mass of Christian Burial, officiated by Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades, will be at 11 a.m., Friday, Dec. 23, at St. Louis Besancon Church, 15535 Lincoln Highway East, New Haven. Visitation will occur an hour and a half prior, as well as from 2 to 7 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 22, at the church, with a rosary at 4:30 p.m. Father Sarrazine will be laid to rest in Catholic Cemetery in Fort Wayne.



# Young adults gather for Advent message

BY RACHEL BATDORFF

On Thursday evening, Dec. 15, young adults from around the diocese gathered at the Archbishop Noll Center in Fort Wayne for an evening of fellowship, food and an Advent message from Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades.

Jennifer Kopecky, Fort Wayne young adult and campus minister, started the evening by introducing Bishop Rhoades to the group gathered in the Garden Room.

"During this cold evening, I hope your hearts are warmed through the message and fellowship," Kopecky said. "Bishop Rhoades leads with humility, great passion and intentional relationships. This speaks to his shepherding, starting from where you're at in your faith journey and building from there. We're all here to build His kingdom."

Bishop Rhoades began his talk, titled "The Mystery



Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades addresses a group of young people who gathered at the Bishop Noll Center, Fort Wayne, Dec. 18 for a message about the mystery of Christmas.

Rachel Batdorff

of Christmas" by praying the Angelus with attendees, followed by the theme of the evening's message.

"There's a certain wonder and awe we should have as we

contemplate Christmas," he said, adding that Christmas in its truest sense is a celebration of the Incarnation, and more than just superficial happiness.

The Incarnation makes Christianity unique. There is no other religion in the world with

the belief, the unheard of idea that the Messiah would be God himself. We can't help but be filled with wonder and awe at the fact that God is actually with us, the bishop said. "All we can do is approach the mystery in adoration."

He went on to reference St. Thomas Aquinas, who stated that among the works of God, the Incarnation surpasses all. He then encouraged the young adults present to pray the Angelus every day to keep the mystery of the Incarnation prominent in their lives.

Referencing John 1:14, he said: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. ... The Incarnation is not an irrelevant event."

Bishop Rhoades then circled back to Saint Thomas Aquinas and his three points of the purposes of the Incarnation. The first is that God is revealing to us the truth about Himself and

man. The second is that He is making all things new through the death and resurrection of Christ. The third is that He is making human beings divine as adopted sons and daughters of God.

The bishop distributed copies of The Nativity, a Byzantine art piece depicting the birth of Christ and mystery of the Incarnation. The artwork illustrates the symbolic darkness of the world contrasting with the light from the sky, the origin of the child.

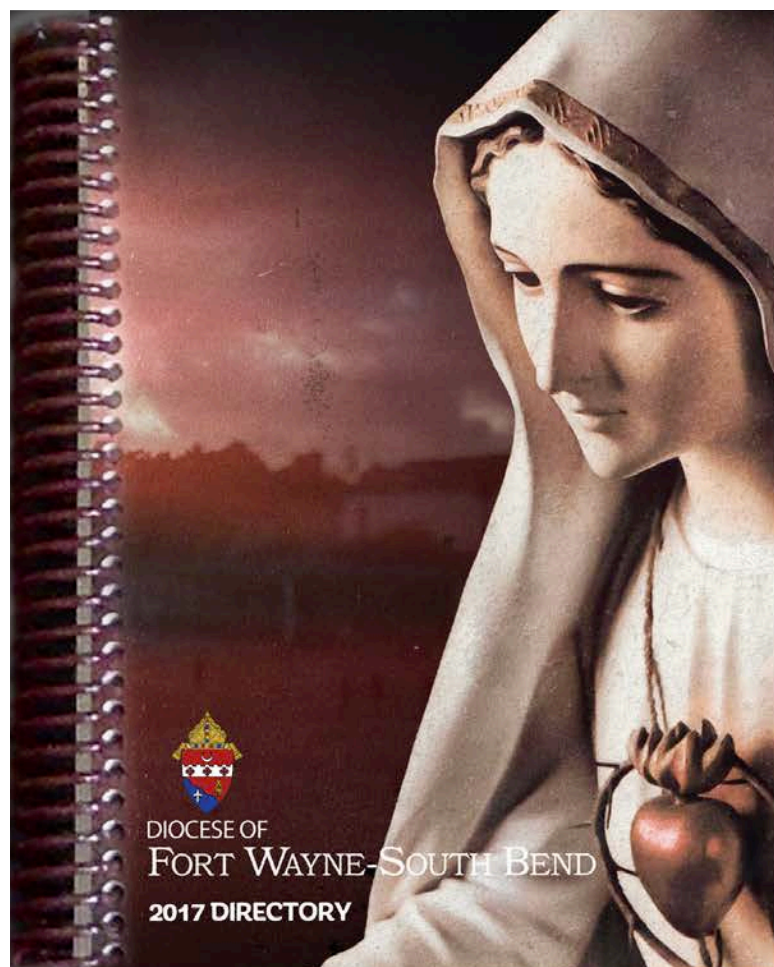
Within the image, Mary is portrayed at the center, rather than the child. This placement symbolizes the reality of Christ's birth and the astonishment that the Word of God became man, Bishop Rhoades said.

The presentation concluded with encouragement that those present would live the mystery of the Incarnation — particularly the virtue of humility.

"Besides humility, live poverty, evangelical poverty through the self-giving love of Christ beginning with the Incarnation," he said. "Be generous, detached from material things."

The bishop also stated that the spirit of how one gives is important. One of the gifts given this Christmas should be a gift to the poor, he suggested.

"Humility, generosity, and self-giving love — these are what Christmas is all about," he concluded. The evening ended with discussion, refreshments and fellowship.



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## House passes international religious freedom bill, sends to Obama's desk

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The U.S. House Dec. 13 passed the bipartisan Frank Wolf International Religious Freedom Act and sent it to President Barack Obama's desk for his signature. The measure gives the Obama administration and the U.S. State Department new tools, resources and training to counter extremism and combat a worldwide escalation of persecution of religious minorities. The bill will improve U.S. religious freedom diplomacy efforts globally; better train and equip diplomats to counter extremism; address anti-Semitism and religious persecution and mitigate sectarian conflict. The bipartisan bill was written by Rep. Chris Smith, R-New Jersey, and co-sponsored by Rep. Anna Eshoo, D-California. Named for former Congressman Frank Wolf, "a tireless champion for the rights of the poor and the persecuted globally," the bill will expand the International Religious Freedom Act Wolf sponsored in 1998. "From China and Vietnam to Syria and Nigeria, we are witnessing a tragic, global crisis in religious persecution, violence and terrorism, with dire consequences for religious believers and for U.S. national security," said Smith, chair of the Global Human Rights Subcommittee.

## USCCB forms working group to monitor needs of migrants, refugees

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops is establishing a working group charged with developing spiritual, pastoral and policy advocacy support for immigrants and refugees. Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, USCCB president, has named members of the working group, with the mandate of closely following developments related to immigrants and refugees in the United States. The USCCB Public Affairs Office announced formation of the group Dec. 16. Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles, USCCB vice president, will chair the group. Members include the chairmen of USCCB committees and subcommittees involved in immigration concerns: Bishop Joe S. Vasquez of Austin, Texas, Committee on Migration; Auxiliary Bishop Nelson J. Perez of Rockville Centre, N.Y., Subcommittee on Hispanic Affairs; Bishop Frank J. Dewane of Venice, Fla., Committee on Domestic Social Development; Bishop Joseph J. Tyson of Yakima, Wash., Subcommittee on Pastoral Care of Migrants; and Bishop Oscar Cantu of Las Cruces, N.M., Committee on International Justice and Peace. The groundwork for the working group was

# NEWS BRIEFS

## Call sounded for evacuation of Aleppo



CNS photo/Abdallrhman Ismail, Reuters

Medics inspect the damage outside a field hospital Sept. 27 after an airstrike in the rebel-held al-Shaar neighborhood of Aleppo, Syria. In mid-December, the Syrian army retook control of almost the entire city of Aleppo, which had been split between government and rebel control since 2012. On Dec. 16, France called an emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council to help consider conditions for evacuating the city and allowing humanitarian aid to reach areas most needed, reported the Associated Press.

set during the bishops' annual fall general assembly in Baltimore when several bishops suggested the conference closely monitor actions by the federal government that affect immigrants and refugees.

## Cardinal Arns laid to rest at the Sao Paulo cathedral

SAO PAULO (CNS) — For two days, a steady flow of worshippers made their way up the steps of the Sao Paulo cathedral to pay their last respects to Cardinal Paulo Evaristo Arns. Cardinal Arns, 95, who died Dec. 14 of pneumonia, was known for his work with the poor, the children and the political prisoners during Brazil's military dictatorship. The cathedral, which remained open round-the-clock since the evening of his death, held a Mass every two hours with the cardinal's casket present. Among the dignitaries who visited the cathedral were former Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and Sao Paulo Gov. Geraldo Alckmin. "Brazil lost one of its greatest symbols in the struggle for justice," Lula said after learning of the cardinal's death. But the vast majority of people entering the cathedral were those whom Cardinal Arns had dedicated his life to help, the poor.

## Martyrs from Southeast Asian regimes beatified

OXFORD, England (CNS) — Catholic martyrs from various nationalities have been beatified in Laos in the first such gesture toward communist regime victims in Southeast Asia. "The Catholic Church in Laos is very small, humble, almost hidden; its story is not well-known," Oblate Father Roland Jacques, vice postulator of the martyrs' cause, said in a commentary for the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, to which six martyrs belonged. "Planted with the sweat and blood of three generations of missionaries, it can rely today only on its own forces, supported by a handful of priests from Vietnam or Thailand. That goes to show how much this event was unique, unheard of for this small country and very young church." The French priest was describing the Dec. 11 beatification Mass in Vientiane's Sacred Heart Cathedral, attended on the pope's behalf by Philippine Cardinal Orlando Quevedo as well as 15 bishops and 150 priests, mostly from neighboring countries, and 6,000 laypeople.

## Put aside ideology and work to rebuild Aleppo, say Catholic leaders

BEIRUT (CNS) — Mideast Catholic leaders are urging people to put aside ideology and blame and work to rebuild the city of Aleppo, Syria. "The world is divided. Each one is accusing the other," said Syrian-born Catholic Patriarch Gregoire III Laham. "Between the superpowers bickering, a whole country got destroyed. Hospitals, schools, churches, mosques and so many people were killed or were displaced. Accusing each other is not going to help the situation. This is the time to work with each other so we can end the war and rebuild Syria. It's not the time to accuse each other. It's the time for worldwide powers to be united and to work together for peace. Now is the time for reconciliation," he told Catholic News Service Dec. 16, the day after he returned from Damascus, Syria. "We are praying for the victims. We are praying for Aleppo and all of Syria to have peace again," Patriarch Laham said. "As Christians, we cannot have hatred in our hearts. Even the ones who attacked us, we have to pray for them that they may have a new life and not to continue

with war, violence, hatred and terrorism. We must pray for them to go toward the path of peace," he said.

## Bishop Morin of Biloxi retires; pope names Texas priest his successor

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Pope Francis has accepted the resignation of Bishop Roger P. Morin of Biloxi, Miss., and has named as his successor Msgr. Louis F. Kihneman III, who is vicar general of the Diocese of Corpus Christi, Texas. Bishop Morin, who has headed the Biloxi Diocese since 2009, is 75, the age at which canon law requires bishops to turn in their resignation to the pope. Bishop-designate Kihneman, 64, is a Louisiana native who was ordained a priest for Corpus Christi in 1977. He has been the diocese's vicar general since 2010. The appointment was publicized in Washington Dec. 16 by Archbishop Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the United States. Bishop-designate Kihneman's episcopal ordination and installation Mass will be celebrated Feb. 17, his 65th birthday, at the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Cathedral in Biloxi. "As a son of a family of the Gulf Coast I have fond memories of summers and summer camp as a boy in the area and thus I feel as if the Lord has led me full circle in some ways back home," Bishop-designate Kihneman said in a statement to Biloxi Catholics. "I look forward to getting to know you and growing with you in the love of Jesus Christ and together sharing that love with all our brother and sisters."

## Stop those profiting from human trafficking, Vatican diplomat says

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Eradicating the "heinous crime" of human trafficking requires cracking down on those who profit from it, said a Vatican diplomat. The Vatican urged nations "to recognize trafficking in human beings as one of the most heinous crimes" and to recognize "their moral duty to address it properly and indeed eradicate it," said Msgr. Janusz Urbanczyk, the Vatican's permanent representative to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. He made his comments Dec. 15, during a meeting of OSCE in Vienna. OSCE includes 57 countries in Europe, Central Asia and North America. In his talk, Msgr. Urbanczyk said greater attention should be given to eradicating the trafficking and enslavement of children. Children can be ensnared by traffickers when they are "enslaved and fall prey to exploitation as child laborers or soldiers, fall into the criminal network of drug trafficking or into the mire of pornography," he said.



# Group prayer, reflection prepare parishioners for Christmas

BY CLAIRE KENNEY

It was a Tuesday evening during the second week of Advent, and a small group of parishioners from St. Augustine Parish, South Bend, gathered in their deacon's living room. Annie Tardy, the wife of Deacon Mel Tardy, scurried about extending hospitality to their guests, who varied in age and time as members of the parish. But they all had one thing in common: a desire to properly prepare them-

selves for the coming of the Lord at Christmas.

Deacon Tardy and Annie host various Bible study series throughout the year. Each focuses on something different and is designed to accommodate the parishioners' busy schedules.

"I've found that our parishioners are hungry for Bible study," Deacon Tardy said. "We've had successful seasonal Bible study discussions during Lent and Easter, and the season of Advent proved successful as well, since we had more time to unpack the



Photos by Claire Kenney

A participant lights the Advent wreath at the beginning of a Bible study session led by Deacon Mel Tardy of St. Augustine Church, South Bend.

aged her to think about the readings, to examine what she read and to ask questions.

On the second Tuesday of Advent the group focused on Gaudete Sunday, a time to rejoice in the Lord. The session fittingly started with a very lively song and a favorite of the parish, "Hallelujah Anyhow."

During the discussion, Deacon Tardy encouraged the group to endeavor in joy.

"Spiritual warfare is real. But God is real," he said.

Hope was a secondary topic that organically stemmed from the subject of joy, and the group shared stories of interactions they had recently experienced with others who seemed to be missing hope in their lives.

When discussing the night's reflection, one participant said, "Tonight I was reminded to live from the inside out instead of the outside in."

"Listening to people share how these Scriptures relate to their daily lives, I heard how they share the good news at the bank, in the grocery (store), and on social media," said another. "This is evangelization."

At the end of the study, the group reflected on writings from "Evangelii Gaudium," the Book of Isaiah and Pope Francis' short book, "Mercy from the Manger: Encouragement and Daily Prayers for Advent." Aligned with the waiting attributed to Advent, the literature concentrated on slowing down to do God's true work. This, then, brought full circle the conversation about helping people find hope.

richness of the Sunday readings.

"Hosting it at our home allows folks to be more informal and at ease, plus our Bible study group reflects the diversity of our parish, which is a blessing," he went on to say. "So we prepared for Advent not just by getting to know the Scriptures better, but by getting to know each other better as a parish community."

"I believe Jesus meant for us to do as he did; to meet at times in large and at times in small gatherings to hear the Word as a means of hope for the world of today," Annie added.

The structure of each ses-

sion was fairly straightforward.

"For the most part, we read and reflected upon the upcoming readings for the subsequent Sunday Mass," Deacon Tardy said. "We began with opening prayer, song and the lighting of Advent candles."

Participants of the Advent Bible Study agreed that the sessions were beneficial.

"Advent and Bible study provide a time to reflect, away from the tensions and busyness of the season," said one. Another said that although she wasn't a regular reader of the Bible, attending Bible study with a group encour-

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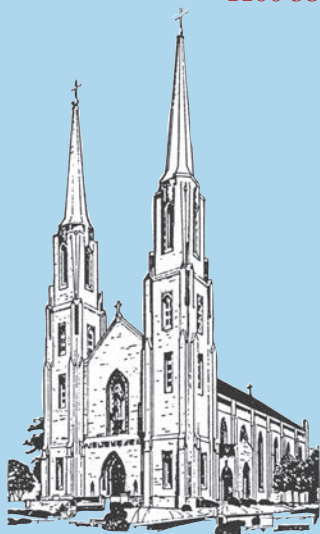


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# MANY REASONS TO CELEBR



At the end of Mass, parish youth performed a dance in celebration of the Aztec roots of Juan Diego, to whom Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared. The dance was a re-enactment of the Aztec conversion, 500 years ago, to Christianity.



Children gathered in the hallway between classrooms as the bishop sprinkled holy water on them and the newly renovated spaces for faith formation.



The Advent wreath sits before the new altar in the parish. The parish crucifix dates back to 1934 and was a gift from the original eight families that founded the parish in San Diego county to build a Catholic church, in 1984.



Bishop Rhoades and Father J. Steele stand with building contractor Doug Henry, left, and Jesse Perez, construction superintendent.



Bishop Rhoades went to the classrooms of students prior to Mass. Students like these fifth graders and teachers pictured were quizzed by bishop about Advent.



Parishioners gathered in the newly constructed narthex for the blessing of the new space.



# DATE AT ST. JOSEPH PARISH

BY BONNIE ELBERSON



the renovated sanctuary. The original gift of the Bix family. The Bixes are one of parish. LaGrange County was the last Indiana



Bishop Rhoades blesses Our Lady of Guadalupe Chapel, with parish sacristan Phil Pritts at his side.



Bishop Rhoades sprinkles holy water on the crucifix and tabernacle.



ce and baptismal font.



Father J. Steele and Bishop Rhoades smile after the chapel blessing, as large snowflakes fall.

LAGRANGE — St. Joseph Parish in LaGrange has many reasons to celebrate during this Advent season. An ambitious construction project of a new sanctuary (interior) in its last stages of completion, and the largely Hispanic church population has built a new shrine on the property dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe.

The parish celebrated both on Sunday, Dec. 18, when Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades blessed the new construction, presided over a Spanish Mass and led a special procession of worshippers to the shrine.

Father J. Steele, CSC, who is in his fourth year as pastor of the faith community, described his parish as “growing and thriving.” In fact, two years ago a pressing need for additional space for the burgeoning congregation led to ambitious expansion plans. Those plans have come to fruition in a five-part construction project under the auspices of general contractor D. M. Henry. No fundraising effort was required for the sanctuary, since the parish had money on hand for the work.

“There were a lot of moving parts to this project,” said the pastor. First, in order to accommodate St. Joseph’s 230 religious education students, as well as other church groups, four temporary classrooms in the church building were converted to permanent spaces. Then additional classrooms were created from the pastor’s rectory apartment, which had been located in the building.

The conversion of the pastor’s living quarters meant that a new rectory was needed; that residence was constructed on church grounds as well.

A larger altar and sanctuary were also built and now grace the main body of the church, and a new gathering area expands the entrance. The newly constructed shrine to Our Lady of Guadalupe stands directly behind the church, located on the opposite side of the wall of the tabernacle.

Father Steele is especially pleased with the new, high altar, with its reredos, or decorative wall, behind the altar; and its 9-foot Corinthian columns and Roman arch of faux-painted gray and cream marble with gold detailing. It was built by area craftsman Barry Campbell, owner of Te Deum Construction in LaOtto.

The new gathering area is a welcome change from a narrow entrance hall: The enlarged area is quite spacious, he said, and enables parishioners to linger and socialize after Mass while enjoying coffee and donuts. In the spring, a “porte cochere” or covered entry, will be added to provide shelter for those entering the church, which will especially benefit the elderly and handicapped.

The new rectory is a 1,300-square foot modular home, with a south-facing view, an open concept floor plan, an attached breezeway and garage

and a large porch.

The shrine dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe was constructed behind the sanctuary wall of the church so that “Jesus and His Mother are back to back,” Father Steele noted. The \$50,000 construction cost was covered by St. Joseph’s Hispanic parishioners, who raised the money through taco sales and personal contributions over a two-year period.

The most significant aspect of the ambitious project, he added, is that all the finish work was completed by parishioners.

“A small army of dedicated volunteers headed up by long-time parishioner Salvador Nieves installed drywall, did general carpentry, painted, put down carpet and laid tile. Volunteers were present on a rotating basis, six days a week, and did a lot of work, said Nieves. Father Steele estimated that the volunteers contributed at least \$150,000 worth of labor to the \$500,000 project. “It’s been tremendous ... a real community effort,” he said.

The project culminated on the fourth Sunday of Advent, with Bishop Rhoades’ visit. He blessed the classrooms, gathering space, baptismal font, altar and shrine, then presided over a Spanish Mass with Father Steele.

During his homily the bishop spoke about the courageous faith and the obedience of Mary and Joseph, calling attention to the fact that their example invites us to accept, with an open spirit, Jesus — who is Emmanuel, which means, “God-with-us.”

The Gospel lesson for the day told of the angel’s appearance to Joseph, in a dream. Mary and Joseph received the same surprising announcement of Incarnation of God, Bishop Rhoades said, and both responded with faith and obedience to His word. Both said yes to God and to His plan for our salvation.

“We prepare ourselves, then, to celebrate Christmas by contemplating Mary and Joseph: Mary, the woman full of grace, who had the courage to rely completely the Word of God; and Joseph, the faithful and just man who preferred to believe the Lord instead of listening to the voices of doubt and human pride. We walk together, with them, toward Bethlehem.”

Bishop Rhoades also noted that the blessing and dedication of the new construction had been postponed one week due to weather. (But) “Thanks be to God, I could be with you today to celebrate the Holy Mass and to bless the new and beautiful church sanctuary and, at the end of the Mass, the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe which sits outside.” The celebration continued with a procession to the shrine for that blessing, and parishioners joined in with traditional hymns and prayers to the Virgin Mary. The day’s festivities concluded with a parish dinner.

Photos by Stephanie A. Patka



# Family experiences the redemptive gift of suffering

BY JEANNIE EWING

FORT WAYNE — For Jim and Cheryl Roy, the past two, almost three years have been an incredible journey of living the cross in such a way that redemption is present in the midst of mystery.

The family's trying time began in 2014, with several incidents that Cheryl believes prepared her for what was to come. "I visited the St. Jude Adoration Chapel weekly and prayed the Rosary of Seven Sorrows often. But one day, as I was praying the second mystery about suffering, I suddenly realized that I had to answer a very important question: Can I really suffer? It was as if God wanted me to answer 'yes' or 'no.' It was hard at the time, but I paused and finally responded to Him, 'Ok.'"

This occurred years before cancer struck both Jim and Cheryl and a mysterious pulmonary disease afflicted their daughter, Michelle. The Roys described the first half of 2014 as challenging, mostly because they were worried about Michelle, whose lungs were only operating at 50 percent capacity.

Jim remembered, "I've always felt very blessed in my life. We've encountered other life-threatening events, but God has always been with us. He's in total control. I accept whatever He gives us to handle. I saw going through my own cancer treatment as an opportunity to offer up my suffering for Michelle."

Shortly after Michelle's illness struck, Jim discovered through a routine colonoscopy that he had Stage 3 colon cancer. He started chemotherapy four weeks later. During that time, Cheryl knew she needed to schedule her



Photos by Jeannie Ewing

**The faith of the Roy family — parents Jim and Cheryl, and children Michelle and Mark — has been tested recently. In 2014 Jim and Cheryl developed cancer, and Michelle began to struggle with diminished lung capacity. As of this Christmas, however, all three have been healed or have seen their affliction diminish.**

annual mammogram, but was tempted to postpone it because of her concern for Michelle and Jim. "I wasn't planning to go until later, but I felt compelled to call and schedule an appointment. I can't explain it." Her mammogram revealed breast cancer.

"Cancer gave me an opportunity to apply the small points of our faith to everyday life. I felt that God wanted me to take one aspect of faith and truly live it. For me, it was gratitude," she said.

Cheryl recalled another poignant moment, back in 2004, that she believes prepared her for

the suffering that would come to their family. "One of my favorite verses is from Philippians 4:4-6. The part about giving thanks made me wonder, could I really give thanks for everything, including the hardships?"

She decided to implement the aspect of gratitude in her daily life. She thanked God for every circumstance, whether a celebration or misfortune. When Michelle became ill, she knew it was time for her faith to really be tested. "This was about whatever God wanted. Even though I asked why it was happening to our daughter, and we didn't get an immediate answer, still, I



Cheryl Roy painted "stones of gratitude" as part of her rehabilitation during treatment for breast cancer.

knew God wanted me to be faithful."

"People always ask, 'Why me?' when something bad happens to them. I always thought of the question, 'Why not me?'" Jim added. "It made me realize that I could find the good in our cancer experience. Since Cheryl and I both work in health care, we knew the importance of exercise — so we forced ourselves to get outside and walk. We called these our 'chemo walks.'"

Cheryl agreed. "We know to stop and see the beautiful gifts that God has given us. I started a gratitude list during our cancer treatments: for meals, people who offered prayers or watched our kids, for God's creation. It has made me pause to value what people have done for us. I see people differently now," she reflected. "I see their dignity and

the value of who they are more deeply than I did before."

"Our chemo walks really fostered gratitude in me, as well," Jim said. "Suffering gets your attention. It makes you focus on what's really important in life. Because of those walks with Cheryl, I appreciate what I didn't notice before — birds singing, the beautiful sky, every good thing God has given us."

During her one year of chemo, Cheryl participated in Parkview Hospital's Healing Arts Program, which allows patients to use different media for art therapy. She chose painting on stones, which she chuckled and said "was never done before." Each stone she painted represents a specific gift or blessing she, Jim and their daughter have received. She calls them her "stones of gratitude" and plans to make them into a large rosary for display in their home.

Today Jim and Cheryl are cancer free, and Michelle is experiencing improvement in her lung function. The Roys admit that, though they wouldn't have sought what 2014 brought them, they know their confidence in God's goodness, their gratitude and surrender to His will brought them to a place of grace.

Suffering often leads to joy, which essentially brings one to a place of appreciation in good times and bad, according to Jim.

"People ask, 'Why suffering?'" But this experience made us understand suffering and study it. I learned that suffering has a purpose and is necessary. Christ learned obedience through suffering."

"I want people to know that it's okay to say 'yes' to suffering, because God will be with you on the journey," Cheryl added.

## High school students partner to support disabled

BY MARIAM SCHMITZ

The Bishop Luers High School, Fort Wayne, chapter of the National Honor Society has partnered with Easter Seals Arc of Northeast Indiana in a relationship that is giving both groups opportunities to grow and have fun together.

NHS recognizes outstanding high school students based upon their scholarship, leadership, service and character. Once accepted into NHS, members must not only maintain a certain grade point average, but also perform service projects. This school year, Luers NHS members overwhelmingly decided to focus on Easter Seals Arc for the service component, but the partnership has turned into a something much more fruitful than merely fulfilling a requirement.

Easter Seals Arc works with the local disabled population in a variety of ways. It offers assistance with employment, recre-

ation and education; in addition, there are eight group homes and a respite house for care during the day only. There is also a supported-living branch of Easter Seals Arc, in which employees visit client homes. In total, the agency serves about 630 clients.

Luers NHS members are primarily helping with recreation services. These include bowling, basketball, shuffleboard and ballroom dance. A special upcoming event is the Christmas dance for Easter Seals Arc clients. At the dance, students will help serve food, socialize with clients and give out gifts that were donated by various area organizations.

Becky Allegrini, NHS moderator at the high school, said the partnership is helping students step outside of their comfort zone. "I think anytime you can expand horizons, it is beneficial." NHS board member and Luers senior Abby Ulman said they are able to "directly interact with the people they are helping," and that has led to positive feedback

from NHS members. Ulman also said members don't feel like it's something they have to do, but that they are having fun.

Allison Diefenbach is the special events and volunteer coordinator for Easter Seals Arc. She agreed that the partnership with Bishop Luers is going well, and that the activities help clients get into the community and meet new people. It also helps them recognize that their disability does not control what they do, which in turn helps them grow.

Bishop Luers is currently the only Fort Wayne-area high school partnering with Easter Seals Arc. According to Diefenbach, the agency is always looking for extra hands to spend time with clients, and volunteer opportunities can be based upon one's interests, hobbies and time available. For more information, visit [www.EasterSeals.com/NEIndiana](http://www.EasterSeals.com/NEIndiana). To volunteer, contact Diefenbach at 260-456-4534, ext. 236 or [adiefenbach@esarc.org](mailto:adiefenbach@esarc.org).

## Advent at St. John the Baptist



PROVIDED BY JANICE COMITO

St. John the Baptist Catholic School, New Haven, formed its kindergarten through eighth-grade students into "faith family" groups this year. In December, the families worked on service projects and attended Mass together. The St. Adelaide family's project was to make decorations with items for wildlife for a tree outside the rectory.



# A special family gift

I had a special project I was working on for my family for Christmas this year. I'd been mulling over the idea for a long time and finally this year decided to just do it. It's a time-consuming and personal gift — I can't give the details, seeing as I'm still hoping it can be a surprise at some point — and I was very excited about putting the whole thing together. I thoroughly researched what I needed to do, gathered what I needed to gather and gave myself plenty of time to complete the task, I thought.

It turned out life happened in an unexpected way this month, though — nothing tragic or particularly extraordinary, but just enough that I didn't end up being as efficient and productive as I'd hoped to be in compiling this gift.

You see, eight of my nine children decided to come home for Thanksgiving, which thrilled me. It also entailed a whole bunch of home cooking. (My sneaky plan, since they have become adults and three have moved 2,000-plus miles away for work, is to put the effort into completing old-style, home-cooked, memory-inducing meals to reel them back in to this part of the country. So far it hasn't worked, but I keep trying.)

When the kids come home I usually put together a little itinerary. Sometimes this is a Google document. Other times it's in email form. I'll outline proposed activities for the group, which is kind of tricky since the age range is so vast — 11 to 29. What happens is everyone writes back with suggestions for family-building group activi-

ties, times for such activities or mentioning something they need to do or someone they need to see. I've learned over the years to block out mornings for everyone to sleep, tend to personal goals and provide workout times. Dad usually cooks big breakfasts and people come and go to do their individual things. Planning ahead helps everyone in a big family to have this sense of togetherness without it being stifling, which is a real concern because A) There are so many of us, B) Four offspring are adults off on their own, who aren't used to having someone else schedule their time, and C) Kids often perceive their parents to be controlling when really those parents are only trying to make things run smoothly. But I digress...

My point is, we had a wonderful Thanksgiving filled with hearty meals, good conversation and lots of bonding activity in the form of college basketball attendance, family bowling, a movie night and old-fashioned euchre games ... but it also naturally took away from any sort of possibility of working on my Christmas project for them.

Then, dear husband informed me he had a work trip to Kentucky planned for the entire next week. I have an amazing and helpful husband, which means when he is gone I not only miss him personally, but I also miss the help he normally provides, including a great deal of driving and picking up kids in the evening. With this help not available, for the last week I have literally spent two hours daily at least, here and there,



## EVERYDAY CATHOLIC

TERESA A. THOMAS

driving, just dropping off and picking up kids.

My daughters dance each year in their local ballet studio production of Nutcracker, and rehearsals were heating up. Often, the girls' rehearsal times did not match. Then there were trips to purchase their needs for the show and extra trips back when pointe shoes unexpectedly "died" and black, not pink slippers were needed for the younger one just for one scene. A moment of panic ensued when reordering a shoe quickly proved impossible because of a manufacturer glitch. A revelation occurred that shellac would serve to stiffen the shoes in a pinch, so I squeezed in a trip to the hardware store to get that, then painted the insides of the shoes. Twice.

During that same week, one of my high-school-aged daughters had the nerve to start running a fever, then became hugely sick. The first trip to the doctor indicated a severe sinus infection, but the antibiotic didn't work, so a trip back was necessary. Poor thing. All I could do is bring her tea and empathize while handing her horse pills. Then came extra helping with

EVERYDAY, page 12

# Remembering holy ground

We Roman Catholics are accustomed to thinking that the early church moved its headquarters from Jerusalem to Rome like a frog hopping from one lily pad to another. In fact, it moved on the ground, along the trade routes.

The early church grew north toward Damascus, where St. Paul was converted, Antioch, where St. Peter lived before going to Rome and east toward Mesopotamia, where St. Thomas the Apostle preached.

The Islamic State terrorist group has undertaken to drive Christians from these lands. The destruction of the ancient church has been thorough. In addition to killing Christians and driving them from their homes, there has been a campaign to destroy the physical evidence of faith: shrines, statues, churches and monasteries.

Last month, there were reports about the Islamic State destroying books and artifacts at a fourth-century monastery near Mosul. Earlier this year, we saw stories about destruction around the world's oldest Christian church, in Dura-Europos, Syria. I have been wondering why this iconoclasm is so upsetting, alongside the far more ghoulish crimes ISIS has committed.

Some years ago, one of our children spent a semester studying in Jerusalem. My wife and I went to visit him for a week, and did the things first-time visitors to the Holy Land naturally do. Some, I confess, were underwhelming.

We visited the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. And though it was old, and we attended Mass and said heartfelt



## INTELLECT AND VIRTUE

JOHN GARVEY

prayers, I came away with some doubt about whether Jesus was born on that spot. He might have been. But the stable might just as well have been two miles away.

We also visited the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. This was Jordanian territory until the Six-Day War in 1967, when Israel captured the Old City. At that point, a team of archaeologists began excavations on the south side of the Temple. They uncovered the ritual baths, where Mary would have gone for her purification when Jesus was presented in the Temple.

They also uncovered the steps up to the double gate in the southern wall of the Temple. Ordinary people would have gone up these steps, and entered the Temple through the double gate. The doorway is uncovered down to bedrock. I have a picture of my wife and me standing in the door.

Unlike some other stops on our pilgrimage, this one left me feeling like Moses must have felt before the burning bush. Jesus, Mary and Joseph entered the Temple through that door. Jesus walked over the stone we are standing on. It is holy ground.

The picture of us standing in that door, which I treasure, has a special poignancy at Christmas.

GARVEY, page 12

# Through the Word Made Flesh, salvation is revealed



## THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

MSGR. OWEN F. CAMPION

### Feast of the Birth of the Lord John 1:1-18

The liturgy includes several Masses for Christmas. These readings are those assigned for Mass during the day.

The third section of Isaiah supplies the first lesson. To understand the reading, it helps to be aware of the historical context surrounding the composition of this part of Isaiah. God's chosen people had been through very much in the past century or so. Their land, regarded by the devout as sacred itself, because God had given it to the people, had been conquered by invading

pagans and often devastated.

In addition, all the turmoil had destroyed the social structure. Political independence was gone. Untold numbers of people were killed. Many survivors were themselves taken to Babylon, the capital of the Babylonian Empire, where they languished for four generations far from their homeland, compelled to live in an atmosphere greatly unfriendly to their religion and scornful of all that they had known.

At long last this enforced exile ended, but returning to the Holy Land was a hollow achievement. The land was poor and unproductive. Misery reigned.

For much of this time, misery had been defined in terms of personal want and abuse. Indeed, deprivation and want were everywhere. The prophets, such as the author of this writing, saw deprivation in another dimension: a gnawing want within the human heart for peace, hope, and a sense of strength, worth the result from sin.

This piercing want is not inevitable. It is relieved by realizing

the reality of the almighty God of Israel, the source of all peace, joy and hope, and by living accordingly. Only this matters.

For its second reading, the Church offers a passage from the Epistle to the Hebrews. This epistle is a marvelous revelation of God as the Trinity, and of Jesus as Son of God, the true and full reflection of the Father.

In the third reading, the Church presents the first 18 verses of the Gospel of John. Each of the four Gospels has its own literary majesty and particular, inspired insight into the reality of God and salvation, but none outdoes John for depth or eloquence. Actually, few passages, if any, in the long Gospel of John outdo the glory of these first 18 verses.

These verses, read in today's Masses, are magnificent because of the soaring and profound sense they convey in relating the person and mission of Jesus. He is God's wondrous gift to humankind, given in God's eternal and unending love. He reigns in a realm far beyond the human

ability to comprehend.

In Jesus, all existence has meaning, order, purpose and a future. He is the glory of God, living for and among humans. He is the light of the world. He is eternal. He is life. He is everything.

## Reflection

The key to deciphering these readings, and Christmas itself, is in admitting that at the birth of Jesus, and in the reality of Jesus, circumstances and powers utterly beyond our human capacity of knowledge occurred.

Human life can be bad. Our times testify to this fact, with all the terror and agony of so many people. Yet relief is at hand, if we seize the opportunity.

The opportunity is to turn to God. Marvelously, mercifully, God provides this opportunity by giving us, as our own, Jesus, the Son of God.

Thus, obviously, appropriately, logically, we celebrate the birth of Jesus. He is human, the son of Mary. Son of God, Jesus

came to us as one of us. He reconciled us with God, repairing a relationship broken by human sin.

So, with the ancient Hebrew prophets, we can be hopeful and assured. Our eternal fate is guaranteed, if we take the opportunity to accept it. In Christ, we can live, truly, now and eternally.

## READINGS

**Sunday:** Is 52:7-10 Ps 98:1-6 Heb 1:1-6 Jn 1:1-18

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

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

**Wednesday:** 1 Jn 1:5-2:2 Ps 124:2-5, 7b-8 Mt 2:13-18

**Thursday:** 1 Jn 2:3-11 Ps 96:1-3, 5-6 Lk 2:22-35

**Friday:** Sir 3:2-6, 12-14 Ps 128:1-5 Mt 2:13-15, 19-23

**Saturday:** 1 Jn 2:18-21 Ps 96:1-2, 11-13 Jn 1:1-18



# Christmas martyria: The Octave of the Word Made Flesh

A striking feature of the Western church's festal calendar is the cycle of memorials and feasts, which "fill out" the Octave of Christmas. Unlike the Easter Octave, which suffers the vagaries one would expect from a movable feast, the days following the Solemnity of Christmas are fixed and chock-full: Stephen, John the Evangelist, the Holy Innocents and Thomas Becket adorn the days following the Solemnity of the Nativity. Even more interestingly, with the possible exception of John the Evangelist — whose end is the subject of some dispute within the Tradition — all are martyrs. How can one make fruitful use of this festal and sanctoral convergence?

The remote origins of Christian martyrdom lie probably within Second Temple Judaism, in particular the experience recorded in the canonical and extra-canonical books of Maccabees, where martyrdom becomes sacrificial and the believer herself becomes, as it were, a temple, the locus of genuine sacrifice. More proximately, one encounters this phenomenon in the Book of Revelation, where persecution induced by Christian intransigence in the face of the Imperial Cult forms the immediate context for John's visions, and where a nascent theology of Christian martyria is perhaps first articulated. On the heels of the Nativity, the Western Church commemorates a number of witnesses who offer fitting and elegant testimony to the Incarnation, for with their very bodies their testimony to the reality of the Word Made Flesh is itself made incarnate.

The Matthean text appointed for the Mass of St. Stephen (10.17-22) is apposite to the day: The Christian, in the face of opposition and hostility, should fearlessly witness to the faith. Stephen's resilient conviction juxtaposed to his gentle demeanor toward his persecutors (Acts 7:60) reflects the Gospel's call to be wise as serpents and innocent as doves (Mt 10:16). Further, Stephen's act of faithful witness to Christ is set within the context of false witness about him (Acts 6:13; 7:58). The Spirit who is promised by Jesus to direct the disciples in their encounter with hostility (Mt 10:20) is present in Stephen's greatest trial (Acts 7:55; 59). Stephen is often referred to in the Tradition as the proto-martyr. Yet for many of the first Christians, it is Christ himself who is the proto-martyr. This clearly is the teaching of the Book of Revelation, where Christ is referred to repeatedly as the "Faithful Witness" (ho martus ho pistos; Rev 1:5; 3:14): All subsequent martyrdom is conceived of solely in terms of his archetypal martyria. In the very early account of the martyrs of Lyons and Vienne (c. 177/8 A.D.), the imprisoned and tortured martyrs-to-be are adamant in eschewing the title "martyr:" Christ alone is worthy of that name.

The traditions regarding the demise of St. John the Evangelist are more muddled. While traditionally the Church has not commemorated him as a martyr — the only apostle so celebrated — some earlier traditions, derived perhaps from the witness of the second-century bishop Papias of Hierapolis, suggest he, too, was martyred. Regardless, John's witness to the Word Made Flesh is canonized in the prologue to the fourth Gospel, appointed for Mass on Christmas Day (Jn 1:1-18). The first reading assigned for Dec. 27 (1 Jn 1:1-4) gives further witness (marturomen, v. 2): The God revealed in Christ, the word made flesh, is not some distant, remote, conceptual deity. Rather, He has made Himself the object of the human senses; recall that one of the preoccupations of John's first letter is the real flesh and blood of Jesus the Christ. ("Antichrist" is his tag for the docetic disposition of those who oppose His coming in the flesh). John's consistent martyria is to the palpable reality of the Word Made Flesh.

With irony appropriate for the author of the Fourth Gospel, the lesson appointed for Mass this day is an account of faith in the presence of the empty tomb (Jn 20:2-8), a faith all the more remarkable in the sudden absence of sense-data: the One heard, seen and touched is now more truly present as the object of faith, a faith irreducible to hearing, seeing and touching. As the early second-century martyr Ignatius of Antioch (+ c. 110 A.D.) wrote to the Roman Christians, Christ is all the more present to us now that he is with the Father.

The Holy Innocents offer yet another kind of witness to the Incarnation. Caught in the wake of Herod's murderous political machinations, these nameless children fall victim to the profound insecurity that marks all earthly power (Mt 2:13-18). Their witness lies precisely in their seeming insignificance: nameless, faceless and obscure, they become the expendable collateral damage in Herod's maniacal lust for power. The Office of Readings in the Liturgy of the Hours includes the slaughter of the children under Pharaoh (Exodus 1:8-16, 22): They are themselves types or a foreshadowing of the children murdered under Herod, from among whom another Deliverer will escape (this time not from Egypt, but to Egypt).

The second reading in the Office, taken from a catechetical sermon of the fifth-century disciple of St. Augustine, Quodvultdeus of Carthage (+ 454 A.D.), sees these children as martyrs, witnesses to Christ, eloquent precisely in their inability to speak, carrying in their newly-formed and delicate little limbs the palm of victory given to victors. The paradox of the Incarnation is that God reveals and saves not



## THE HUMAN CONDITION

MSGR. MICHAEL HEINTZ

through an exercise of power (and so imitate Pharaoh, Herod and all earthly and diabolical powers), but through humility. Born in the outskirts of an obscure village in a backwater province of the ancient world, the Word Made Flesh has identified himself not with those in power, but with the weak; not with the famous, but with the nameless; not with the wealthy, but with the poor; and there were few members of ancient society more vulnerable, more lacking in power, prestige and resources than children.

St. Thomas Becket (+ 1170 A.D.) is perhaps best known as the subject of T.S. Eliot's 1935 play "Murder in the Cathedral," which dramatized the events of Thomas' friendship with, estrangement from and short-lived reconciliation with Henry II, king of England. The Gospel pericope appointed for the fifth day of the Octave (Lk 2:22-35) is in subtle contrast to the previous day's passage from Matthew: Whereas the fourth day features the young and voiceless, in the Lucan narrative, an aged and articulate Simeon offers his own witness to the newborn child's destiny, one combining both promise and conflict.

Here, another aspect of martyria is captured: The opposition those who follow the Word Made Flesh are undoubtedly to encounter and indeed should expect. Becket's complexity, captured by Eliot, in his struggle to parse his obligations to his king, his Church and his conscience reveals that martyria is not reducible simply to physically violent opposition.

The beginnings of martyrdom are found within the disciple, as one strives to remain a faithful witness to the faithful witness. Within early Christianity, Origen (+ 254 A.D.) and his contemporaries were fond of speaking of the Christian life as an agon, literally a wrestling match, a contest of strength and resolve (intellectually and morally) in following Christ. Becket's witness, his martyrdom, was but the culmination and consummation of this struggle to remain faithful in the face of internal and external pressures.

The Christmas Octave beautifully demonstrates the organic nature of the Christian mysteries, in that the crèche and the cross can only be understood fully in terms of each other: The Word Made Flesh in Bethlehem is the Word Made Weak on Calvary, revealing the height and depth and breadth of the love who has given Himself so generously to us.

## SCRIPTURE SEARCH®

Gospel for December 25, 2016

John 1:1-18

Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for Christmas, Mass of Day. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

ALL THINGS SHINES ENLIGHTENS THE WORLD CHILDREN FLESH ONLY SON	LIFE DARKNESS EVERYONE ACCEPT BORN AMONG US GRACE	LIGHT TRUE LIGHT COMING POWER BECAME GLORY TRUTH
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------

## DAY DAWNS

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

## EVERYDAY

Continued from Page 11

homework: "Mom, will you quiz me?" "Could you help me organize my thoughts on this part of my paper?" "I don't get what Plato was saying here." (Really.) "Do you remember Punnett squares?" One night, as the clock was approaching 10 p.m. or so, I had just sat down to work on the project and I heard a knock. "Mom, can I talk to you about something?" Of course.

And so, here we are. The deadline has passed for my project to be completed and arrive on time. To my dear children, I would like to say this:

I'm sorry you won't have the amazing, personalized, hand-

made Christmas present that I planned and tried to finish for you this year. Maybe you'll get it before the New Year's arrives, or maybe not, but I'd like to think that the reason for my lateness will make your waiting worthwhile. I tried to give you my best when you needed it, moment by moment. I helped you, tended to you, simply loved you the best I could these last few weeks, and if that means I missed out on giving you the homemade surprise gift I'd planned, so be it. I hope you will understand.

Somehow I think they will.

Theresa Thomas is the wife of David and mother of nine children. Watch for her newest book "Big Hearted Families" (Scepter) and read more on her blog: <http://theresathomas.wordpress.com>.

## GARVEY

Continued from Page 11

It is the most tangible reminder of the Incarnation. Jesus was born to Mary near that city. Forty days later, his parents went through that door to present him in the Temple. As an adult, he stepped where we are standing, on his way to pray.

And that is why we find the iconoclasm of the ISIS campaign so sacrilegious. It is a sin against faith, an effort to erase from our memories the fact that God became man, lived among us and died on a cross. Our faith is not

just an intellectual construct; we are not just disembodied spirits. Jesus was and is as real as we are.

It was a saint from Syria, John of Damascus, who captured best why these things matter: "Now that he has made himself visible in the flesh and has lived with men, I can make an image of what I have seen of God ... and contemplate the glory of the Lord, his face unveiled."

When we ask if Christianity will survive in the Middle East, we are asking not only about its future, but about the things of its very beginnings.

John Garvey is the president of The Catholic University of America.



# Sports

**NAIA FOOTBALL CHAMPIONS** — The University of Saint Francis football team returned to Fort Wayne Sunday evening, Dec. 18, and brought with them the 2016 NAIA National Football Championship. Saturday night the USF Cougars defeated Baker University 38-17 in Daytona Beach, Fla., to win their first national title. The win, supported by students, faculty, staff and Cougar fans, capped off a season that also saw Coach Kevin Donley win his 300th game and be named the NAIA Regional Coach of the Year. The university is planning a larger celebration on campus in January.

## Physically challenged athlete clears hurdles on and off the track

BY RON BUSCH

There's a Norwegian saying that is fitting this time of year: "Shared joy is double joy." And as the joy of the Lord's birth is expressed this season, His people are often reminded of their blessings.

Thirteen years ago, Greg and Beth Peters were expecting twins. Due to complications the two babies were born early, on Dec. 23.

Grace Christine and Magnolia Anne Peters entered the world weighing less than two pounds each and were immediately placed in incubation. Grace Christine struggled, then passed away after only a few days, on Christmas morning. Meanwhile Magnolia Anne (Maggie) was given only a 10 percent chance of survival. That's where Maggie's story begins: with only a 1 in 10 chance of living.

Maggie responded to the care provided by her parents, doctors and nurses, as well as to the prayers offered for her and her family. She persisted through seven surgeries, eventually progressing to a normal weight and satisfactory health, and was allowed to come home and begin her young life.

Maggie's vision had been affected, however, by the extended use of oxygen in her recovery. She is legally blind, with no vision at all in one eye and 20/200 vision in the other. This presented a hurdle in her early education, but Maggie persevered. By third grade she had found a reliable of reading by holding her book just an inch or two from her functioning eye.

Today Maggie is in seventh grade and enjoys reading very much and has even become a multi-sport athlete, participating in CYO track in the spring and, this year, swimming when track season is finished.

Fellow competitors, family and friends marvel at her appreciation for life. She refuses special attention at competitive events and prefers to be treated as just one of the team.

Maggie swims with Three Rivers Aquatics Club, even though she took up swimming just three months ago. Her free-style relay team recently participated in the Christmas Card



Provided by Beth Peters

**CYO hurdler Maggie Peters, Fort Wayne, also participates on her school's cheerleading squad and a local swim team despite significant physical setbacks and afflictions attributed to a premature birth.**

Invitational in Muncie, achieving a third place finish from which she proudly displays her first swimming ribbon. The Queen of Angels student is also a school cheerleader.

During track season she participates in sprints, relays and the long jump. One of her events is hurdles, which her mother thinks is an appropriate metaphor for the life of someone who finds a way to get over the many physical challenges that have come her way.

Currently, Maggie struggles with an autoimmune disease called alopecia, which has caused her to lose her hair. Because of her baldness, others often think she is undergoing chemotherapy. But Maggie refuses to wear a wig or get hair replacement treatments because she is satisfied with who she is. She accepts her hair loss as just another difficulty to be endured and conquered.

There are a few sports she's unable to participate in, like basketball or baseball, for the safety of her remaining eyesight. Not one to hold herself back, however, she enjoys drawing, art projects, gymnastics, even paddle boarding, kayaking and even surfing, when given the chance. Her attention to detail in her artwork and drawing is nothing short of amazing, given her limited vision. Another of her hobbies is knitting, and she's earned a family nickname of "Grandma

Maggie" because she becomes engrossed in it. Recently she started on a blue and pink blanket.

Maggie has two younger brothers, 11-year-old Mason and 8-year-old Cooper. Beth, an English teacher at Bishop

Dwenger High School, keeps the Serenity Prayer on her desk and often prays a Hail Mary as she contemplates the special gift that she and her husband have been given in raising Magnolia Anne.

Beth confesses that sometimes she feels unworthy to have

been blessed with such a special daughter as Maggie, who has given her a special perspective and insight on life and living. She realizes that good eyesight is not what life is all about. She feels blessed that her life's journey has included raising Maggie and caring for other members of the family.

Maggie's future will likely include enrolling at Bishop Dwenger in a couple years. She has already met a number of teachers and has a goal of being on the varsity swim team as a freshman.

Given her mantras of "Don't be afraid to try new things" and "Never give up," there will likely not be much that will serve to hold her back. Maggie Peters seems to meet every hurdle head on.



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# Winter ICCL keeps faith-based values at its core

BY ANDREW MENTOCK

Winter season for the Inter-City Catholic League is underway. The decades-old winter athletics roster consists of boys' and girls' basketball, as well as girls' volleyball, for South Bend-area Catholic school students who are in fifth through eighth grade. As the years have gone by, those involved with ICCL agree that the level of overall talent in the league has improved. Often, the competitive environment

that comes from such a rise in talent will cultivate poor sportsmanship: however, the men and women in leadership positions with the ICCL have made sure the league keeps its core, faith-based values.

"My goal is to try to reinforce some of the values that kids get throughout the day in their Catholic schools," said Ben Wiginton, vice president of the ICCL board and president of basketball. "Whether they are interacting with an official or a coach, they should show them the same respect they are expected to

show their principal or a teacher at school."

An important way that these values are strengthened is from the prayer that each student is required to memorize and pray before every game or match.

"This year we've also encouraged the coaches not just have the students learn the prayer because it's important to say the words," said Wiginton, "but also to understand the message behind the prayer and what it talks about."

The pregame prayer is important because it starts the players off by acknowledging their potential shortcomings and asking God, the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Sebastian, the patron saint of athletics, to help them put their best efforts forward and stay safe from harm, and for the strength to treat everyone, including their opponents, with respect.

"Not only does every game start with a prayer, but I hear a lot of prayers said by the teams in the locker rooms," said Steve Baumgartner, who monitors

Saint Joseph High School's gym during ICCL games. "Coming from the Catholic grade schools, I think it's imbedded in the kids. That comes out in the way they play, act and show sportsmanship on the court."

The respect, positive attitude and faithfulness that students participating in winter ICCL show is why those in charge of the league are so comfortable with it becoming more competitive.

"We want it to be competitive — it's one of our goals for the league," said Wiginton. "We want to show kids that there are rewards for hard work, a reward for putting time and effort in and succeeding in a positive way — where there's respect for your teammate, respect for your opponent and respect for the officials around you."

In addition to the men and women who run the ICCL, the coaches are also key components of the league's competitiveness.

ICCL coaches Nick Dalton and Ryan Hunsberger are perfect examples. Both have continued to coach even when their own

children weren't playing on their teams. They do it not only because they enjoy sports, but because they care about helping to provide such a great environment and competitive experience for the kids.

"I attribute much of the kids' sportsmanship to their faith and how they have been taught to treat others," said Dalton, who for the past 20 years has helped coach either boys' or girls' basketball at St. Anthony de Padua School in South Bend. "It also helps that in the ICCL, wins and losses aren't as important how they play and prepare for each game."

It's safe to say that Hunsberger agrees.

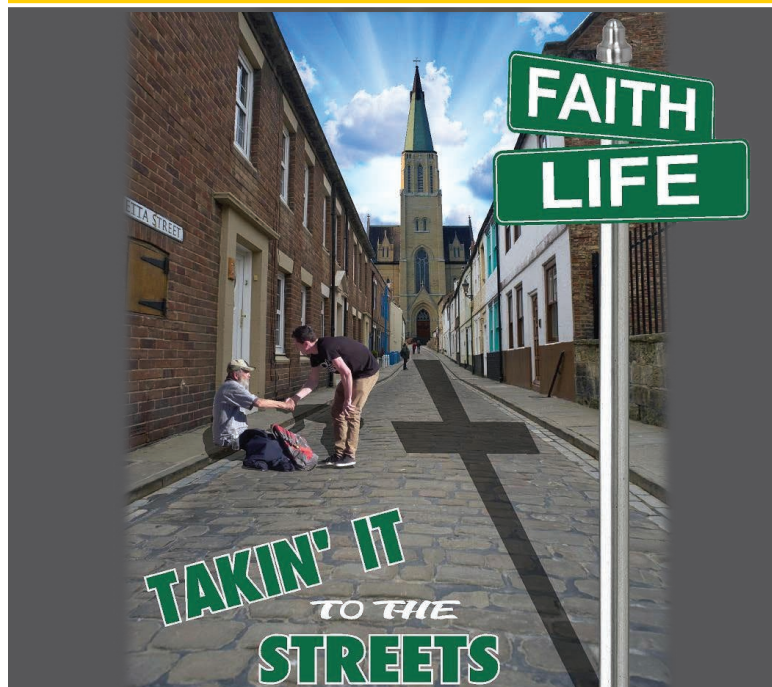
"I wouldn't be coaching in the league if I didn't think it was such a positive experience for the kids," said Hunsberger, who has also been a coach in the Mishawaka Catholic School system for 20 years.

The ICCL will continue to focus on making sure the students are putting sportsmanship and their faith before the game.



**7<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL DIOCESAN MEN'S CONFERENCE**  
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 18<sup>TH</sup>, 2017  
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## Saint Joseph, Marian high school wrestlers take to the mat



Saint Joseph High School 120-pound sophomore Vincent Frucci, top, is ready to pin 113-pound Marian freshman Nathan Samuels during a matchup of the two schools on Dec. 8 at Marian. Samuels was wrestling up one weight class. Frucci won by pin in 20 seconds, and Saint Joseph won the meet by the score of 60-15.

Mitchell Floran, top, a 138-pound Marian freshman, beat Saint Joseph 145-pound sophomore Alex Lee by a 10-3 decision during a matchup of the two schools on Dec. 8 at Marian. Floran was wrestled up one weight class. Saint Joseph won the meet by the score of 60-15.



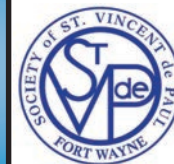
Photos by Paul Tincher

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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](http://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.

**Trivia night planned**

**FORT WAYNE** — St. Vincent de Paul Parish will have a trivia night Saturday, Dec. 31, from 9 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. in the Msgr. John Kuzmich Life Center, 1502 E. Wallen Rd. Cost is \$10/person at the door. Teams of 10/table or sign up individually and be assigned a table. Groups may choose a theme, dress up and decorate to win a prize for the best table. Bring your own food and drinks. Sign up at [www.saintv.org](http://www.saintv.org). All proceeds benefit seminarians of the parish.

**Christmas concert to be offered**

**FORT WAYNE** — The St. Vincent de Paul Christmas Concert and reception will be Tuesday, Jan. 3, at 7 p.m. in the church, 1502 E Wallen Rd. The concert will feature musicians of the Fort Wayne Philharmonic.

**Frasatti young adult game night**

**FORT WAYNE** — Catholic young adults, ages 18-39, the Frassatti group is having a game night at Our Lady of Good Hope on Jan. 14, at 6 p.m. in the gym. Bring board games, your own drinks

and a snack to share. Babysitting available for \$15 per family. For information and more events join the Facebook page: Fort Wayne Frassatti Young Adults.

**Open house and tour planned**

**KENDALLVILLE** — The 150th anniversary of Immaculate Conception Parish will be celebrated in 2017. An open house and tour of the beautiful church on Wednesday, Dec. 28, from 1-3 p.m. and 6-8 p.m. in the church, 301 E. Diamond St.

**Day of Reflection**

**MISHAWAKA** — A day of reflection will be held at St. Francis Convent (across from Marian High School) Wednesday, Jan. 4, from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The theme for the day is "Peacemaking." Bring a Bible. The cost of the day is \$20 and includes lunch. Register by Dec. 30 to Sister Barbara Anne Hallman at 574-259-5427.

**Polish, English Epiphany Mass**

**FORT WAYNE** — A Polish Epiphany Mass will be celebrated Sunday, Jan. 8, at 1:30 p.m. at

St. Mary Mother of God church, corner of Lafayette and Jefferson. Father Tim Wrozek will be the celebrant. A prelude of singing of Polish Christmas carols (Koledy) will begin at 1 p.m. Light refreshments will be served after Mass. For information contact Jean Podzielinski at 260-432-2414.

**Diocesan liturgical training scheduled**

The Office of Worship has organized diocesan liturgical trainings on upcoming Saturdays in early 2017 for parish lectors and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. There is no charge to attend a training, but advance registration is required by mail or email. Lector trainings will be on Jan. 28 at St. Jude Church in Fort Wayne, and on March 4 at St. Jude Church in South Bend. Extraordinary minister trainings will be on Jan. 21 at St. Charles Church in Fort Wayne, and on Feb. 4 at St. Joseph Church in Mishawaka. The times and durations of the trainings vary. Visit [www.diocesefwsb.org/Trainings-And-Retreats](http://www.diocesefwsb.org/Trainings-And-Retreats) for more information.

## REST IN PEACE

**Churubusco**

Sam Buchanan, 70, St. John Bosco

Mary A. Klemm, 91, St. John Bosco

**Fort Wayne**

James J. Robinson, 91, St. Joseph

Richard L. Callen, 89, Our Lady of Good Hope

Robert E. Gorman, 94, St. Vincent de Paul

Dale Parish, Chapel of the Resurrection

Mary Lou Bodeker, 82, Queen of Angels

Gloria M. Seiler, 90, St. Charles Borromeo

Michael Modica, 70, St. Charles Borromeo

Mary A. Bangert, 80, Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception

**Granger**

Leslie L. Kleppe, 46, St. Pius X

**Mishawaka**

Mary Jo Smith, 83, Queen of Peace

Carolyn K. Kovacs, 79, Queen of Peace

**New Haven**

Robert J. Spieth, 71, St. Louis Besancon

Father Kenneth Sarrazine, 79, St. Louis Besancon

**Notre Dame**

Rev. Ronald Wasowski, CSC, 70, Basilica of the Sacred Heart

**South Bend**

Wilma A. Veldman, 89, Christ the King

Frank M. Kuzmich, 93, Holy Family

Carol Ann VanWiele, 70, St. Matthew Cathedral

Anthony Klosowski, 92, St. John the Baptist

Lucille F. Lubelski, 91, Holy Cross

Submit obituaries to [mweber@diocesefwsb.org](mailto:mweber@diocesefwsb.org)

### 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.

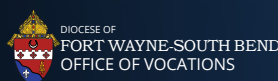
**For a more complete job description,** please write to Fr. Bob Showers OFM Conv. at [frbob@stanthonyangola.com](mailto:frbob@stanthonyangola.com) -or- write to St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church 700 W. Maumee St., Angola IN 46703.

## little flower holy hour

January 3  
7:00 p.m.

St. Mother Theodore Guerin Chapel  
with Deacon Jim Fitzpatrick

Please, come and pray for vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life.







## Two Christmas Stories

### 112 Years Apart

Dr. Anthony F. Laviano



*He rang the doorbell. It sounded his last stop. He arrived. It had been a long, cold, lonely, exhausting trip. When he started out a winter snowstorm was on the horizon and approaching at full force. Not deterred, he was determined to begin his journey. He needed to fulfill Her request.*



On Dec. 20 1896, with luggage in hand at the Superior, Wis., depot he boarded the 11 p.m. train heading Southwest to St. Paul then taking him Eastward across Wisconsin to Milwaukee. The snowstorm was intense. The train slowed to a crawl having to plow its way through snowdrifts. Arriving in Milwaukee he stopped to visit the Capuchin seminary of St. Francis two miles from the depot. The following day he boarded the train to Chicago and upon arrival changed trains to Detroit. Heavy snow slowed the last leg of the train trip to 12 miles an hour. From the Detroit station he took the street car to 1740 Mt. Elliot Ave., St. Bonaventure Monastery. He arrived well after dusk and rang the door bell. It was now Dec. 24, Christmas Eve. - With anticipation he waited for the door to open. He knew that when he stepped through the doorway he would have completed Our Lady's desire. She related it to him on Dec. 8, 1896, the feast of the Immaculate Conception, the last day of his novena asking guidance of the Blessed Mother. "Go to Detroit," She impressed upon him. Bernard Francis Casey had completed his initial step to becoming a Capuchin Friar. - The Capuchins at St. Bonaventure were expecting him. He was warmly welcomed by the porter who led him to a chair within the entrance. Unknown to him, such a station in life would be his and such entrances would one day become his office. The porter soon reappeared with Father Casimir, the superior, and Father Gabriel Messmer, his future novice master. They suggested that he have something to eat but his exhaustion satisfied his appetite. He wanted to sleep. - They led him up the stairs to his room behind a wood latch door. Soon he was fast asleep on the narrow iron bed. A one-drawer wooden desk with a straight back wooden chair, the only furnishings, kept watch. Light from the Christmas Eve sky coming through the one window blanketed the ascetic 9x12 room with restful comfort. - He had only been asleep an hour when the traditional procession before Midnight Mass began along the monastery corridors. He was awakened by bells and acapella singing scented with incense. The voices were singing Christmas carols in Latin and German. These languages would later confront him in his studies. Listening, he could hear Friars joining the carolers. Approaching his door he joined them. The procession moved into the chapel. His heart was uplifted and "Silent Night" echoed in his ears. - Father Solanus often told the story of his first Capuchin Christmas and how he felt a flood of happiness during the Midnight Mass. - The words in the Last Gospel of the Latin Mass that Christmas remained a Christmas crèche etched in the soul of Father Solanus Casey.

*"The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."*

*Et Verbum Caro Factum*

*Est, et habitavit in nobis.*

*Deo gratias!*

**Merry Christmas  
and a  
Joyous New Year**

*Stille Nacht! Heilige Nacht!*

*Alles schläft; einsam wacht*

*Nur das traute heilige Paar.*

*Holder Knab im lockigten Haar;*

*Schlafe in himmlischer Ruh!*

*Schlafe in himmlischer Ruh!*



Venerable Solanus Casey, OFM, Cap  
Christmas at the Manger

**My Christmas story is a  
simpler one but heartfelt.**

**It took place 112 years later.**

**It is told in an unnoted footnote  
in the unpublished portfolio of  
Solanus miracles.**



**"Anthony F. Laviano was cured of  
prostate cancer  
during the 2008 Christmas season  
through the intercession of  
Father Solanus Casey.  
Deo Gratias!"**

**A Ferferino for the Beatification of Solanus Casey  
Mary, our mother, we ask you to intercede for us before your son,  
as you did at the wedding at Cana, that the beatification  
of the Venerable Solanus Casey may be brought about.  
We pray that through your intercession the Holy Spirit will bring  
his beatification about at this time so that we may be strengthened  
in our faith and filled with gratitude to God. Hail Mary...Glory be...**

*To report favors received through the intercession  
of Father Solanus, please direct correspondence to  
the official office in Detroit; The Father Solanus Guild.*

[www.solanuscasey.org](http://www.solanuscasey.org)

Dr. Anthony F. Laviano, Chairman and Founder, NANOworld®

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