Blessed Solanus Casey lived out faith, hope, charity every day, says cardinal

DETROIT (CNS) — A humble priest and porter, Blessed Solanus Casey thanked God daily for the gift of those who came to his door in his small corner of the world.

On Nov. 18, tens of thousands of those whom he touched gathered to thank God in return for the gift of the holy Capuchin’s life.

“Others, above all the poor, were seen by him not as a weight or obstacle to his climb to perfection, but as a way to the light of the splendor of God," Cardinal Angelo Amato, prefect of the Congregation for Saints’ Causes, told the tens of thousands of people gathered at Detroit’s Ford Field for Blessed Solanus’ beatification Mass.

A congregation of more than 60,000 — young, old, clergy and laity, those of all races and ethnicities — flooded into Ford Field for the Mass, with tens of thousands more watching live on TV or the internet.

Countless others visited the Solanus Casey Center and St. Bonaventure Monastery over the weekend to pray and leave prayer intentions at the tomb of a saintly friar known for miraculous healings, intercessions and a compassionate listening ear.

True to Blessed Solanus’ spirituality, a special VIP section of the main floor was set aside for those with illness and disabilities.

Father Michael Sullivan, provincial minister of the Detroit-based Capuchin Franciscan Province of St. Joseph, welcomed those in attendance, “especially those whom Father Solanus so loved — the sick and the poor.”

“We gather in gratitude for all of God’s blessings and for all the ways in which God moves in our lives,” Father Sullivan said. "What a witness was..."

SOLANUS, page 3
Mass is a time of silence and prayer, not idle chit-chat, pope says

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Mass is the highest form of prayer and not an appropriate moment for small talk, Pope Francis said.

At church, Catholics should spend their time in silence before Mass, preparing “to meet with Jesus” instead of engaging in “chitchat,” the pope said Nov. 15 during his weekly general audience.

“Silence is so important,” he said. “Remember what I told you last time: we are not going to a show. Silence prepares us and accompanies us.”

The pope continued his new series of audience talks on the Mass, reflecting on the Eucharist as a form of prayer that is “the highest, the most sublime and, at the same time, the most concrete” way of encountering God’s love.

“Teny of prayer” - Junno Arocho Esteves

Mass is a time of silence and prayer, not idle chit-chat, pope says
At least 60,000 people battled inclement weather conditions to fill Detroit's Ford Field for the beatification Mass of Father Casey on Nov. 18. The electronic banner at top reads, “Beatification of Father Solanus Casey.”

SOLANUS, from page 1

our beloved brother Solanus! He opened his heart to each person he met, he prayed with them, and loved them, and through him God moved powerfully again and again. Thanks be to God!”

Cardinal Amato was the main celebrant and homilist for the beatification Mass, joined by Detroit Archbishop Allen H. Vigneron; Cardinal Adam J. Maida, retired archbishop of Detroit; Boston Cardinal Sean P. O’Malley, himself a Capuchin Franciscan; Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin of Newark, New Jersey, who is a Detroit native; and Archbishop Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the United States, among others.

About 35 bishops, 400 priests and deacons and more than 200 Capuchins joined together in praise with 300 members of the Casey family, members of the Father Solanus Guild and thousands of faithful during the Mass intention.

The altar, placed at midfield, was created originally for St. John Paul II’s visit to the Pontiac Silverdome in 1987. To the right of the altar was a large painting of Blessed Solanus. It was unveiled to thunderous applause after the beatification rite, which took place at the beginning of the Mass.

The music was provided by a 25-member orchestra and a choir of 300 directed by Capuchin Franciscan Father Ed Foley. The singers were members of parish choirs from across the Detroit metro area. The Casey family’s Irish roots were reflected in the Irish hymns chosen as part of the music for the liturgy.

Reflecting the diversity of the Catholic Church in which Blessed Solanus served, readings and prayers of the faithful were proclaimed in several languages, including English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Chaldean, Polish and Tagalog.

“When his favorite sons were the poor, the sick, the emarginated and the neglected, Cardinal Amato said of Blessed Solanus, the Wisconsin-born priest with Irish roots and a whispy voice who served as a monastery door-keeper in New York, Detroit and Huntington, Indiana, over his 60 years as a Capuchin friar.

“He always fasted in order to give them their own lunch. He spent hours upon hours patiently receiving, listening to, and counsel- ing the ever-growing number of people who came to him,” he added.

Once, the cardinal recounted, when the Capuchin Soup Kitchen — which Blessed Solanus helped start during the Great Depression — ran out of food, the friar sim- ply prayed an Our Father, and a woman’s miraculous healing from a skin disease was the miracle needed to advance the Capuchin Franciscan friar’s cause for beatification.

By virtue of his beatification, Blessed Solanus can now be publicly venerated in Detroit and in Capuchin houses worldwide. Beatitude is the last step before sainthood, which would allow Blessed Solanus to be ven- erated by the worldwide church.

Beatitude is the step last before sainthood, which would allow Blessed Solanus to be ven- erated by the worldwide church. His feast will be celebrated July 30, 1957.

Among the hundreds, if not thousands, of healings attributed to Blessed Solanus during and after his lifetime, Pope Francis recognized the authenticity of a miracle necessary for the friar to be elevated from venerable to blessed after a review by the Vatican’s Congregation for Saints’ Causes was completed earlier this year.

The miracle involved the healing — unexplained by medicine or science — of a woman with an incurable genetic skin disease, Paula Medina Zarate of Panama. She was only recently identified publicly and she was at the Mass. As it began, she walked up to the altar with a reliquary holding a relic of Blessed Solanus — a small piece of bone taken from the friar’s arm.

Zarate was visiting friends in Detroit and stopped at Father Casey’s tomb to pray for others’ intentions. After her prayers, she felt the strong urging to ask for the friar’s intercession for herself, too, and received an instant and visible healing.

The miraculous nature of her cure in 2012 was verified by doctors in her home country, in Detroit and in Rome, all of whom confirmed there was no scientific explanation. Father Casey himself died of a skin disease July 31, 1957.

During the presentation of the gifts, baskets of food were brought to the altar along with bread and wine, symbolizing Blessed Solanus’ ministry to the hungry through the Capuchin Soup Kitchen and the Capuchins’ continuing ministry today.

After Communion, the congregation was invited to sing “God, Be Praised for Humble Service,” a hymn commissioned in honor of Blessed Solanus written by Benedictine Sister Delores Dufner.

In thanking Cardinal Amato and the Congregation for the Causes of Saints “for your devoted attention to the cause of Father Solanus’ beatification,” Archbishop Vigneron garnered loud cheers when he assured the cardinal that “the field hospital of mercy is open here in Detroit.”

“Your Eminence, when next you speak with our beloved Holy Father, Pope Francis, please let him know that we are grate- ful beyond measure that he has judged our beloved Father Solanus worthy of the rank of blessed,” Archbishop Vigneron said. “Assure His Holiness of our filial affection and loyalty and tell him that we are committed anew to imitate Blessed Solanus by witnessing to the good news of Christ’s mercy.”

Mike Stechschulte is managing editor of The Michigan Catholic, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Detroit.
Youth urged to remember they’re ‘beloved children of God, called by name’

BY NATALIE HOFER

INDIANAPOLIS (CNS) — The sound of more than 20,000 teens screaming and singing along with raucous music of Christian hip-hop band TobyMac was loud.

The sound of the same number of youths in silent prayer was deafening.

These external and internal forms of praise formed bonds to the opening general session of the National Catholic Youth Conference Nov. 16 at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis.

After two hours of music, entertainment — including cultural dancing by the Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement — and an entrance procession of banners from each diocese present, the participants were greeted by Indianapolis Archbishop Charles C. Thompson.

Although each person came “from many dioceses, many states … and with many titles,” he said, “we are first and foremost children of God. And that God who knows us desires to be known by us … God wanted us to know him … through a personal relationship with a human being, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

“We are beloved children of God, called by name, claimed by Christ,” he continued, referring to the conference theme of “Called.”

“We begin this NCYC weekend by embracing that reality of who we are.”

Chris Stefanick, an internationally acclaimed author, speaker and founder of Real Life Catholic, used humor and personal experience to speak about the reality of who we are and of God’s love for each person.

He spoke of the “love story” upon which the Catholic faith is founded.

“God’s love created us, he said, no other form of love will satisfy.

“We feel so small in this world,” he told the crowd that came from as far away as Hawaii and Alaska. “We feel so insignificant in this universe.

“I think God looks down from heaven and says, ‘You are huge next to all this.’ As big as a mountain is, can it know someone? As big as an ocean is, can it make a choice? As big as a galaxy is, can it choose to love? No, but you can … You’re a huge deal!”

But because of human rejection of God, Stefanick continued, sin and brokenness entered the world. To applause and shouts of “Amen!” he modified the words of John 3:16 to note that therefore, “God so loved you that he gave his only Son.” Whoo … .”

This love story — which continues in the sacraments, Stefanick noted — “doesn’t just show you who God is. It shows you who you are.”


“Sin is not your name—Jesus gives you your name. And what is your name? ‘Beloved.’ I don’t matter because of who I am … I matter because of whose I am. I’m not somebody, I’m somebody’s. I’m precious and I’m worth dying for. This is the best news ever.”

He encouraged the crowd to use their will to “say yes” to the love that created space and time and perpetually invites us to Himself.

Father Joseph Espaillat, a priest of the Archdiocese of New York, who was one of the evening’s emcees, led the more than 20,000 present through a period of silent prayer to close. He suggested using the word “pray” as an acronym to guide their prayer — “P” for praising God, “R” for repenting of sins, “A” for asking God for needs rather than wants, and “Y” for yielding to his will.

It was this prayer time more than any of the evening’s other events that most affected Abby White of the Diocese of Covington, Kentucky.

“I thought it was really powerful,” she said of the quiet time. “I like saying that you’re sorry to God. It’s been awhile since I’ve been to confession, and I really want to go to confession this weekend. I felt like that [prayer time] empowered me to want to go.”

While Abby has attended NCYC before, Garrett Randel of Seneca, Kansas, was exuberant with the joy of one experiencing the event for the first time.

“I thought it was really cool,” he said of the opening session.

“The speaker was really inspiring. I thought it was one of the best experiences I’ve had in my Catholic faith.”

Caitlin Dusenbury of the Diocese of Lansing, Michigan, couldn’t agree more. The NCYC first-timer’s eyes lit up and a smile brightened her face when she spoke of her experience that evening.

“I really like it so far,” she told The Criterion, newspaper of the Indianapolis archdiocese. “It’s impacted me a lot. I’ve never seen so many Catholics together.

“The highlight for me was Chris speaking. It’s not who you are, but whose you are — that quote stuck with me.”

Natalie HOFER is a reporter at The Criterion, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.
Puerto Rico archbishop sees spiritual rebirth after storm’s wrath

BY CAROL ZIMMERMANN

BALTIMORE (CNS) — Almost two months after the devastating winds and rains of Hurricane Maria pummeled the island of Puerto Rico, there is still no clear path to recovery.

Although some power and phone service have been restored and relief supplies are slowly filtering in, the cleanup and rebuilding is only just beginning.

“You go day by day, but it’s overwhelming and traumatic,” said Archbishop Roberto Gonzalez Nieves of San Juan, Puerto Rico.

The archbishop, who attended the U.S. bishops’ fall assembly in Baltimore, is acutely aware of the storm’s initial and ongoing impact. Since Maria, he has visited 57 parishes in his archdiocese and has 100 more to go.

Every parish in this archdiocese in the northeast corner of the island was impacted by the hurricane from minimal to extensive damage.

And as Puerto Rico’s Catholics find their way through the wreckage and mud-soaked parish buildings and roofless homes while coping with minimal electricity, food and water, he said they have not lost their faith. For many, their faith has only deepened.

“Tragedies and adversities have a way of reinforcing our faith and our sense of spirituality, our dependency on God,” which also goes hand in hand with an “intensified spirit of sharing, generosity and solidarity,” he said.

Archbishop Gonzalez, who lived in Puerto Rico as a child and has led the San Juan Archdiocese for 18 years, said he has noticed “the choirs continue to sing the hymns they were singing before but with much more vigor and joy.”

“We are in a sense being rejuvenated,” he told Catholic News Service Nov. 13.

He isn’t surprised by the way people are taking care of each other or as he put it — “the enormous amount of sharing that took place and is still taking place” — as people make meals for neighbors, for example, on gas-powered stoves.

He also has experienced this care firsthand in the calls and emails — once they could come through — from other bishops, along with donations and offers of rebuilding help. At the Baltimore meeting, he said a number of bishops told him:

“We’re with you and we’ll be sending help.”

Archbishop Gonzalez and Bishop Herbert A. Bevard of St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands — another region hard hit by Hurricane Maria — were both invited as observers to the bishops’ fall meeting and were introduced by Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Puerto Rico, a U.S. commonwealth, has its own Catholic bishops’ conference and participates in the Latin American bishops’ council, known as CELAM.

During the Baltimore gathering, Dominican Sister Donna Markham, president of Catholic Charities USA, told the bishops that the relief agency had given $2 million in early November to Father Enrique Camacho, director of Caritas Puerto Rico, the Catholic Charities affiliate on the island, and she had just presented Bishop Bevard with $1 million for recovery needs.

The funding has been distributed for emergency housing, food, water, cleaning supplies, clothing, bedding, diapers and other baby needs. The agency also has deployed 150 case managers in storm-battered areas to assist people in navigating the unfamiliar task of seeking assistance.

In an unscheduled discussion about recent natural disasters at the close of the bishops’ public session Nov. 14, Bishop Frank J. Dewane of Venice, Florida, chair of the U.S. bishop’s Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, urged fellow bishops to think of what more could be done to help Puerto Rico. He wonders if there had been donor ops to think of what more could be done to help Puerto Rico. He wonders if there had been donor

“We should, as a body, think of how we can help. They are destroyed,” he said.

Archbishop Gonzalez doesn’t deny the island can use monetary help, but he said it also needs prayers.

“We believe in the immense power and efficacy of prayers. We have felt it, I have felt the impact of so many prayers. They make a difference,” he said.

“Today we’re still in an emergency mode. We need water, food, clothing, basic necessities of life. In the long term, we’ll need assistance rebuilding homes, churches, schools, roofs.”
Chinese officials pay to swap religious images for portraits of Xi

HONG KONG (CNS) — Officials in China’s eastern Jiangxi province have replaced religious images displayed by Christian families with portraits of the country’s leader, Xi Jinping. Ucancenews.com reported that, on Nov. 12, pictures were uploaded to the popular social messaging service WeChat account of Huangjibin town government, showing officials removing images of the cross and other religious subjects in Yugan County. The message from officials said the Christians involved had “recognized their mistakes” and decided not to entrust to Jesus but to the (Communist) Party” claiming the Christians voluntarily removed 624 religious images and posted 453 portraits of Xi. The officials also claimed they were “converting” Christians to party loyalty through poverty alleviation and other schemes to help the disadvantaged. Nearly 10 percent of Yugan County’s largely impoverished 1 million people are Christian.

New museum tells the story of the Bible — chapter and verse

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Hey, Smithsonian, there’s a new kid on the block. It’s the Museum of the Bible, just a few blocks from the National Mall in Washington. On its opening to the public Nov. 18, it told visitors how the Bible — both Old Testament and New Testament — has intersected society and at times even transformed it. The people behind the museum say that if visitors were to read the card behind every artwork, saw every video, heard every song and took part in every interactive experience — including a Broadway-style musical called “Amazing Grace” about the song’s writer, John Newton, and the musical inspiration behind the abolitionist movement — it would take them 72 hours to do it all. But visitors can take their time, because there is no admission charge to the museum. The museum was the brainchild of Steve Green, chairman of the museum’s board of directors and president of the Hobby Lobby chain of arts and crafts stores. “It’s exciting to share the Bible with the world,” Green said at a Nov. 15 press preview of the museum.

Supreme Court to hear case on free speech and crisis pregnancy centers

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The Supreme Court has decided to hear a case examining freedom of speech at crisis pregnancy centers. The case, accepted Nov. 13, will consider if a California law that went into effect in 2016 violates First Amendment rights to freedom of speech and free exercise of religion. The pregnancy center law was upheld last October by a panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit that said the state could regulate professional speech because of its interest in safeguarding public health and to ensure that “citizens have access to and adequate information about constitutionally protected medical services like abortion.”

Bishop asks for prayers after shooting tragedy in California

BALTIMORE (CNS) — Bishop Jaime Soto of Sacramento, California, asked his brother bishops meeting in Baltimore to pray for the victims of the nation’s latest shooting tragedy. The bishops were gathered for the second day of their annual fall assembly Nov. 14. Early that morning in Northern California, a gunman opened fire at random locations, including near a grade school, in a rural area, leaving at least four people dead and at least 10 others injured. AP reported that sheriff’s deputies fatally shot the gunman, who was later identified as Kevin Neal, 45. He was the fifth fatality in the incident. At least two children were among those being treated for injuries. The Tehama County Sheriff’s Office said that it was dealing with seven crime scenes, according to AP. Tehama County is one of several counties that comprise the Sacramento Diocese. California Gov. Jerry Brown in a statement said he and first lady Anne Gust Brown “are saddened to hear about today’s violence in Tehama County, which shockingly involved schoolchildren. We offer our condolences to the families who lost loved ones and unite with all Californians in grief.”

Pope to preach dialogue in Bangladesh, Myanmar

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — While the ongoing crisis of Rohingya refugees fleeing Myanmar for Bangladesh will draw much attention during Pope Francis’ visit to the two countries in late November, the pope also is expected to focus on interreligious dialogue, poverty and climate change. Although lively and growing, the Catholic community in both countries is up less than 1 percent of the population. The vast majority of people in Myanmar are Buddhist, while Hinduism, the overwhelming majority in Bangladesh are Muslim. Both countries have been plagued by political and ethnic tensions that have found religion to be an easy differentiator to exploit for political gain. Differences are exacerbated by poverty and the difficulty of accessing very limited resources; the poorest are further worsened by climate change, which is evident in the droughts, flooding and increased power and frequency of cyclones that make them in the Bay of Bengal. Pope Francis is scheduled to arrive in Myanmar Nov. 27.
USF announces ‘Pay It Forward’ Scholarship

FORT WAYNE — The University of Saint Francis has announced a new scholarship available to incoming students who exhibit a commitment to service and helping others.

Pay It Forward is a renewable scholarship that ranges from $2,000 to full tuition. First-time and transfer students seeking their first undergraduate degree at the Fort Wayne and Crown Point locations are eligible. Three recipients will be chosen for larger awards, with two students awarded half tuition and fees, and one student to receive full tuition and fees. Scholarship recipients will be announced in February.

The Pay It Forward Scholarship is unique in that USF is the only university in the country offering service-based scholarships without limiting the number of awards or applying economic thresholds or ethnic-origin requirements, as evidenced by the university’s primary research into university-sponsored service scholarships.

To be considered for a Pay It Forward Scholarship, applicants must write a compelling essay explaining how they help others. The deadline to apply for the service scholarship is Jan. 1.

“The University of Saint Francis has a long tradition of producing graduates with a deep sense of community and a dedication to serving others,” said President Sister M. Elise Kriss, OSF. “The Pay It Forward Scholarship has a direct connection to our Franciscan values. Rewarding applicants who are already living that value is the way we desire to pay it forward as a university.” USF students together complete a total of more than 25,000 hours of service each year through various community projects and campus initiatives.

More information about the University of Saint Francis Pay It Forward Scholarship can be found at go.sf.edu/scholarships. More information about USF can be found at sf.edu.

Experience ‘Holy Darkness’ at Advent retreat

HUNTINGTON — Victory Noll Center will offer an Advent retreat, “Holy Darkness,” on Dec. 1-2, which will provide an opportunity to slow down during this busy season. All are invited to this time of prayer, reflection and solitude.

The retreat begins Friday, Dec. 1, at 7 p.m. and ends Saturday, Dec. 2 at 1 p.m. The theme of “Holy Darkness,” comes from the prophet Isaiah: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.” Facilitated by Sue Wilhelm and Tina Brown-Eckart, this retreat will allow participants to engage in prayerful stillness and creative reflection in preparation for the Light of Christ at Christmas.

The men and women who drive the Care Van for the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Fort Wayne drive a total of almost five weeks per year, at 45 hours per week, and average 400 to 500 miles per week. They are dedicated to the cause of transporting clients to and from doctor’s appointments and hospital visits. Recently, the organization honored them with a special dinner. From left to right are drivers Jackie and Paul Moreau, Joe and Shirley Weldon, Fran and Paul Braun, Annette and Ed Richardson, Ed and Kathleen Jarboe, Carol and Carl Ehinger and Jim Andrews. Other drivers are Deb Andrews, Margie and Dennis Foote, Mel and Gloria Vachon, Randy and Bobbi Lauer and Bill and Carolyn Ellison.

There is a cost to attend. Overnight accommodations and meals are included. Participants can choose to commute. Victory Noll Center is located at 1900 W. Park Drive in Huntington. For more information call 260-200-1740, email info@victorynollcenter.org or visit www.victorynollcenter.org.

Victory Noll Center extends the charm and legacy of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters by inviting all people to discover and develop their capacity for God’s mission.

Earthworks to host winter wildlife camps for children

DONALDSON — Wondering how to occupy the children during the upcoming holiday break? Earthworks has a creative solution. Reserve a spot now for “Fun in the Wild: Searching for Wildlife in Winter.” From Tuesday, Jan. 2, through Friday, Jan. 5, students ages 6-10 will explore the natural world through art, music and intergenerational activities to gain a greater understanding of a world that is anything but frozen and desolate. Here, they’ll learn to live in harmony with nature and reflect God’s character of caring for creation.

Located at Lindenwood Retreat and Conference Center, Earthworks’ aim is to educate children about wildlife, habitats and nature using a multidisciplinary, fun approach that makes sustainable living second nature. It’s not too early to start planning for spring break and summer vacation either. Earthworks will offer two spring break sessions, March 26-30 and April 2-6, and six weeks of summer programs are also planned. Those are scheduled from June 11-15, June 18-22, June 25-29, July 9-13, July 16-20 and July 23-27. Plan to enroll now in these educational opportunities.

For more information, contact Cheri Ringer, coordinator of Earthcare Education, at earthworks@poorhandmaids.org or 574-935-1746. Earthworks, a part of The Center at Donaldson, is sponsored by The Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ.

USF to discuss icons in the Catholic Church

Sister Visel, from the Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in southern Indiana, will present “Recovering Beauty and Iconography in Catholic Churches Today.” She will discuss how icons are not just decorations limited to Eastern Orthodox Church, and how they could play a central role in the Western Church that goes beyond mere decoration. A theologian and iconographer, she will speak about her recent book, “Icons in the Western Church: Toward a Sacramental Encounter,” which argues that the post-Vatican II Roman Catholic Church needs to give greater respect to the Eastern tradition of icons.

This lecture is free and open to the public. Copies of Sister Visel’s book will be on sale after the lecture. For additional information contact Angie Springer, 260-399-8066 or aspringer@sf.edu.

Novena to stop abortion planned in South Bend

SOUTH BEND — The Apostolate of Divine Mercy in Service of Life, Marriage, and the Family will offer a perpetual adoration novena, asking the intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the Unborn, that an application for a new abortion clinic in South Bend be denied. Join them in praying night and day from Dec. 4-12 at The Life Center Chapel, 2018 Ironwood Circle, South Bend. For more information visit http://www.divinemercyfortlife.com.

Around the Diocese

St. Vincent de Paul Society Care Van drivers honored

The men and women who drive the Care Van for the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Fort Wayne drive a total of almost five weeks per year, at 45 hours per week, and average 400 to 500 miles per week. They are dedicated to the cause of transporting clients to and from doctor’s appointments and hospital visits. Recently, the organization honored them with a special dinner. From left to right are drivers Jackie and Paul Moreau, Joe and Shirley Weldon, Fran and Paul Braun, Annette and Ed Richardson, Ed and Kathleen Jarboe, Carol and Carl Ehinger and Jim Andrews. Other drivers are Deb Andrews, Margie and Dennis Foote, Mel and Gloria Vachon, Randy and Bobbi Lauer and Bill and Carolyn Ellison.

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U.S. bishops take on immigration, racism at fall assembly

BY CAROL ZIMMERMANN

BALTIMORE (CNS) — At the start of their annual fall assembly in Baltimore Nov. 13, U.S. Catholic bishops faced some big issues — immigration and racism — straight on and zeroed in on how to raise the national level of prudential judgment on these topics starting in the church pews.

They acknowledged the current polarization in the country and divisions within the Catholic Church and stressed their responsibility as church leaders to promote immigration reform, educate parishioners on justice issues and listen to those affected by “sins of racism.”

On immigration, Bishop Joe S. Vasquez of Austin, Texas, who is chairman of the Committee on Migration of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said there needs to be a “path to legalization and citizenship for the millions of our unauthorized brothers and sisters who are law-abiding, tax-paying and contributing to our society.”

The bishops responded with applause and an agreement by voice vote to issue a statement calling for comprehensive immigration reform.

The bishops were keenly aware that their defense of immigrants was not necessarily the view of the U.S. church at large. For example, Chicago Cardinal Blase J. Cupich spoke of dangers of Catholics falling prey to and believing “poisoning rhetoric” about immigrants that demonizes them.

“There’s something wrong in our churches, where the Gospel is proclaimed, and yet people leave our worship services, our Masses on weekends, with that rhetoric still echoing in their hearts,” he said.

Several bishops also brought up the notion of prudential judgment — referring to the view Catholics could take on immigration that differs from the bishops since it is not a prudential matter of church teaching.

The bishops who spoke on the floor didn’t buy that argument and said Catholics can’t use it to push aside the need to care for immigrants. Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone of San Francisco took this a step further saying the prudential judgment can’t be “taken lightly” on a “justice issue like immigration.”

Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski of Miami said the bishops’ defense of immigrants, as brothers and sisters, not problems, is not only right for immigration but “for our society as a whole.”

“We can make America great, but you don’t make America great by making America mean,” he added, referring to a slogan of President Donald Trump without naming him.

On racism, Bishop George V. Murry of Youngstown, Ohio, head of the bishops’ Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism, said the church must recognize “and frankly acknowledge” its failings. He said the issue has found a “troubling resurgence” in recent years, referring particularly to a white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, this year where he said racial hatred was “on full display.”

“Racism isn’t going to be conquered by speech but by actions,” said Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory of Atlanta, adding that this was a watershed moment where the church could play a leadership role.

He spoke about discussions happening at diocesan and parish levels, and several bishops commented about them as well noting that these discussions are not easy, but so necessary to bring about healing.

Other key issues of the day where church leaders are responding include health care, taxes and abortion, mentioned by Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston in his first address as USCCB president.

He took office at the close of last year’s fall assembly.

“We are facing a time that seems more divided than ever,” Cardinal DiNardo said. “Divisions over health care, conscience protections, immigration and refugees, abortion, physician-assisted suicide, gender ideologies, the meaning of marriage and all the other headlines continue to be hotly debated. But our role continues to be witnessing the Gospel.”

He explained that the National Catholic War Council, created by the U.S. bishops in 1917 in response to the world refugee crisis that emerged from World War I and the forerunner to the USCCB, was formed to address great national and international needs at a time not unlike today.

The cardinal emphasized other modern challenges such as recent natural disasters and mass shootings.

But the problems of the day should not overwhelm church leaders who should recognize signs of new hope in the church, mentioned by the papal nuncio, Archbishop Christophe Pierre, who addressed the bishops at the start of the meeting and encouraged them to make time for prayer amid “burdens of the office.”

He told them to be adventurous in the “new frontier of faith” and to make a strong effort to accompany young people who often question their faith.

The bishops also heard from the Vatican secretary of state, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, at a Nov. 12 Mass where he was the main celebrant and the homilist, and at a dinner celebrating the USCCB’s 100th anniversary.

The cardinal told the U.S. bishops that the church needs them today to “bring not only material assistance but also the spiritual balm of healing, comfort and hope to new waves of migrants and refugees who come knocking on America’s door.”

He also urged them to follow the pope’s call to accompany the modern Church.

Prior to the Mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a few protesters held placards or placed them on the sidewalk, calling on the U.S. bishops to embrace pacifism.

Also in the lobby of the hotel where the bishops were meeting, a protester sought dialogue with church leaders to urge them to offer sanctuary to immigrants facing deportation, and another voiced displeasure with church leaders he said support war.

The second public day of meetings did not tackle major
s societal issues but examined ways the bishops can continue to uphold the Catholic faith from specific wording in the baptismal rite, a review of catechetical materials and a pastoral plan for marriage and family life that will give Catholic couples and families resources to enable them to live out their vocation.

They also voted to move forward the sainthood cause of Nicholas W. Black Elk, a 19th-century Lakota catechist who is said to have introduced hundreds of Lakota people to the Catholic faith. As part of the business side of the meeting, the bishops elected Archbishop Allen H. Vigneron of Detroit as the next secretary of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. He’ll take office next November. Votes also were cast for a new chairman of the bishops’ Committee for Pro-Life Activities.

The bishops identified key issues they are addressing with Congress, including health care, the federal budget and tax reform, and concluded their assembly by mentioning the impact of recent disasters such as hurricanes and wildfires.

Bishop Curtis J. Guillory of Beaumont, Texas, a region hard hit by Hurricane Harvey, said often when tragedies occur, “you just feel very much alone and wonder how you are going to move forward.”

He thanked the bishops for their support, in prayers, phone calls and donations, which he described as a “wonderful sign of solidarity” and sign of unity of our faith. This will be a long and costly recovery, he noted, but added that “people have deep, deep faith.”

Contributing to this story were Rhina Guidos, Dennis Sadowski, Mark Pattison and Julie Asher.

Bishop Rhoades elected chairman of USCCB Committee on Doctrine, re-elected to CRS board

FORT WAYNE — At the fall general assembly of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Most Reverend Kevin C. Rhoades, Bishop of Fort Wayne-South Bend, was nominated and elected chairman of the Committee on Doctrine; he was also re-elected to the board of directors of Catholic Relief Services. The assembly took place Nov. 13-14 in Baltimore, Maryland.

The Committee on Doctrine assists the bishops, both collectively and individually, in areas of faith and morals of the Church. It collaborates with the committees of the conference, providing expertise and guidance concerning the theological issues that confront the Church in the United States. The committee particularly addresses the relationship to science, human values, and health care, and supports the bishops’ efforts in the area of development and review of Scripture translations.

Among other responsibilities, members of the committee study issues of significance, evaluate theological and moral trends of concern to contemporary society, and communicate and promote the teachings of the Church in support of the Holy See and the Church in general.

Bishop Rhoades was also elected, during the gathering, to serve another term on the board of directors of Catholic Relief Services. He is joined by Bishop Edward J. Burns of Dallas, Bishop Felipe J. Estévez of St. Augustine, and Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski of Miami, who were also re-elected. Archbishop Bernard A. Hebda and Bishop Shelton J. Fabre were elected new members of the board, and George Mason University law professor Helen Alvaré was selected as a new lay member. Their three-year terms begin Jan. 1.

Catholic Relief Services carries out the commitment of the bishops of the United States to assist the poor and vulnerable overseas. The agency is motivated by the Gospel of Jesus Christ to cherish, preserve and uphold the sacredness and dignity of all human life, foster charity and justice, and embody Catholic social and moral teaching. It acts to promote human development by responding to major emergencies, fighting disease and poverty, and nurturing peaceful and just societies; and to serve Catholics in the United States as they live their faith in solidarity with their brothers and sisters around the world.
The St. Bryce Missions: global outreach, local link

BY JILL A. BOUGHTON

When one listens to the Holy Spirit, one thing can lead to another.

When she started a young adult prayer group because she needed support after graduating from a Catholic college, Colleen Mitchell didn’t anticipate meeting her future husband there. When she and Greg lost their 3-month-old son, Bryce, to sudden infant death syndrome, she had no idea God would channel the energy of their grief into founding an international mission in Bryce’s name. When she began studying the women of the New Testament, Colleen had no intention of writing a book. And when people from Fort Wayne began making short-term mission trips to Mitchell’s Costa Rica ministry, the Louisiana residents had no plans to move to that city.

As they set their sights on Myanmar, who knows what adventures lie ahead?

Living in Lafayette, Louisiana, the Mitchells were involved in door-to-door evangelizing outreach to the poor and short-term foreign mission trips. They had five sons, who now range in age from 10 to 19. In September 2009, they were devastated when they found their sixth son dead in his crib with no prior warning.

As she prayed, Colleen realized God wouldn’t ask them to endure such suffering unless he wanted to bring some good out of it. She begged not to get stuck asking “Why?” but to move forward to “What now?”

Self-employed in sales, Greg found the beginning of their answer on a business trip to Costa Rica. At prayer in the Basilica of Our Lady of the Angels, site of a Marian apparition, he met two missionary priests. They invited him to visit their mission among a remote, rural indigenous people, the Cabecar. As soon as he got home, Colleen realized her husband had left part of his heart with the mostly pre-Christian people.

Within six months the family had opened their hearts to the possibility of moving to Costa Rica as full-time missionaries. They sold everything and arrived in Turrialba in January 2011.

The original vision of the St. Bryce Missions was to build chapels, then to assist in evangelizing and catechizing as their ministry of Spanish grew. However, they soon became aware of another need. Although there is a hospital in Turrialba, the Cabecar can only access it after an eight-hour walk on a long bus ride. As a result, the rate of infants dying before their first birthday was five times Costa Rica’s national average, which the government declared a national emergency. Colleen remembered how complicated it had been to take care of one sick child in the U.S., even with America’s abundance of economic, educational and medical resources. She began to pray about opening a maternity home where pregnant women could come at 37 or 38 weeks and stay until they were strong enough to return home after being released from the hospital.

The cost of building and staffing such a facility seemed daunting, until she realized they already had a place with beds, food, available transportation and Christian love: their own home. “Our doors are open, our soup pot is full, our prayer times are set; but we never know who will show up,” said Colleen. “Whomever God sends, we serve.”

In 2013 the Mitchells began welcoming mothers, moving several times as the work expanded. They also wound up caring for children with disabilities and infants for baptism, according to the diocesan catechetical plan. Rather than provide a paternalistic alternative, the St. Francis Emmaus Center cooperates fully with the Costa Rican government, the medical system and the local Catholic diocese, providing a safety net to address gaps in those systems. Many of the mothers it welcomes have never encountered Christian love in such a tangible form or realized that they could develop a personal relationship with Jesus. Emmaus goes beyond simply receiving hospitality, to encountering Jesus during this stop on their road.

With 600 women in and out of their home each year, the ministry soon outgrew the largest house in town. The Bishop of Cartago donated a piece of property with a structure that could be remediated to provide bed space for 30 women at a time, as well as housing for staff and maternal home economics to accompany mothers through the labor and birth process. They have funds and ecclesial permission to build a eucharistic chapel on the grounds as soon as building permits come through. This will be a further step in fulfilling Pope Francis’ vision of “a poor Church for the poor,” founded on Christ’s eucharistic presence.

During the past year, Greg and Colleen became aware that their primary vocation should be the growing needs of their own family. As they pray about where to relocate, close friends from a group of Catholic families who had come to work in Turrialba every summer made a proposal. The Mitchells moved to Fort Wayne and St. John the Baptist Parish so that Colleen could teach Spanish and language arts to junior high students at St. Joseph School, where 90 percent of the students are of Mexican origin. Their oldest son started college at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, the second is a sophomore at Bishop Luers High School and the other three attend St. Joseph. Greg still spends most of his time in Costa Rica, working to make the mission self-sustaining, although the Mitchells intend to remain closely involved in training, spiritual and financial support. They also desire to replicate the maternity home model among other peripheral peoples. At the invitation of the papal nuncio, their next exploration involves Myanmar, which also has a very high maternal and infant mortality rate.

Colleen didn’t set out to be a writer, either; but in her lonely early days in Costa Rica, she was led to reflect on the women of the Gospels — mining their stories in an attempt to discover her own identity. Her journaling resulted in “Who Does He Say You Are?: Women Transformed by Christ in the Gospels,” published by Franciscan Media/Servant in 2016. A second book is due before the end of the year: “When We Were Eve: Uncovering the Woman God Created You to Be.”

As Colleen’s editor, Heidi Hess Saxton became intrigued by St. Bryce Missions. She, her husband, Craig, and their two teenagers accepted the Mitchells’ invitation to visit St. Francis Emmaus Home last May and June. In preparation for the trip, Heidi reached out to her parish, Queen of Peace in Mishawaka. The parish women’s Jubilee Society raised $200 to refurbish the center’s labor room with paint, equipment and a sound system. The youth group sponsored an event to make 40 baby blankets for new Cabecar moms. Queen of Peace Pastor John Eze called the Saxtons forward after Mass and gave them a blessing before they left on their trip.

Several Queen of Peace parishioners are interested in volunteering in Costa Rica next summer, and blanket making was so much fun it will probably happen again — perhaps for a local pregnancy center, they say. In Heidi’s words, “getting involved in a missionary project like this really provides an opportunity to use the gifts God has given us in ways that stretch our faith. My daughter got an unforgettable lesson about how other people live. They have so little, and yet they do so much with it. I know it was a blessing and a real personal challenge for me and my family to respond to the call to do more than write a check — to give a piece of ourselves. And I know our friend at Queen of Peace felt the same.”

Heidi Hess Saxton holds Axel, one of the indigenous babies staying at the St. Francis Emmaus Center in Costa Rica, a home for expectant mothers founded by the Mitchell family of Fort Wayne and supported in part by Queen of Peace Parish, Mishawaka.
We are all God’s children:’ Couple advocates interfaith dialogue, compassion

BY MARIAM SCHMITZ

Steven Shaikh was born and raised in India. As a Muslim, he witnessed violence in the name of religion and consequently became an atheist. While he knew there must be a higher power, his anger caused him to deny God’s existence.

In 1986, 24-year old Shaikh was hiking through the mountains, unaware that his faith journey was about to leap forward. As he walked through a long tunnel, a thundering sound suddenly came from the other side. Leaving the tunnel, he came upon a cloud-filled valley and realized a turbulent waterfall had just begun from high above. It was monsoon season, and heavy rains had caused the waterfall to form in a spot that had been peaceful just moments before. The water was showing its strength and causing the thunderous sound.

Reflecting back on that moment, Shaikh said his thoughts were, “Any of this will kill me in an instant.” “My ego was destroyed, in a sense. That’s when I felt the presence of God.” He had reached a turning point, and this new direction would lead him to the Catholic Church, a new life in the United States with a loving wife and daughter, and challenges that he had unknowingly been preparing for his whole life.

Shaikh’s father was raised Catholic, but converted to Islam to marry Shaikh’s mother, a Muslim. They settled in the Indian city of Pune and opened their own business, a grocery store. Shaikh and his siblings were sent to Christian schools. Ultimately though, he said it was his Muslim mother who provided the best example of Christian discipleship.

When he was 9 years old, there was an outbreak of violence between Hindus and Muslims. One day, he said, their family was warned by friendly Hindu neighbors that their grocery would be attacked. Around midnight, “people came with axes, swords and sticks and destroyed the store.” The next day, police officers arrived and asked Shaikh’s mother if she knew who did it. Even though the culprits were milling around the store at the time, she did not identify them. Instead, she said, “the people who broke into our store are right around here, but they are my brothers. I forgive them. I’ll re-build the store. They can come and break it again. I’ll keep on re-building.” Shaikh said he took note of his mother’s compassionate response, but still attributed this incident of violence in the name of religion as a major reason why he became atheist.

During this period, Shaikh said he felt called to search for answers. “Even though I didn’t believe in God, I traveled to a lot of different places to see where I could find peace.” Ultimately, it was his hike in the mountains at the age of 24 that gave him the peace he had been searching for.

When he returned, he met with a visiting priest and family friend. Shaikh said the priest emphasized that, “Catholicism is all about love. Focus on that, and everything will fall into place.” Shaikh soon became Catholic.

Susan Shaikh was born and raised in Fort Wayne. Steven’s sister, who was also living in Indiana, thought Susan would be a good match for her brother. She connected the two, and the couple began writing letters and talking on the phone, and they eventually met in India. They were married 13 days later, in January 1997: The priest who baptized Steven presided over their Catholic wedding. The next day there was a Muslim celebration, too. They eventually settled in Fort Wayne where Steven, now an Indian immigrant, would face some unexpected, but all too familiar, challenges.

During the first year Steven said he noticed the occasional disapproving glance, but after 9/11 it became more open and more frequent — with yet another uptick after last year’s election. Susan recounted a day when Steven was mowing their lawn, and a van started slowly driving back and forth in front of their home. After four or five passes, Susan advised Steven to come inside the house.

Steven remembered when he was called an “Islamic terrorist” by a stranger as he walked down a Fort Wayne street. A similar incident happened at a mall, with their daughter present. Another time, it was at a local restaurant. And yet again, about a month ago, the day a terrorist drove a truck down a busy bicycle path in Manhattan and killed eight people in the name of ISIS, Steven was stared down by a stranger driving an adjacent car.

Steven was once again experiencing unfair treatment, this time because of his skin color and Muslim last name. However, just as Steven’s mother forgave the vandals who destroyed their family store, Steven and Susan reacted with compassion — even though there were times when their initial reaction was, understandably, anger.

Noting his recent encounter with the stranger who stared him down after the Manhattan attack, Steven said he “got angry and stared back. That is where I failed. That’s when Jesus should have hit me on the head and said ‘Steven, you’re not my follower if you do that.’ In retrospect, there’s remorse.” Susan added, “We try to remember for that one person who hates him because of his skin color or who he is, or his last name, there are 99 other people who love and adore him. We need to focus on those 99.”

Steven and Susan hope to share their experiences as a way to build bridges and ease racial and religious tensions. When they heard the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend had partnered with the newly formed ecumenical group Northeast Indiana Congregation Action Network, or NE-ICAN, they were thrilled. They had been hoping for an organized interfaith dialogue to begin, and that is one of the aims of NE-ICAN.

Steven is grateful the diocese is playing a part in the group, and said, “Do you see why I love being Catholic? That’s the reason.”

As NE-ICAN continues to grow and evolve, the Shaikhs are brainstorming ways they can best assist, including ways to educate people of all ages so others don’t have to experience what they do. Susan said, “No matter if you’re Muslim, Christian or Hindu, people just want to live the best lives they can.” To which Steven added, “We are all God’s children.”

Steven and Susan Shaikh of Fort Wayne are parishioners at St. Jude. They have witnessed and experienced, throughout Steven’s lifetime, the effects of religious discrimination and violence. The couple continues to respond with understanding and compassion.

Provided by Steven and Susan Shaikh
Take action against gun violence

Christopher White is national correspondent for Crux. Follow him on Twitter @CWWhite212.

Mass murder and our culture of death

Greg Erlandson

Florida, chairman of the U.S. Bishops’ Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, urged “a real debate about needed measures to save lives and make our communities and our nation safer.”

Bishop Dewane said the U.S. bishops continued to urge a “total ban on assault weapons,” as well as universal background checks, limitations on high-capacity magazines and “improved access to mental health care for those who may be prone to violence.”

Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, the president of the U.S. Bishops’ conference, also issued a forceful appeal: “We must come to the firm determination that there is a fundamental problem in our society. A culture of life cannot tolerate, and must prevent, senseless gun violence in all its forms.”

Erlandson, page 13

The Lord is our shepherd, protector, judge and king

The Sunday Gospel

Feast of Christ the King

Matthew 25:31-46

Next week, a new year will begin with the First Sunday of Advent. This weekend, the Church concludes its liturgical year with an exultant and fervent proclamation of Christ as the king of all.

The first reading comes from the ancient Old Testament. In this reading, God speaks in the first person, promising protection of the flock—in other words, the people of God. He is the shepherd, seeking the lost, carting for the injured, rescuing the imperiled. Also, God will distinguish between the sheep and others who assume other identities because of their voluntary unfaithfulness.

St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians provides the second reading. This selection is a proclamation of the Resurrection, and of the role of the Lord as redeemer of humankind. He is the risen Lord, the first of those who will rise to everlasting life. Those who will follow Jesus in being raised from the dead are “those who are his” to Christ— in other words, those persons who have admitted God, through Jesus, into their lives, and who have received from the Lord the gift of grace, eternal life and strength.

The reading frankly admits that a great many forces are hostile to God. These forces cannot be dismissed as insignificant or timid, however, they are by no means omnipotent. In and through Jesus, the power and life of God will endure. God will triumph over all evil. No one bound to God should fear the powers of evil, although all must resist these powers.

For its final reading on this great feast, the Church offers us a passage from St. Matthew’s Gospel. It is a glance forward, to the day when God’s glory will overwhelm the world; to the day when Jesus will return in majesty and glory.

This expectation was a favorite theme in the early Church, in the community that surrounded and prompted the formation of the Gospels. The reading repeats the description given in Ezekiel. In Ezekiel, God the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, the good from the unfaithful. In this reading from Matthew, Jesus promises a final judgment to separate the faithful from the sinners.

Beautifully, in this reading, the Lord defines who will be judged as faithful and who will be seen as unfaithful. The faithful will not be those who only give lip service to their belief in God, but those who, in the model of Jesus, give themselves totally to the will of God.

Reflection

A popular motion picture a few years ago, and a true story at that, was “The King’s Speech.” It was about Britain’s King George VI (1895-1952), on the throne from 1936 until his death, and focused on his determined efforts to overcome a serious speech defect.

The king and his wife—known for decades, until her own death in 2002, as Queen Elizabeth the Elderly Surprise—were great figures as the British struggled against enormous odds in World War II. At the height of the Blitz, “King George’s,砾,” or bombarding, relentlessly tearing British life apart, the rumor spread that the royal family, as well as Book of Remembrance, would flee the country.

One day, arriving on the scene of a horrendous bombing attack, Queen Elizabeth was confronted with the question of whether or not she and her husband would send their young daughters to Canada. Indeed, would she and the king flee?

The queen answered, “My daughters will not leave without me. I shall not leave without the king, and the king will never, ever leave you!”

For us Christians, our king will never, ever leave us. He is with us now and always, guiding, healing and strengthening us.

Readings

Sunday:
- Ezek 34:11-12, 15-17 Ps 23:1-3, 5-6 Is 15:20-26, 28 Mt 25:31-46
- Dn 1:6-8,20 (Ps) Dn 352-56 Lk 21:1-3
- Dn 2:31-45 (Ps) Dn 352-61 Lk 21:5-11
- Dn 7:2-14 (Ps) Dn 352-67 Lk 21:12-19
- Rom 10:9-18 Ps 19:11 Mt 4:18-22
- Dn 3:2-9 Ps 352-61 Lk 21:29-33
- Dn 7:15-27 (Ps) Dn 382-87 Lk 21:34-36
Destroying my freedom — in the name of freedom?

In an August 2015 column in The Washington Post, George F. Will argued in favor of physician-assisted suicide, summarizing up his perspective this way: “There is nobility in … affirming at the end the distinctive human dignity of autonomy.”

His conclusion, however, raises several important questions: Shouldn’t death-dealing actions directed against ourselves be seen as a deep repudiation of our autonomy, insofar as suicide eliminates our personal freedom once and for all? If our ability to freely make choices is among the highest of our human faculties, isn’t it a radical contradiction to mount an attack on that autonomy through suicidal acts? Isn’t there a certain absurdity to mar- shaling our freedom to obliterate our freedom?

Autonomy is often described as being able to do what we want, being “self-governing” and “self-directing.” Authentic freedom, though, doesn’t actually mean the ability to do whatever we want; it means the ability to do what we ought, in accord with who we are. To grasp the difference, consider the following example: Exercising autonomy means acting in accordance with respect to our car doesn’t mean we can consume anything at all. We can legitimately choose between apples and oranges, but not between milk and drain cleaner. If, in the name of autonomy, we were to declare that we’re free to do whatever we wish with our bod- ies, and we ingested drain cleaner on purpose to make ourselves ill, we would actually undermine and surrender our personal autonomy. We would no longer be able to do what we might wish to do, as our body rebelled and constrained us to a stretcher on our way to the emergency room or poison control center.

Looking at a misguided choice of this kind reminds us how our autonomy is never absolute. This kind of choice would also raise doubts in the minds of those who cared about us regarding our mental and moral sanity. To deem self-inflicted sickness to be desirable would itself be a sickness, a kind of lie, spoken in the name of a perverted sense of being free to do whatever I want, even to the point of self-harm or self-annihilation.

The decision to intentionally end our own life by an act of suicide (whether alone or with the assistance of others) pivots our uniquely human power to make sound choices into a sedi- tious power directed against our own good. To self-inflict death in collusion with a physician would constitute a profoundly disor- dered decision, and a radically corrosive attack on our autono- my. Rather than something dignified, this abuse of freedom is ethically indefensible. If some people can recognize that drinking poison to get our- selves sick is wrong, how can we feign that ingesting drugs or using other means to kill ourselves is somehow right and noble? Abusing our own free- dom or autonomy isn’t free or autonomous; instead, it enslaves and diminishes us. When med- ical professionals pivot in their role of healing and curing, and instead be- come accomplices in the name of autonomy, we were to declare that we’re free to do whatever we wish with our bod- ies, and we ingested drain cleaner on purpose to make ourselves ill, we would actually undermine and surrender our personal autonomy. We would no longer be able to do what we might wish to do, as our body rebelled and constrained us to a stretcher on our way to the emergency room or poison control center.

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ERLANDSON, from page 12

America is its astronomical number of guns.”

Americans make up 4.4 per- cent of the world’s population, but the Times said we own 42 percent of the world’s guns. Only Yemen has a higher rate of shootings, and it has the second-highest rate of gun ownership. America also leads in gun suicides: 21,175 suicides by gun in 2015, almost twice as many deaths as by homicide. As an addiction counselor recently told me, the availability of a gun makes the suicide impulse more likely to be successful, especially for men.

The recent statements by U.S. church leaders, like the hand- wringing expressions of symp- pathy by politicians whenever a new massacre happens, does not necessarily lead to legislative change. However, they do have an effect.

After the Las Vegas slaughter, in which the killer used a device called a bump stock to turn his rifle into a weapon capable of firing up to 100 rounds in seven seconds, even pro-gun politicians said they should be restricted. Six weeks later, no action has been taken and one manufactur- er of the device has resumed sales.

Regardless of the politi- cal paralysis, however, the church reminds us that choosing a culture of life not only means address- ing abortion and physician-assisted suicide, but also the proliferation of weapons that contribute so terribly to the sui- cide, homicide and mass shoot- ing rates that are plaguing our society.

SC suesearch®

Gospel for November 26, 2017
Matthew 25:31–46

Following is a word search based on the Gospel for the Solemnity of Our Lord, Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, Cycle A. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

SON OF MAN
THONE
SHEEP
KINGDOM
FOOD
IM PRISON
THE LEAST

GLORY
NATIONS
GOLDS
FOUNDATION
STRANGER
ANSWER
ACCUER
ANGELS
SHEPHERD
FATHER
HUNGRY
NAKED
LORD
DEVIL

WHEN DID?

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

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Blessed Bernardino of Fossa

1420–1503
Feast November 27

Born to a noble family at Fossa, Italy, Blessed Bernardino received his early education at nearby Aquila. Then he studied canon and civil law at Perugia. There a Lenten sermon attracted him to the Friars Minor. And he joined a strict community of Franciscans in 1445. Like his namesake, St. Bernardino of Siena, he became widely known in Italy for his preaching. In the mid-century Bernardino also served as provincial in his local area. In 1464 his superiors sent him to Bosnia and Dalmatia, where nationality differences were causing conflict among the brothers. He succeeded in restoring peaceful relationships in the communities. Later the pope allowed Bernardino to refuse appointment as a bishop so he could continue his ministry of preaching.
The Star' delivers faithful message of the Gospels

BY JOHN MULDERIG

NEW YORK (CNS) — A holiday treat suitable for all but the tiniest, “The Star” (Sony) is a delightful animated version of the Christmas story told from the perspective of some of the animals present in the manger.

Director Timothy Reckart and screenwriter Carlos Kotkin skillfully balance religious themes such as the importance of prayer and the value of forgiveness with a more secular message about pursuing your dreams. They also throw in a healthy dose of straightforward entertainment.

They work their way into the biblical narrative of Jesus’ birth through the adventures of a gentle donkey from Nazareth named Bo (voice of Steven Yeun). Curious about the world beyond the grain mill where he carries out his monotonous work, Bo yearns to exchange his drudgery for the fame and prestige to be gained by joining the storied royal caravan.

Bo’s best friend, a lively dove by the name of Dave (voice of Keegan-Michael Key), shares this ambition. And the pals get their chance to fulfill their aspirations when Bo successfully escapes his confinement, though he injures his leg in the process.

Bo is tended to by no one less than Mary (voice of Gina Rodriguez), after which his quest takes a detour. Despite the mild disapproval of Joseph (voice of Zachary Levi), Mary adopts her patient as a pet. Bo, in turn, becomes dedicated to protecting the parents-to-be, as they journey to Bethlehem, from the murderous scheming of King Herod (voice of Christopher Plummer).

Bo is aided in this endeavor not only by the devout Thaddeus (voice of Ving Rhames) and Rufus (voice of Gabriel Iglesias), accompanying him, but also by an affable sheep called Ruth (voice of Aidy Bryant) who makes simply in order to fit in with the other animals present in the manger.

As a range of characters do what they can to thwart the unspeaking hulk of a soldier Herod has dispatched to slaughter the Holy Family and the pair of ferocious-seeming but not entirely evil dogs, Thaddeus and Rufus, whom the pals encounter along the way. Together, the critters throw in a healthy dose of moral Rorschach test variability and the emotional needs have left her feel engaged.

Auggie's world are wholly good — his parents and Justin, for example — no one is presented as irredeemably wicked.

In adapting R.J. Palacio’s 2013 best-seller, director and co-writer (with Steven Conrad and Jack Thorne) Stephen Chbosky has created a winning and memorable film about the significance of ordinary life and the lasting impact of everyday choices. Despite a few mature elements, the movie’s valuable lessons make it appropriate fare for most teens.

Subplots involving Via’s best friend, Miranda (Danielle Rose Russell), and newfound love interest Justin (Nadji Jeter) reinforce the idea that all of us are potential heroes or villains. Though some of the people in August “Auggie” Pullman’s world are wholly good — his parents and Justin, for example — no one is presented as irredeemably wicked.

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The film contains scenes of peril and a bit of very mild scatological humor. The Catholic News Service classification is PG — parental guidance suggested. Some material may not be suitable for children.
Holiday craft bazaar
SOUTH BEND — A holiday craft bazaar will be Saturday, Nov. 25, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Our Lady of Hungary School Gym, 755 W. Calvert St. Crocheted items, handcrafted jewelry, handmade soaps and much more. A small lunch will be available for purchase. Call Edie Leemreis for more information at 260-289-2145.

Youth ministers’ gathering
FORT WAYNE — A gathering for youth ministers who want to build community, share ideas and learn from one another’s experiences will be Monday, Nov. 27, from 3:30-5 p.m. at Forreza Coffee, 819 S. Calhoun St. Anyone who works or volunteers in youth ministry is welcome. Meet with other area youth ministers, hear updates from the Office of Youth Ministry and assist with the direction of youth ministry collaborative efforts in the diocese.

Christmas bus trip to Chicago
FORT WAYNE — A bus trip to downtown Chicago will depart from St. Peter’s Catholic Church, 518 E. Dewald St., Wednesday, Nov. 29, at 7 a.m., and return approximately 10 p.m. Luxury bus will drop off and pick up guests along the Miracle Mile. Cost includes a boxed meal on the bus and includes a boxed meal on bus and learn from one another's for information.

Contact Karen at 260-744-2765 and donuts prior to departure. Cost includes a boxed meal on the bus and learn from one another's for information.

Catholic Business Network First Friday breakfast
FORT WAYNE — The Catholic Business Network breakfast will be Friday, Dec. 1, at the St. Mother Theodore Guerin Chapel, 1122 S. Clinton St. Mass at 7 a.m. is followed by networking and breakfast at 8 a.m. in the Cathedral Center. This month’s featured speaker is Seminarian Augustine Omohu, who will share his vocation story: “Thanksgiving for Amazing Grace.”

Marian Trivia Night
MISHAWAKA — Share your knowledge at Trivia Night on Friday, Dec. 1, at Marian High School. Doors open at 6 p.m. and trivia begins at 7 p.m. The cost is $150 per table of 10 people. Support the Athletic Transportation Fund. Reservations are needed by Monday, Nov. 27, and can be made online at www.marianhs.org or by contacting Colleen Ravotto at 574-258-7676 or crravotto@marianhs.org. Round and event sponsors needed, contact Colleen.

Christmas craft fair
FORT WAYNE — Shop local on Saturday, Dec. 2, at the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Christmas craft fair, 10700 Aboite Center Rd., from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Find unique, handmade items and more. Chili, pizza and snacks available for purchase. Contact seaschristmascraftfair@gmail.com for questions or find us on Facebook: facebook.com/seaschristmascraftfair.

Saint Nick Six
SOUTH BEND — The 9th annual Saint Nick Six takes place Saturday, Dec. 2, from 9:30 a.m. to noon. Events include 6K and 3K Runs, a 3K Walk, and the “Run, Run Rudolph .06K” for first grade and younger. Entry Fees: 6K Run - $25; 3K Run - $15; 3K Walk - $10; Run, Run Rudolph: Free.

Mishawaka
Joan Gritti, 80, St. Bavo
Mary Anne Lawhorn, 71, St. Joseph
Mary Claire Sodder, 95, St. Monica
New Carlisle
Adeline H. Jasinski, 92, St. Stanislaus Kostka
Doris M. Tuyayaert, 81, St. Stanislaus Kostka
New Haven
Rita C. Reuille, 82, St. Louis Besancon
Notre Dame
Herald Esch, 87, Basilica of the Sacred Heart
Robert H. Schuler, 91, Basilica of the Sacred Heart

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BY WILLIAM SCHMITT

Deep explorations of good and evil, as they operate in individuals, society and today’s ethical dilemmas, prompted diverse cultural references — including the television show “Breaking Bad” and the Disney movie “Frozen” — at a recent University of Notre Dame conference.

The university’s Center for Ethics and Culture convened more than 100 speakers and about 800 attendees for the fall conference Nov. 9-11. This interdisciplinary and international gathering, which annually showcases the Catholic moral and intellectual tradition, marked its 18th year with the title, “Through Every Human Heart.”

Center director Carter Snead, a professor of law and political science, told those attending that the title is taken from “The Gulag Archipelago” by Nobel Prize-winner Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. The Russian historian wrote of learning that “the line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either, but right through every human heart.”

Guests at the three-day meeting included students as well as thought leaders from numerous schools and organizations, such as Bishop Godfrey Onah from the Diocese of Nsukka, Nigeria; Gary Anderson, a Notre Dame theologian; and Richard Doerflinger, a commentator and former associate director for pro-life activities for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Anderson, who is the university’s Hesburgh Professor of Catholic Theology, used a clip from the television series “Breaking Bad” as an illustration during his Josef Pieper Keynote Lecture titled “Is the God of the Old Testament Evil?”

Assuring the audience that his summary answer to that question was “No,” Anderson showed a scene portraying a killer’s instinctive desire for people to recognize the evil nature of his actions. Anderson then discussed scriptural scenes in which God expressed His just motive for punishment alongside a merciful responsiveness, when His people recognize their sinfulness and intercede for each other.

Evil cannot be ignored, Anderson said, pointing to Old Testament events such as Moses’ dialogue with God when the Israelites began idolizing a golden calf. Moses, as a representative before God, asked Him to forgo punishing His people, and God relented.

Anderson quoted an analysis by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI regarding God’s desire for human participation in acknowledging sin and fulfilling His desire to forgive: “Intercessory prayer makes divine mercy so active within the corrupted reality of the sinful man that it finds a voice in the supplication of one who prays and, through him, becomes present where salvation is needed.”

In a separate panel presentation, discussing sacrificial love as a response to a broken world, Doerflinger spoke on “Warming the Frozen Heart: Self-Deception and Self-Sacrifice in Disney’s ‘Frozen.’”

Referring to the 2013 animated musical loosely based on Hans Christian Anderson’s “The Snow Queen,” Doerflinger said interpretations of the popular, cheerful songs don’t coincide with the actual story being told, which sees characters struggling to rise above painful circumstances. The story is ultimately about “the education of [Princess] Anna in what love is,” as Doerflinger described it.

Several characters in the film place themselves in danger to help Anna as she tries to save the snowbound kingdom of Arendelle. Doerflinger pointed out, Anna, although stricken with a frozen heart by her snow-queen sister Princess Elsa, cli-

“Is the God of the Old Testament Evil?” was one of the questions discussed during a University of Notre Dame Center for Ethics and Culture conference that took place Nov. 9-11.

Photos by Peter Ringenberg/Courtesy of the Notre Dame Center for Ethics and Culture

Gary Anderson, University of Notre Dame professor of Catholic theology, left, and professor Carter Snead, director of the Center for Ethics and Culture, field questions following a presentation by Anderson at conference that took place Nov. 9-11, looking at God, evil and human tendencies.