As the season of Advent begins, the focus is on Christ’s first coming as a baby in Bethlehem over 2,000 years ago. During Advent, Christians also look forward to His second coming, in glory at the end of time. But He is also with us right now, in the present moment and in all of our joys and difficulties: He is with His children, as Pope Francis says, “today and every day.”
Archbishop Sheen’s upcoming beatification greeted with joy, thanksgiving

BY TOM DERMODY

PEORIA, Ill. (CNS) — With joy and thanksgiving, officials and faithful throughout the Diocese of Peoria and around the globe welcomed the announcement Nov. 18 that Pope Francis has called for the beatification of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen in Peoria Dec. 21.

“It was a surprise, an early Christmas present from the pope, and it is truly a great blessing for our diocese, for so many people who have worked and sacrificed and prayed,” said Msgr. Stanley Deputa, executive director of the Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen Foundation. “I’ve believed for a long time that Fulton Sheen is a gift to the Church, a hero that we Catholics need in our day.”

The beatification ceremony will take place during Mass at 10 a.m. (local time) at St. Mary’s Cathedral in Peoria, where the famed media evangelist and author was ordained to the priesthood 100 years ago.

Peoria Bishop Daniel R. Jenky announced the beatification date the afternoon of Nov. 18 after the diocese received a document sent by email from the office of the Vatican secretary of state confirming Pope Francis’ directive.

In an interview following the Nov. 18 Mass, Bishop Jenky said he was “overwhelmed” by the announcement and the news was “a great blessing” for the diocese.

“Fulton was a joy and a gift to the Church, a hero that we Catholics need in our day,” Bishop Jenky said. “It is truly a great blessing for those who have worked and sacrificed and prayed for this day.”

The short time for preparation was due to the fact that Bishop Jenky had already planned to announce the beatification on Nov. 22 near the anniversary of Fulton Sheen’s death on Dec. 29, 1979.

Local planning for the beatification began in July when Pope Francis approved a miracle attributed to the intercession of Archbishop Sheen. The miracle concerned the healing of James Fultcon Engstrom of Washington, Illinois, who was stillborn when he was delivered during a planned home birth Sept. 16, 2010.

His parents, Bonnie and Travis Engstrom, immediately invoked the prayers of Archbishop Sheen and encouraged others to seek his intercession. Just as doctors were preparing to declare that he was dead, James Fulton’s heart started to beat at a normal rate for a healthy newborn. He had been without a pulse for 61 minutes. An evening Holy Hour will be observed at the cathedral Dec. 20.

Archbishop Jenky — who petitioned the Vatican on behalf of the Diocese of Peoria to open the canonization — said the beatification confirms Pope Francis’ direction during the morning of Dec. 22.

A Mass of Thanksgiving will be celebrated at the cathedral on Dec. 22.
Honor martyrs, work for Christ's kingdom of peace, pope says in Nagasaki

BY CINDY WOODEN

NAGASAKI, Japan (CNS) — While the world knows Nagasaki as the site of a U.S. atomic bomb blast, for the Catholic Church it is also the site of one of the fiercest campaigns of anti-Christian persecution.

Visiting the city Nov. 24, Pope Francis paused for prayer on the hill where St. Paul Miki and 25 others were crucified in 1597; hundreds more were killed in the decades that followed. For more than 200 years there was not a single Catholic priest in Japan, but small communities of “hidden Christians” kept Catholicism alive by secretly baptizing their children and teaching them the faith.

When priests finally were allowed to return to Japan, not all the “hidden Christians” joined the parishes they established, preferring to preserve the family-focused faith they had learned from their ancestors. Small groups of them still exist today.

On a cold, rainy morning at the martyrs’ memorial, Pope Francis paused for Mass in the city’s baseball stadium with about 35,000 people, including members of the U.S. military stationed in Japan and Catholics from China and Korea.

In his homily, the pope made reference both to the unwavering faith of the Japanese martyrs and the horrendous suffering of the people after the United States dropped an atomic bomb on Nagasaki in 1945.

“This land has experienced, as few countries have, the destructive power of which we humans are capable,” the pope said in his homily. “Nagasaki bears in its soul a wound difficult to heal, a scar born of the incomprehensible suffering endured by so many innocent victims of wars past and those of the present, when a third World War is being waged piecemeal.”

Pope Francis asked the region’s Catholics to pray for those in other parts of the world who are suffering the effects of war today and to bear witness to Jesus’ kingdom, which is one of “truth and justice, of holiness and grace, of love and peace.”

The charred, eyeless head of a Marian statue that survived the destruction of Nagasaki’s cathedral in 1945 stood near the altar. The pope venerated it with incense as the Mass began.

The martyrs’ witness, he said, “confirms us in faith and helps us to renew our dedication and commitment to that missionary discipleship which strives to create a culture capable of protecting and defending all life through the daily ‘martyrdom’ of silent service toward all, especially those in greatest need.”

Standing before a monument featuring bas relief sculptures of the 26 martyrs on the horizontal beam of a cross, the pope urged prayers for all those who endure persecution because of their faith today.

“Let us speak out and insist that religious freedom be guaranteed for everyone in every part of our world,” he said, and “let us also condemn the manipulation of religions” by those seeking power or hoping to sow violence and chaos.

After a brief rest in the Nagasaki archbishop’s residence, Pope Francis celebrated Mass in the city’s baseball stadium with...
The average annual Social Security benefit for a religious professional is $6,596.77. There are 30,151 religious professional past age 70 in the United States. In 2021, the average annual cost for their care was roughly $47,000 per person; skilled care averaged $69,000 per person. Since 2009, the annual cost to support senior women and men religious has exceeded $1 billion. In 2018, 72 percent of the religious communities providing data to the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) had a median age of 70 or higher. The average annual Social Security benefit for a religious professional is $6,596.77, while the average US beneficiary receives $47,000. Why we ask:

- In 1988, Catholic bishops of the United States launched the Retirement Fund for Religious to address the significant lack of retirement funding for Catholic sisters, brothers, and priests in religious orders.
- For most of their lives, older religious worked for little to no pay. There were no 401(k) plans or pensions.
- Religious communities are financially responsible for the support and care of all members. Income, earnings, and expenses are managed separately from the parish and diocesan structures of the Catholic Church.
- The funding shortage is compounded by rising healthcare costs and decreased income. As more religious reach retirement age and leave compensated ministry, income will further decline while care needs increase.
- By 2029, religious past age 70 are projected to outnumber religious under age 70 by nearly three to one.
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How donations help:

- Each year, hundreds of US religious communities receive financial assistance made possible by the Retirement Fund for Religious. Communities can use this funding for immediate retirement expenses or invest for future needs. Since the first collection, US Catholics have donated $872 million. Since 1989, almost $737 million has been distributed to support the day-to-day care of elderly sisters, brothers, and religious order priests. An additional $48 million has been allocated toward self-help projects initiated by religious communities, including collaborative healthcare facilities.
- In addition to direct financial assistance, proceeds from the annual appeal underwrite educational programming, services, and resources that enable religious communities to evaluate and prepare for long-term retirement needs.
- Support from the Retirement Fund for Religious helps religious communities care for senior members while continuing important ministries to the People of God.

Visit retiredreligious.org to learn more.

Please give to those who have given a lifetime.

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encounter. It’s Christ encountering the world in a very unique and special way now,” he said. “It’s going be my moment with my own kids — they’re 10, 8 and 6. They know their dad goes out around the course and meets a lot of kids. We have to pay attention to one really important thing to think about the coronavirus is born into poverty, and from poverty, we learn a lot.”

He spoke of the hope people in Puerto Rico have despite the devastation they have suffered. Catholic Extension has ministered to Puerto Rico for a century. “People are ‘recovering’ from the still-devastating effects of Hurricane Maria. Two years later and still absolutely no relief of any sort,” Boland said.

“They talk about their hope and God’s solidarity with them as a people,” he said, and “a sense of joy that God has given them life and they’re going to use the best of their ability to help them and their neighbor.”

The destruction there includes hurricane damage to 20 churches, yet people are “going out and still meeting their neighbors.”

He recounted the tale of a Puerto Rican boy whose father has to work far away from home to earn money for the family. When the subject of Christmas came up, the lad’s idea, according to Boland was: “We can put our gift in the front, and Dad will come home.”

De La Salle Christian Brother Javier Hansen, a religion teacher at Cathedral High School in El Paso, Texas, sets out to instill habits students may not have in cultivating Advent customs.

“A lot of our students cross the border (with Mexico) every day. I envy them in some sense because they go home and pray the rosary together,” said Brother Hansen, adding that earlier in November, he “went over with them.

He noted that various institutions have their own calendar — the school year, the monthly calendar and “the church also” has a liturgical year that begins in Advent.”

A big fan of Advent music, Brother Hansen said he’ll sit with his students and sing Advent songs with them.

“Advent tells a real story of our faith,” he added. “Part of my job is to write reflections to the parents and the larger school community on virtues such a patience. That’s a big virtue that’s associated with the season.”

Students, he said, “need a small reminder at times that secular society’s not helping us all the time when they’re putting Christmas ornaments in stores and everything, and (make it seem) that Advent doesn’t exist. That’s not their main intention, but that’s kind of what it’s doing to us.”
Pope names Msgr. Robert J. McClory fifth bishop of Gary

GARY — Pope Francis announced Nov. 26 that he has selected Msgr. Robert J. McClory, a priest for the Archdiocese of Detroit, to serve as the fifth bishop of the Diocese of Gary. Bishop-elect McClory was introduced to the clergy, faithful and public the same day at a 10 a.m. press conference by Bishop Emeritus Dale Melczek and Father Michael J. Yadron, diocesan administrator for the Diocese of Gary.

Bishop-elect McClory, 56, has served the Archdiocese of Detroit since his ordination to the priesthood in 1999. He was ordained a priest by Cardinal Adam Maida on May 22, 1999. His ordination and installation as the fifth bishop of Gary is scheduled for the feast of our Lady of Lourdes, Feb. 11.

Bishop-elect McClory currently serves as the pastor and rector of the National Shrine of the Little Flower Basilica in Royal Oak, Michigan. He also serves on the Priests, Religious and Lay Leadership Board of the Diocese of Gary. Previously, Msgr. McClory served as a vicar general and moderator of the curia of the Archdiocese of Detroit. In that capacity, he was the chief of staff for Archbishop Allen H. Vigneron coordinating the central offices of the archdiocese. Prior to becoming moderator of the curia, Msgr. McClory served as chancellor of the Archdiocese of Detroit, administrative secretary to Cd. Maida, and as an associate pastor at St. Isidore Parish, Macomb Township and St. Therese of Lisieux Parish, Shelby Township. He has been a weekend associate at Our Lady of the Lakes Parish, Waterford; St. Blase Parish, Sterling Heights; and St. Andrew Parish, Rochester, all of Michigan. Prior to his assignment at the National Shrine, he served as pastor at Presentation/Our Lady of Victory, Detroit.

“During this week in which we celebrate Thanksgiving, my heart is full of thanksgiving that he has entrusted me to serve the people of Northwest Indiana. I look forward to getting to know the needs of our local Church and, together, sharing the Good News,” said Bishop-elect McClory.

“Bishop-elect McClory will be the second priest of the Archdiocese of Detroit to serve as bishop for the Diocese of Gary,” Bishop Melczek, ordained for Detroit in 1964, led the Diocese of Gary from 1992 until his retirement in 2015.

“In Msgr. McClory’s home diocese, he is recognized as a zealous priest who generously devotes all the talents God has blessed him with to the ministry of spreading the Gospel,” said Detroit Archbishop Vigneron. “The pastors and people of the Church of Gary will find themselves blessed by his service. We, the priests, religious and faithful of the Archdiocese of Detroit, send him on mission with our heartfelt prayers.”

“I was delighted to hear that our Holy Father, Pope Francis, assigned Msgr. McClory to the diocese,” Father Yadron said. “I am honored and humbled that the Holy Father has appointed me as the bishop of Gary,” said Bishop-elect McClory.

“Bishop-elect McClory’s appointment. He is exactly what the Diocese of Gary needs to lead us deeper in our relationship with the Lord,” said Bishop Donald J. Hying, the fourth bishop of Gary. “I’m particularly pleased that he was instrumental in leading and implementing the pastoral synod of the Archdiocese of Detroit. He is uniquely poised to continue to build on Gary’s 2017 Synod.”

Father Yadron, who has served as administrator for the Diocese of Gary since Bishop Hying was appointed to the Diocese of Madison, was elated to receive a call from the Papal Nuncio. “I was delighted to hear that our Holy Father, Pope Francis, assigned Msgr. McClory to the diocese,” Father Yadron said. “I am honored and humbled that the Holy Father has appointed me as the bishop of Gary,” said Bishop-elect McClory.

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“I was filled with great joy when I heard the news of Msgr. McClory’s appointment. I am very gifted and very close to the Lord,” said Bishop Melczek. “We are greatly blessed to have his leadership. He is exactly what the Diocese of Gary needs to lead us deeper in our relationship with the Lord,” said Bishop Donald J. Hying, the fourth bishop of Gary. “I’m particularly pleased that he was instrumental in leading and implementing the pastoral synod of the Archdiocese of Detroit. He is uniquely poised to continue to build on Gary’s 2017 Synod.”


The diocese covers 1,807 miles, including Lake, Porter, LaPorte and Starke counties in northwestern Indiana. The mother church of the diocese is the Cathedral of the Holy Angels in Gary.

The population of the area is 786,500, the Catholic population is estimated to be 168,500. The diocese comprises 64 parishes, seven hospitals, two colleges, three high schools, one private high school and 17 elementary schools.
Mission is seeking family members you don't know yet, pope tells Thais

BANGKOK (CNS) — Missionaries are not mercenaries, but beggars who recognize that some brothers and sisters are missing from the community and long to hear the good news of salvation, Pope Francis told the Catholics of Thailand. Celebrating Mass Nov. 21, the feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in Bangkok's National Stadium, Pope Francis looked at the meaning of what he calls “missionary discipleship.” Pope Francis' visit was part of the celebrations of the 350th anniversary of the establishment of the Apostolic Vicariate of Siam Mission, the first Catholic jurisdiction in what was to become Thailand. In his homily, the pope said the early missionaries realized “they were part of a family much larger, any based on blood lines, cultures, regions or ethnic groups,” and, empowered by the Holy Spirit, “they set out in search of family members they did not yet know.” The missionaries didn’t see the Thai people as pagans or nonbelievers, but as brothers and sisters, the pope said. And they did not just want to share the Gospel with the Thai people, but wanted “to receive what they needed to grow in their own faith and understanding of the Scriptures.” “A missionary is not a mercenary of the faith or a producer of prolesecy, but rather a humble mendicant who feels the absence of brothers, sisters and mothers with whom to share the irrevocable gift of reconciliation that Jesus grants to all,” he said.

After U.S. reversal, Vatican reiterates two states needed in Holy Land

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The Vatican reiterated its call for a two-state solution in the Holy Land after U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced the United States would no longer recognize the illegality of Israeli settlements in the West Bank. In a statement released Nov. 20, the Vatican said that in the “context of recent decisions that risk undermining further the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and the already fragile regional stability, the Holy See reiterated its position of a two-state solution for two peoples as the only way to reach a complete solution to this age-old conflict.” The Vatican also reiterated that it supports Israel’s right “to live in peace and security within the borders recognized by the international community.” However, it also “supports the same right that belongs to the Palestinian people, which must be recognized, respected and implemented. The Holy See wish-

Pope Francis meets with bishops of Japan in Tokyo

Describing himself as a “missionary pilgrim,” Pope Francis finally fulfilled a more than five-decade-old desire to share the Gospel in Japan. Arriving in Tokyo Nov. 23 after a five-hour flight from Bangkok, the pope met almost immediately with the bishops of Japan and outlined the major themes of this four-day stay: nuclear disarmament, the example of the Japanese martyrs, interreligious dialogue and special care for the young. Setting foot in the country for the first time less than a month before his 83rd birthday, Pope Francis told the bishops it “has been long in coming.”

Knights still honor Kennedy as order's 'most distinguished' member

NEW HAVEN, Conn. (CNS) — The date was Nov. 22, 1963. That day, the seemingly peaceful world of 1950s America was torn apart. President John F. Kennedy — the first Catholic to be elected commander in chief — had been assassinated. Kennedy was “overwhelmed with grief,” noted then-Supreme Knight Luke D. Marcellin, who were “overwhelmed with grief,” noted then-Supreme Knight Luke E. Hart, after the death of the order's “most distinguished” member.

Federal judge blocks scheduled executions of death-row inmates

WASHINGTON (CNS) — A federal judge Nov. 20 temporarily blocked the executions of four federal death-row inmates scheduled for December and January, saying the lethal injections they were to receive goes against the Federal Death Penalty Act. U.S. Attorney General William Barr announced in July that the government was reinstating the federal death penalty after a 16-year hiatus, he said the executions would use a single drug instead of a three-drug protocol used in recent federal executions and used by several states. Several of the inmates have challenged the use of the single lethal injection. In her ruling, U.S. District Court Judge Tanya Chutkan of the District of Columbia said that since the inmates were likely to win their case, their executions should be blocked until their legal challenge is resolved.
Lay pastoral ministry in high schools — a ministry of accompaniment

BY JENNIFER BARTON

A shepherd walks among his flock, leading and guiding it through fair or stormy weather. He feeds them physically and spiritually. He spends his life amidst the flock.

Following Christ’s example as the Good Shepherd is at the heart of pastoral ministry, the very name of which stems from this loving care. In a teenager’s sometimes-confusing world, high school pastoral ministry seeks to play a loving, guiding role.

As Catholic schools in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend continue to embrace a strong Catholic identity, pastoral care has become a priority.

Mark Kirzeder, principal of Marian High School, Mishawaka, stressed recently the importance of such care. He noted that Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades changed the ministry’s name from “campus ministry” to “pastoral ministry” several years ago in an effort to demonstrate the pastoral role those who engage in it are to take in the faith lives of students.

Kirzeder said he believes that as principal, the role given to him by the bishop includes an element of lay pastoral ministry — serving as a spiritual role model for the students entrusted to him. He also recognizes, he said, that he cannot fulfill that mission on his own. “The time needed to spend with each student could not be done by myself and the dean of student formation alone,” he admitted. That’s where lay pastoral ministry comes in.

Students at all four high schools have access to their school’s lay pastoral ministers at any time. Walking with students in their faith journey, providing guidance and help in their everyday lives is of greatest importance for those ministers. “Our team is central to meeting students where they are and helping them further develop and deepen their love of God and Catholicism,” said John Kennedy, principal of Saint Joseph High School, South Bend. “When students can allow the teachings of Jesus to influence decisions, how they treat each other … we become a more kind and welcoming school.”

The pastoral ministry office is situated next to the chapel at the schools, because caring for the spiritual lives of students is at the heart of Catholic education. The prominent location is a symbol for students, staff and visitors of the role their faith should play in their lives.

“We want to help everyone to encounter the Gospel when they come through the doors,” stated Kirzeder.

This year, three of the four high schools — Marian and Saint Joseph, and Bishop Luers High School in Fort Wayne — brought on new lay staff members in pastoral ministry. It also marks the first time since the early 1990s that each high school has two chaplains assigned to it, something Kirzeder said is a blessing. “It puts two priests in the building; that makes it easier to schedule things like adoration.”

He also shared that the chaplains are very active in Marian student life. Father Nathan Maskal, for example, often spends lunchtime with the students.

Kennedy pointed out that having two chaplains gives students two different personalities to relate to. Students tend to gravitate toward the young, vibrant chaplains whom, they feel, seem to understand them.

Lay pastoral ministers carry with them knowledge and experience in faith formation and ministry. Angie Hall brought her experience in retreat planning and catechesis to Marian, including familiarity with the liturgical calendar how it affects scheduling around it. “She is vital in all aspects of our school,” said Kirzeder.

Nicole Rudolph felt called to minister to young people. She found a home at Bishop Luers, and said her experience living in different places throughout the southern Midwest has given her a great appreciation for the strong Catholic identity fostered within the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. Principal James Huth extolled the good work Rudolph does connecting with individual students, finding those who need to be presented with the challenge of growing in their faith and providing that guidance.

At Saint Joseph, director of pastoral ministry Tami Goy has been joined by alumna Ryker Kennedy, whose previous experience included directing summer programs for high school students at The Catholic University of America.

Bishop Dwenger has not seen a change in lay pastoral ministry. Jason Garrett heads the department, and principal Jason Schiffli said he believes that with Garrett’s dual role as coach and minister he has set an especial example for the young men at Dwenger. Garrett has helped them to grow their identity as Catholic men and shown them that they can be both masculine and strong in their faith.

Schiffli sees himself, other teachers and students who regularly seek the accompaniment of pastoral ministers as “active witnesses of the faith.” Huth, too, sees the importance of pastoral ministry to staff as well as the students. “Pastoral ministry meets the needs of adults, too. Adults lead the way; we can go into the chapel to restore the

Fort Wayne Knights’ Habitat home build

St. Charles Borromeo Parish Knights of Columbus Council 451 volunteers participated in a new home build for a local Habitat for Humanity family on East Pettit Avenue in Fort Wayne, Saturday, Nov. 16. The brother Knights spent the day hanging and finishing drywall as they worked together to build on faith, build up families and build community.
Violins sound notes of hope at interfaith prayer service

BY KEVIN KILBANE

The prayer, music and song commemorated a time of great sadness and unimaginable evil. Yet, people walked out inspired by hope.

More than 1,000 members of Fort Wayne’s Catholic and Jewish communities united for a Jewish-Catholic Interfaith Prayer Service that took place Nov. 20 at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Parish.

“I hope this service will move all our hearts as we remember the evil of the Holocaust and resolve to eradicate all hatred and violence from our community and the world,” Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades said in welcoming remarks. “I thank God for the deep bonds that unite us in faith and love this evening, and I pray that we may walk together as a people of hope in our commitment to the common good, our deep respect for the dignity of every human person, and our pursuit of peace.”

The bishop led the prayer service with Rabbi Paula Jayne Winnig, interim clergy leader of Congregation Achduth Vesholom Jewish congregation in Fort Wayne.

The gathering was one of many events held Nov. 9-Dec. 1 as part of the Violins of Hope project’s visit in Fort Wayne. Activities ranged from an art exhibit of historic string instruments to presentations, radio and television programs, and concerts featuring local musicians playing the instruments.

The instruments previously had been played by Jewish people who died in the Holocaust or whose lives were altered by it. From about 1940-45, the Nazi regime systematically killed 6 million Jews and many other prisoners, people with disabilities and those from cultural minorities.

The Jewish Federation of Fort Wayne, the Fort Wayne Philharmonic and other organizations and sponsors brought Violins of Hope to Fort Wayne “to support and uphold Jewish culture and impart an understanding of the Holocaust while highlighting human behavior ‘from ultimate evil to ultimate good,’” said the event’s website, violinsofhopewf.org.

The prayer service opened with a welcome and thank you from Avshalom Weinstein, who assists his father, Amnon Weinstein, the master violin-maker in Israel who founded the Violins of Hope project. It continued with musical interludes, choral singing, stories about the owners of two instruments in the Violins of Hope collection and reflections by Rabbi Winnig and Bishop Rhoades.

The service was based in the Psalms, a portion of Scripture shared by the Catholic and Jewish faiths because of their common heritage.

Members of the Philharmonic’s Youth Symphony Orchestra’s Premier String Quartet used four instruments from the Violins of Hope collection to perform the music, which was somber and reflective. Songs by the Hazemir Choir of Congregation Achduth Vesholom and the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Choir maintained the same tone, though final selections by each choir looked to the future with hope.

Rabbi Winnig began her comments by speaking about Pope Francis’ remarks during his Nov. 13 papal audience in Rome. The pope said the Jewish people have suffered greatly throughout world history and warned that violence against Jews is on the increase.

“The Jews are our brothers and sisters and must not be persecuted! Understood?” the pope said. “Sadly, she added, a Jewish man was stabbed on the morning of the interfaith prayer service while he walked to a synagogue in the New York City area.

We teach about the Holocaust to stop violence and persecution, she emphasized. “We want people to take action. We want people to say, ‘Never again!’”

She said people living today have a special obligation. “In our lifetime, the last witnesses to World War II will die.”

Bishop Rhoades said the Violins of Hope visit to Fort Wayne wouldn’t have been complete without the Jewish-Catholic prayer service and the lifting up local hearts and minds to the one God.

“This faith unites us,” he said. “This love inspires. It is a faith and love that Hitler and the Nazis tried to destroy, but they were unsuccessful.”

Bishop Rhoades told of visiting the former Nazi concentration camps at Dachau and Auschwitz, where thousands of Jews and others worked in forced labor or suffered mass murder.

“I never in my life experienced the emotions that I felt during those visits, filled with sadness and deep distress in contemplating the sufferings of so many tortured and killed and contemplating the depths of the evil that can take over the human heart.”

The Violins of Hope visit reminds us always to maintain hope, the bishop said.

“When the forces of darkness seem to have the upper hand, when hatred and violence flair, we must remember the Shoah (Holocaust) and never cease crying out to God who gives us the strength to reject and fight evil and the courage to love and do good.”

Afterward, people described the evening as deeply moving. “It was powerful,” said Rich Hines, a member of the St. Elizabeth choir. “You could see people were fully into it.”

Bringing Jewish and Catholic people together “should have been done sooner and should have been done more,” Hines added.

“It touched everybody who came,” said Father David Voors, St. Elizabeth pastor, and Deacon Jim Kitchens said his own emotions ranged from tears to hope.

“I’ve had endless people walk up to me and say, ‘We should do this again,’” said Deacon Kitchens, who has studied history and the Holocaust extensively. “I agree.”
Legacy of love continues beyond loss

BY JENNIFER BARTON

S

he called herself “the beggar.” She believed that was
God’s intention for her life.

So when Virginia Schrantz, founder of Miss Virginia’s Food
Pantry on the south side of Fort
Wayne, approached Suzy Beard
more than 20 years ago asking
for help getting a turkey to the
hands of a needy family for
Christmas dinner, Beard jumped
on board. It was the first turkey
Suzy collected in order to provide
a holiday meal to those who
could not afford one.

“She called it her mission.”

Suzy’s husband, Bill, stated.
The collection started in her
garage that first year and has
grown to over 400 turkeys.

After Suzy’s death on March
18, a committee of dedicated
volunteers at St. Vincent de Paul
Parish in Fort Wayne decided to
make it their mission to keep her
effort alive: Thus, the ministry of
Suzy Beard Christmas Dinners —
named in her honor — was
born.

“The church was filled for her
funeral,” recalled Dian Sullivan,
one of the committee members
in charge of requesting turkeys
from fellow parishioners. “Suzy
gave so much to so many people.
We want this to go farther, in
her honor.”

One of Beard’s daughters,
Erin, an art teacher in Colorado,
set up a GoFundMe page to
continue the cause her mother
believed so strongly in. “She
wanted to help from a distance,”
Bill said. The page raised around
$3,000. Then, while cleaning
the house after her funeral, Bill
found two envelopes contain-
ing nearly $1,700 for the turkey
drive tucked in a drawer. Suzy
used to visit local stores asking
for donations, he shared.

Bill said he was “just a
worker bee”; that Suzy was the
organizer. Most of the names
of families that she collected
came from Miss Virginia’s Food
Pantry, though Suzy found
additional names through her
work at Matthew 25 Health and
Dental Clinic, where she was a
dental hygienist.

The organization of the turkey
drive is taking on a slightly dif-
f erent form going forward. It’s a
collaboration between St. Vincent
and St. Henry parishes, which
have been sister parishes for the
last six years. Volunteers are
also limiting themselves to solic-
ting only food donations from
local stores.

St. Henry parishioner and
property manager Paul Gerardot
heads the efforts at his parish.
Gerardot met Suzy while working
at Miss Virginia’s Food Pantry a
few years ago.

Last year Suzy informed him
that it would be her final year for
the turkey drive, and Gerardot
promised to pick up where she
had left off. Working with the
committee at St. Vincent, he
helps provide the means to col-
lected the turkeys by arranging for
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He said it’s an honor to be
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The response to this year’s
turkey collection drive was
overwhelming. On Nov. 17,
volunteers worked from 6:45
a.m. to 8 p.m., collecting frozen
turkeys from donors and mov-
ing them into storage. Beard
and Gerardot made a game of
it, guessing the weight of each

turkey that came down the line.

The organization of the turkey
drive is taking on a slightly dif-
f erent form going forward. It’s a
collaboration between St. Vincent
and St. Henry parishes, which
have been sister parishes for the
last six years. Volunteers are
also limiting themselves to solic-
ting only food donations from
local stores.

St. Henry parishioner and
property manager Paul Gerardot
heads the efforts at his parish.
Gerardot met Suzy while working
at Miss Virginia’s Food Pantry a
few years ago.

Last year Suzy informed him
that it would be her final year for
the turkey drive, and Gerardot
promised to pick up where she
had left off. Working with the
committee at St. Vincent, he
helps provide the means to col-
lected the turkeys by arranging for
use of a donation truck to collect
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turkey that came down the line.

Assembly will take place at St.
Henry on Dec. 19: The turkeys
will be packed into gift boxes,
along with nonperishable goods
like green beans, stuffing and
potatoes, and delivered to several
local organizations including A
Mother’s Hope, Women’s Care
Center, Euell A. Wilson Center
and Vincent Village for distribu-
tion.

Gerardot has recruited
volunteers from Fort Wayne
Community Schools and Career
Academy to help in the packag-

ing process. Volunteers from
neatly every high school in the

city and some in outlying Allen
County are expected, along with
St. Vincent and St. Henry parish-

ioners.

A record donation of around
440 turkeys this year indicates
that the mission of Suzy Beard
has been uplifting for both par-
ish communities. Suzy’s legacy
of giving lives on in the hearts
and minds of those she touched
with her generous spirit. The
continuation of her mission is a
testament to the power of one
person, a person who saw a need
in the community and sought to
fill it.
BY NATALIE HOEFE

INDIANAPOLIS (CNS) —

Outside, a cold drizzle damped Indianapolis Nov. 21.

Inside the city’s convention center, however, it seemed as if the pure joy and enthusiasm of 20,000 people — mostly high school youths — would have held off the damp chill even if the building hadn’t.

But in a heartbeat, the crowd went from rowdy to reverent. They knelt in silence as a eucharistic procession twined through the Indiana Convention Center, the Eucharist held aloft in a monstrance carried by Indianapolis Archbishop Charles C. Thompson.

These joyful, worshipping people hailed from 145 dioceses around the country — and even from Australia, Canada and England. They came to participate in the largest biennial Catholic youth gathering in the United States: the National Catholic Youth Conference, or NCYC, held this year from Nov. 21-23.

The theme this year was “Blessed. Broken. Given.”

To explore the theme and to encourage youths to read the Scripture daily, four general sessions held in Lucas Oil Stadium across from the convention center dove into the story of the Road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35) during the course of the conference.

At the opening general session on a chilly night, the youths first warmed up with the musical praise of the band For King and Country.

The sound level and energy were high. But when the 20,000 participants tilted their heads up and turned to silence as Pope Francis turned to silence as Pope Francis during the course of the conference held off the damp chill even if the building hadn’t.

Youth carry a statue of Our Lady of Fatima into Lucas Oil Stadium Nov. 21 at the opening general session of the National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis. The conference is organized by the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry with the help of the Indianapolis archdiocese as the host.

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Dear young people of NCYC,” said Bishop Perez, “in his five recorded address to conference participants.

As with the eucharistic procession, the youths’ shouts turned to silence as Pope Francis read his message.

“I send you an affectionate greeting and my prayers at this moment of encounter that you are living,” he said, occasionally lifting his eyes from a transcript to the camera. “May it be an opportunity to deepen your faith and communion. May it light your missionary hearts with the courage and strength to live in and with the Lord, always as a Church sent forth.

“Go and fill your surroundings, even the digital ones. Not of convictions,” Pope Francis said, setting his paper down and speaking off-script directly to the youths. “Not to convince others. Not to proselytize. But to bear witness of the tenderness and mercy of Jesus.”

He closed his message by blessing the participants with the sign of the cross. “And don’t forget to pray for me,” he added.

Moments later, the darkness of the stadium was broken as one ambassador from each delegation present streamed into the arena, each carrying a candle.

With the area encircled in candlelight, several singers dressed in choir robes ascended the stage and chanted the Emmaus story from the Gospel of Luke.

From the stage, Cleveland Bishop Nelson J. Perez reflected on the reading.

“This Gospel that you just heard sung to you today tells a story that is actually being lived out in these days,” he began. “We’ve been on the road to get to NCYC. Some have flown, some have driven long hours.”

“As you came here ... in your mind you were already thinking of things going on in your life,” he added, much like the two disciples traveling to Emmaus. “In these days, Jesus, through His word and His abiding presence in the Eucharist, begins to walk with you.”

And as with the two disciples, said Bishop Perez, “He’s asking you, ‘What are you talking about? What’s going on in your lives? What’s going on in your hearts? I want to know. I want to listen.’”

He encouraged the youths to consider how they would respond if Christ asked them these questions.

“You might say, ‘Well, Lord, don’t you know everything? You know what’s going on,’” said the bishop. “‘But He wants to hear it from you. So talk to Him these days, before His presence in the Blessed Sacrament, in moments of prayer.’

Bishop Perez told the young people they would be hearing many inspiring speakers in the following days.

“God will speak to you through the word, but also through their words,” he said. “Listen, because God has something powerful and beautiful to tell you.”

Participants were asked to bring a Bible to each of the general sessions.

“All of you who pledge to read the Bible every day, stay standing ... and raise your Bibles high,” said author and international speaker Katie Frejean McGrady, one of the evening’s excees.

“Young people are losing their faith. ... (But) I look at all of you, and I (say) to myself, ‘They’re wrong.’ “Look around you — they’re wrong!”
Diocesan teens see ‘massive, unified body of Christ’

BY NATALIE HOEFER

INDIANAPOLIS — In 2017, six members from the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend ventured to Indianapolis to see what the biennial National Catholic Youth Conference was all about.

“We were all blown away,” said Father Ryan Pietrocarlo, CSC, associate pastor of St. Adalbert Parish in South Bend.

So blown away, in fact, that with the encouragement of Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades, NCYC 2019 was promoted to high school students throughout the diocese.

As a result, the number of NCYC attendees from northeast-Indiana exploded from six in 2017 to more than 70 for this year’s gathering on Nov. 21-23 at the Indiana Convention Center and Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis.

Ten parishes were represented in the delegation. Most participants were youths, about 60 percent of whom were Latino, including 24 from the predominantly Hispanic St. Adalbert Parish. The young people were joined by Father Pietrocarlo, Father Dennis DiBenedetto of St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Fort Wayne, chaperones and diocesan youth ministry director John Pratt.

Pratt’s 2017 NCYC experience “was more than I expected,” he said. “I think this year could be a breakthrough year where people come back and say, ‘This was awesome!’”

From left, Declan Ladewski, from Christ the King Parish in South Bend; Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades; and Zachary Taylor, from Christ the King, gather before the concluding NCYC Mass, which Bishop Rhoades celebrated Saturday, Nov. 23.

Ten parishes were represented between the 70 Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend participants at NCYC.

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Searching for the lost sheep

BY JENNIFER BARTON

If there is one point to remember, it's that there is hope. Hope for brothers and sisters, daughters and sons who have fallen away from the Church. Not only is there hope, but parents are not alone — and they certainly are not to blame for their children's choices. “As parents, it is not your fault. But it is your problem.”

That was the message Father David Huneck reiterated during an adult education presentation at St. Jude Parish, Fort Wayne, Nov. 19. “Return: Help for those who have left the Church” was part of the parish’s ongoing “Fanning the Flame of Our Faith” series.

Father Huneck saw a need, he said, to address the rapid loss of young people in the Catholic Church and sought to do so in a broader context than a homily.

According to Brandon Vogt, author of “Return: How to draw your child back to the Church,” for every one person who joins the Church, 6.5 leave. Fifty percent of cradle Catholics no longer consider themselves Catholic, and 7% leave the Church before age 23. Many of these fallen-away Catholics gravitate toward Protestant denominations or a sense of “spirituality” rather than a profession of religion, Vogt asserts; rarely do they completely abandon God for atheism or agnosticism. And while it is reassuring for families in this situation to know that they are not alone, it’s disheartening. What can a parent do to bring a lost sheep back into the fold?

Basing his presentation on Vogt’s book, Father Huneck explored some of the common reasons young people turn away from the Church. He included several practical ways to help them find their way back.

“The first and most obvious thing to do is pray,” Father Huneck said. He gave the example of St. Monica, whose prayers for her son Augustine did not go unheard. Indeed, the son for whom she shed tears became one of the Church’s greatest theologians and a Doctor of the Church. Fasting is another powerful and often unused form of prayer. To fast is to detach from worldly things, not only food but also comforts and pleasures, in order to grow closer to God.

Fasting, along with any other type of suffering, can be endured conscientiously and as a form of sacrifice on behalf of the hope that those who have left the Church will one day return.

Of greatest importance in the battle to bring souls back to the faith is to “equip ourselves with knowledge of the faith” by reading the Bible and becoming more familiar with the Catechism, Father Huneck said. That way, when questions arise, parents can be more prepared to answer them.

There will still be times when a parent must admit they do not have all the answers, however. The key is to know how to find them. Father Huneck encouraged those present to seek the help of priests such as himself or other, older and wiser priests, who can help them with the answers to difficult questions. “The question that we need to be able to answer for ourselves is ‘Why am I Catholic?’ Because that’s what people want to know.”

At the heart of the matter is trust and dialogue. “Millennials like to be heard,” Father Huneck noted. Listening to them helps build trust, which is essential to opening genuine dialogue. The knee-jerk reaction of dismissing a child’s objections instead of listening to them is a mistake parents sometimes make. Nagging and being overly critical of young people’s lifestyles and viewpoints can be other mistakes that may drive them further from the Church.

Starting the conversation is vital, and Father Huneck pointed out that it may start small; not with deep theological questions but small droplets, including reminders of their Catholic upbringing or simple questions about the young person’s happiness or current beliefs. Even the use of humor, through sharing relatable Catholic memes, can be a small step in the direction parents want to lead their non-practicing child.

Most of all, parents need to express unconditional love. “If there is no love in the house, young people will not feel comfortable enough to open their minds and hearts to their parents’ message. Maintaining a home of hospitality can also go a long way toward inviting the return of a lost loved one. All of these plant the seeds for growth, he said. Some parents may feel it is appropriate to plant literal seeds, too: placing books, CDs, prayer cards or news articles where their child will find them inevitably, eventually, eventually take notice. The parents present were also urged to remember that helping their child find a path back to the Lord and His Church is a process; the seeds might take years to bear fruit.

“One sows, another harvests,” Father Huneck stated. “You may not be the one who wins them over.”

Following the presentation, Father Huneck took time to dialogue with the parents, listening to their specific concerns and offering suggestions that might help others in similar situations. No matter how devout or well-educated parents are, or what particular parenting style they applied, the likelihood that one of their children has or will fall away is distressingly high, Father Huneck and Vogt concurred. Even families in which a member has been called to a religious vocation can and often see the negative effects of the world manifesting within their home. Two siblings raised with the same love and opportunities can produce vastly different results. As Father Huneck said, “Love is a choice.”

Parents despair, weep and pray over their children’s departure from the Church and their faith, but Father Huneck offered hope. From his work as chaplain, he said, he has seen firsthand the hope embodied in the younger generations. He urged parents not to try to change their children, but to be a loving support for them.
Patroness of the Americas:
Our Lady of Guadalupe

Novenas, the traditional Mañanitas song, liturgies and other events honoring Our Lady of Guadalupe begin next week in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. Everyone is warmly invited to join in the celebrations of Mary’s apparition to Mexican peasant Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin at the following parishes. Many of the events will take place in Spanish.

**Our Lady of Guadalupe**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Warsaw</td>
<td>Dec. 3-10</td>
<td>5:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Novena followed by Mass and rosary</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dec. 11</td>
<td>11 p.m.</td>
<td>Vigil Mass followed by midnight Mañanitas and gathering in the cafeteria</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dec. 12</td>
<td>5:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Mass in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe</td>
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<td>St. Anthony of Padua</td>
<td>Dec. 12</td>
<td>5 a.m.</td>
<td>Mañanitas</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4 p.m.</td>
<td>Procession with image of Our Lady of Guadalupe</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5 p.m.</td>
<td>Mass</td>
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<td>6:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Fiesta</td>
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<td>Bremen</td>
<td>Dec. 12</td>
<td>6 p.m.</td>
<td>Our Lady of Guadalupe Mass Posadas</td>
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<td>St. Patrick</td>
<td>Dec. 12</td>
<td>5 a.m.</td>
<td>Mañanitas</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>6 a.m.</td>
<td>Mass</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elkhart</td>
<td>Dec. 12</td>
<td>4 p.m.</td>
<td>Procession</td>
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<td>6 p.m.</td>
<td>Mass</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Joseph</td>
<td>Dec. 12</td>
<td>6 a.m.</td>
<td>Mañanitas followed by hot chocolate and sweet bread</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Mass in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe, followed by dinner</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Bend</td>
<td>Dec. 12</td>
<td>5 p.m.</td>
<td>Rosary followed by re-enactment of apparitions</td>
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<td>7 p.m.</td>
<td>Mass followed by dancers and Mañanitas with live band in the gym</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Adalbert and St. Casimir</td>
<td>Dec. 11</td>
<td>11 p.m.</td>
<td>Rosary, Mañanitas at 11:45 p.m., midnight Mass</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dec. 12</td>
<td>6 p.m.</td>
<td>Folkloric dance group, Mañanitas at 6:45 p.m.</td>
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<td>7 p.m.</td>
<td>Mass, followed by dinner, music and raffle at the school cafeteria</td>
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<tr>
<td>Immaculate Conception</td>
<td>Dec. 3-12</td>
<td>5 p.m.</td>
<td>Mass</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6 p.m.</td>
<td>Novena (Only on Dec. 7 novena will be at 7 p.m.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Robert Bellarmine</td>
<td>Dec. 12</td>
<td>6 p.m.</td>
<td>Mass in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe, followed by gathering in the cafeteria</td>
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BY MARY GATES

While the idea of a 30-day silent retreat may seem, in part, intriguing and appealing, four weeks away from family, work and responsibility can make the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola seem out of reach for many Catholics. The exercises, prayers and meditations written by the 16th-century saint, who himself transformed it. Ignatian spirituality taught how to discern those thoughts, feelings, and desires that the Lord is able to communicate His will for us. Ignatian spirituality equips people to recognize and be aware of the different thoughts, feelings, and desires. Through his spiritual exercises, Ignatius enlightens our minds to notice these through lingering temptations, our own thoughts, the influence of our culture and friendships, and most importantly the voice of God the Father," he said. "It is the voice of the Father, who calls out to His beloved sons and daughters, leading them to safety and happiness. Driven by the desire to do the Father’s will, Ignatian spirituality teaches us how to discern those thoughts, feelings, and desires and how to act upon them – to either reject or accept them.”

Schneider’s experience brought to light the ways God speaks to him in the call to prayer, helping to reveal to him his true identity as a son of a loving God.

“I became aware that our relationship with God is affected by everything we do. The time we devote to prayer and developing our relationship with the Trinity, Mary and the saints is influenced by all our actions.”

“The most important thing is to spend time with Him.”

“By discerning His voice, we can conform our actions to His call. Being conformed to His will is the response and acceptance of His love. His love leads us to happiness which is fulfilled partly in this life and completely in heaven.”

Ignatian spirituality is not only for priests and seminarians, but is accessible to lay people through retreats and events hosted throughout the diocese, as well as in small prayer groups. Schneider’s advice for those who want to pursue the exercises? “Those who are interested must be ready to be flexible and open to what Ignatius prescribes. Not every person fits the mold of purely Ignatian spirituality, but learn and use what ignatian spirituality equips people to recognize and be aware of the different thoughts, feelings, and desires. Through his spiritual exercises, Ignatius enlightens our minds to notice these through lingering temptations, our own thoughts, the influence of our culture and friendships, and most importantly the voice of God the Father,” he said. “It is the voice of the Father, who calls out to His beloved sons and daughters, leading them to safety and happiness. Driven by the desire to do the Father’s will, Ignatian spirituality teaches us how to discern those thoughts, feelings, and desires and how to act upon them – to either reject or accept them.”

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Parish takes leap of faith to bring joy to children

BY DENISE FEDOROW

A late-night leap of faith by Mom Amanda Woodiel paid off, and 150 ‘Boxes of Joy’ are on their way to children in five impoverished countries through Cross Catholic Outreach’s Box of Joy ministry.

Woodiel, a parishioner of St. John the Evangelist, Goshen, and a blogger for CatholicMom.com, said she was on the site around 12:30 a.m. Oct. 16 when she saw an article about the Box of Joy program. As coordinator for St. John’s Living the Liturgical Year Moms’ Group, she had been interviewing moms about what more can be done to support the domestic church.

“Over and over again they’ve said, ‘we want a service project we can do as a family,’” Woodiel shared.

In order to participate in the Box of Joy program there has to be a group affiliation. Woodiel listed the moms group, but then noticed the deadline was Oct. 15. At that moment it was in the early hours of Oct. 16.

She decided to submit the application to participate anyway and see what happened. Because it was late and past the deadline, she didn’t ask anyone first about whether she should sign up at all, “I had to go or not go,” she said.

Initially, she thought she’d commit to 20 boxes. “Twenty scared me, but I felt God said 100,”

Woodiel listened and signed up for the 100 boxes. She then spent a restless night, anxious because she didn’t know if she’d be financially liable if she couldn’t get 100 commitments.

“The registration form indicated she’d hear from Cross Catholic Outreach in 24 hours. When she didn’t, she just assumed the registration had arrived too late. But six days later she received an email saying the boxes were on the way.

Woodiel reached out to the moms’ group and also sent texts and emails to other friends in the church, asking if they’d be willing to help. Within 36 hours she had 131 boxes pledged, including 25 from St. John the Evangelist School.

She called and told the organization she needed 31 more boxes than her original pledge and was informed increases could only be made in quantities of 50. Her original commitment of 20 boxes was now at 150.

School secretary Peggy Mueller got the word out to teachers, and students in each grade were asked to donate specific items to go in the boxes. Kelsey Weddell, who is on the school advisory board, thought the school could fill 25 boxes.

Donations to Cross Catholic Outreach’s Box of Joy ministry are filled and ready for delivery to the drop-off location Nov. 8, just a week after parishioners of St. John the Evangelist Parish, Goshen, received the empty boxes to fill. From left are Kelsey Weddell, Amanda Woodiel and Pauline Allen. In the truck are the Woodiel children.

The students also had two dress-down days, where they could pay $1 to not have to wear their uniforms – with the money going toward the shipping costs for each box. Weddell also approached parishioner Maureen Kercher, owner of Kercher’s Orchard, a local business, and they offered to help too.

The boxes arrived Oct. 31 and needed to be filled and returned by Nov. 8. Forty-nine volunteers mobilized to comply.

Ani Wallach, another member of the moms’ group, not only helped spread the word about the project, but instead of trick-or-treating with her family on Halloween delivered the empty boxes to the people who had volunteered to fill them and then picked up the boxes when they were ready.

The nearest drop-off location was at St. Boniface Church in Lafayette. Woodiel was prepared to make that drive Nov. 8. A conversation at a small group meeting prompted parishioner Pauline Allen, however, to volunteer herself and her husband, Doug, to make the delivery. “Pauline said one of her daughters lived there so they’d be glad to take it.”

As the Allen’s truck, filled with the Boxes of Joy, pulled out of the driveway Nov. 8, Woodiel breathed a sigh of relief and expressed gratitude for how quickly so many parishioners pulled together to provide a merry Christmas to children they have never met.

For more information about the program visit the website at www.crosscatholic.org.

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The return of the Lord is at hand

The Sunday Gospel

First Sunday of Advent Matthew 24:37-44

With this weekend, the Church begins its new liturgical year. In so doing, it also begins to use the “A” cycle of readings at Sunday Masses.

This weekend’s first reading is from the first section of the Book of Isaiah. Isaiah is one of the most important prophets in the Hebrew Scriptures, and it is eloquent and profound. It is also one of the longest books in the Old Testament, although in fact it is the collection of three distinct works.

As often the case with other prophetic books, Isaiah at times warned the people that if they did not return to heartfelt religious fidelity, their doom was on the way. Certainly, this is a theme found in the Book of Amos.

No prophet, however, including Isaiah, spoke warnings without expressing a most hopeful and faith-filled thought that God, the almighty and merciful, would protect the people in the end.

After all, such was the promise of the Covenant. God had pledged to safeguard and secure the people, despite their stubbornness and their fascination with the idols of the Gentiles. It is in spite of the catastrophe they brought upon themselves by sinning.

This weekend’s reading, the first Scriptural proclamation for Advent 2019, is a testament of this confidence and faith. God will judge the good and the bad. Such is the divinity of God. It is logical. Human behavior must be balanced against the justice and love that perfectly exist in God. In the midst of war and political conflict, the Israelites are to be feared. God’s faithfulness to God brings peace and reward.

St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans is the source of the second reading. Always, Paul called upon Christians to live as authentic followers of Jesus. While some may have been modeled after the behaviors of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Inasmuch as they are not faultless or even generous, but hope. They see a future for themselves and their children, filled with the happiness that God has promised if that’s your view of what life has in store, why not share it?

And although women who have large families provide us all with a public good, the sense of fulfillment can’t be just the satisfaction one derives from making a civic contribution, like serving in the armed forces or in public office. The phenomenon would not be limited to religious women. As often the case with other religious women.

First, be convinced by setting your Christmas clock differently. Dec. 1 begins Advent, which means “it’s coming!”

Waiting for the birth of Jesus in the manger, with an eye toward His second coming in glory. Hold off with Christmas clockwork and enjoy the season instead. Not until Christmas Day shall the role people in the end.

We make? Will we stand in the wrong. What appearance shall the Lord of life, the supreme standard of what is right or wrong. We earnestly believe that they would be vindicated when Jesus came again in glory.

Reflection

Advent, begun with this weekend’s liturgies, calls us to prepare for Christmas. Preparation is more than addressing Christmas cards and decorating Christmas trees. It means actually working to make the coming of Jesus real in our daily lives; a personal event, not just because we admit the Lord into our loving hearts.

Especially in Advent, the Church calls us to “prepare for” the coming of Christians, ridding ourselves of anything standing in the way. It calls us to set priorities.

Regardless of Christmas 2019, Jesus will come again to us at the moment of our earthly death. He will come as the triumphant Lord of life, the supreme standard of what is right or wrong. What appearance shall we make? Will we stand in the aftermath having been, in life, wholeheartedly devoted to Christ, or just occasionally, or maybe never? The choice among these options belongs to us now.
A talk on the Hill

A couple of weeks ago, I had the distinct privilege of addressing an audience of senators, representatives and Capitol Hill staffers in a beautiful room at the Library of Congress. This event was made possible by two congressmen, Rep. Tom Suozzi of New York, a Democrat, and Rep. John Moolenaar of Michigan, a Republican. Both had seen videos of the speeches I had given at Facebook and Google Headquarters and asked me something similar for those who work in government.

At the outset of my talk, I specified that I would not be addressing the hot-button issues that so often dominate discussions of religion and politics. I was quick to point out that this is not because I think those questions are unimportant or that they should not eventually be addressed. But I insisted that the rush to those matters around which there is radical polarizations effectively precludes the possibility of finding deep points of contact between the spiritual and political worlds. And it was that common ground that I endeavored to explore in my presentation.

I commenced with the idea of vocation. We’re accustomed to using this term in an explicitly religious context, but I suggested that, with its full spiritual resonance, it applies just as well to other areas of life. I asked my audience to recall a moment when they first felt the summons to pursue a career in public service. I invited them to bracket the realities, disappointments and opportunities of the present moment and to recover that moment, undoubtedly marked by enthusiasm and idealism, when they decided to enter into politics and to work for justice.

The passion to pursue righteousness in particular cases, I told them, is a function of something more basic and more mystical — namely, the call from justice itself that summons to serve as a servant of this great transcendent value.

In a similar way, an artist has heard the call — as James Joyce did, for example — to be a knight for beauty, and a philosopher or journalist or professor is someone who has heard the summons to serve truth itself. But in Catholic theology, truth itself, beauty itself, justice itself are simply names for God. Therefore, provided they search out the deepest ground for their commitment, all of these participants in the culture can and should understand themselves as having received a vocation with religious implications.

And once that connection has been made, I told my Washington audience, the great biblical texts dealing with vocation from God open up in a fresh way. I drew their attention to the marvelous story of the call of the prophet, Isaiah. When just a boy, Samuel heard the voice of God, but did not at first recognize it for what it was. It was only after several repetitions — “Surely the voice of the Lord has not been heard” — and after the helpful intervention of the high priest Eli, that the young man was ready to listen to God. So, I said, God (under His title of justice itself) called you each by name, most likely called you repeatedly until you listened, and probably employed some older to interpellate the meaning of His voice.

Next, I referenced the strange and illuminating account in the sixth chapter of Isaiah regarding the call of the prophet. Isaiah says that he saw the Lord in the temple surrounded by angels crying “Holy, Holy, Holy.” The Hebrew term here is “kadosh,” which carries the sense of “other.” God is not one being among many, not one true thing among true things; rather, He is the source of existence itself, the unconditioned ground of all that is — and this entails that He is greater than all of the particular projects and desires that customarily preoccupy us. His call to us is accordingly, greater than career, family, personal pleasure, country or anything else.

Isaiah speaks further of how smoke filled the place where he was and how the foundations shook. Both of these symbols indicate the manner in which the experience of God puts anything finite or conditioned into question. So, I told the senators, representatives and staffers, the summons to serve justice itself must trump anything else, any other concern, any merely personal project. It properly shakes the foundation of your life and relativizes everything you once considered supremely important.

When I’m in danger of forgetting that, I recall the poem “Christmas” by John Betjeman. Written decades ago and set in London, some of the poem seems dated and its references unfamiliar. But the last three stanzas are timeless. May you have a blessed Christmas.

“...And is it true? And is it true, That most tremendous tale of all, Seen in a stable and a window’s hue, A Baby in an ox’s stall? The Maker of the stars and sea Become a Child on earth for me?...”

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

Richard Doeringller worked for 26 years in the Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. He writes from Washington state.

DOERINGILLER, from page 16

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Seminarians seek Cupertino three-peat

BY JOSHUA SCHIPPER

Marian High School, Mishawaka, will host the sixth annual Cupertino Classic basketball game Dec. 27. The seminarians, back-to-back Cupertino Classic champions captained by Benjamin Landrigan, seek to maintain their streak, while the priests, captained by Father Andrew Curry, hope to unseat their title-holding competition.

Seminarian Holden Berg said that his team is “ready to rumble.”

“I would ask them (the priests) to continue praying for us and know we are praying for them,” Berg added. “All that said, we are looking forward to a fun game of basketball against them.”

Father Curry indicated that his roster of clergy is excited for the game. “We love basketball and enjoy being able to be a source of joy and to shine Christ to others any way we can.”

“I feel that every year the seminarians have prepared more than us because, for the most part, they live in the same place and are regularly playing sports together,” said Father Curry. “Regardless, we expect to spread out, slow it down and let smart passes and shots prevail.”

The Cupertino Classic is named for St. Joseph of Cupertino, a 17th-century Franciscan monk who was known to levitate when in prayer, especially when Christmas carols were sung at Mass. St. Joseph of Cupertino is the prime saint to represent this annual basketball game, not only because it takes place in a season where Catholics sing Christmas carols in anticipation and celebration of the coming of the Messiah — but also because the players may pray for his intercession to levitate when they drive for the game-winning dunk.

The Cupertino Classic is a unique opportunity for everyone in the diocese to come together because of their shared Catholic faith and to watch their parish priests attempt to spoil the seminarians’ streak.

“The priests would like to wish everyone a prayerful Advent and Christmas,” said Father Curry. “May Jesus Christ be the center and joy of our lives and our families. May the presence and power of Jesus’ love reign and be celebrated in our times.”

For pregame updates from both benches, visit “Cupertino Classic” on Facebook. The duel begins at 6:30 p.m. and entry is free. The game will be broadcast by Redeemer Radio in Fort Wayne on 106.3 FM and in Michiana on 95.7 FM.

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WHAT’S HAPPENING carries announcements about upcoming events in the diocese. View more Catholic events and submit new ones at www.todayscatholic.org/event. For additional listings of that event, please call the advertising sales staff at 260-399-1449 to purchase space.

Children’s adoration
FORT WAYNE — Children’s adoration at Our Lady of Good Hope, 7215 St. Joe Rd., will be on the Feast of St. Nicholas, Dec. 6, from 6:30-7:30 p.m. All, young and old, are invited to attend. During adoration, Father Daniel Whelan will invite the children to gather around him at the foot of the altar for prayer, silence and song. Afterward, there will be a reception in the gym. Contact Father Whelan at 260-685-9615 or padredw@yahoo.com.

Masses interpreted for the deaf
SOUTH BEND — Masses interpreted for the deaf are on the second and fourth Sundays of the month at 11 a.m. at St. Matthew Cathedral, 1701 Miami St. An interpreter from Community Services All Deals provides American Sign Language. A Mass interpreted for the deaf will also be celebrated on the second Sunday of each month at the 11:30 a.m. Mass at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in downtown, Fort Wayne. An interpreter from DeafLink, a service of The League for the Blind & Disabled Inc., will provide ASL. Contact Allison Sturm at asturm@diocesefwsb.org or at 260-299-1452 for information.

St. Michael cookie walk and craft sale
PLYMOUTH — St. Michael’s Altar Rosary Society is sponsoring a cookie walk and craft sale Saturday, Dec. 7, from 8 a.m. to noon in the school cafeteria, across Center Street from the church, 612 N Center St. Cookies are $4/lb. Donated crafts are priced as marked. Proceeds will support the parish. Contact Chris Morrow at 574-540-9686.

Check out all the happenings
www.TodaysCatholic.org/event

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This Advent, may we be especially attentive to all of the mysterious, marvelous ways that Christ comes to us.

Lisa Everitt