

# TODAY'S CATHOLIC

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# Pope asks Catholics to set up, be enchanted by a Nativity scene



CNS photo/Vatican Media

**Pope Francis prays during a visit to the Nativity scene of Greccio, Italy, Dec. 1. The first Nativity scene was assembled in Greccio by St. Francis of Assisi in 1223.**

BY CINDY WOODEN

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — A Nativity scene is a simple reminder of something astonishing: God became human to reveal the greatness of His love “by smiling and opening His arms to all,” Pope Francis said in a letter on the meaning and importance of setting up Christmas cribs.

“Wherever it is, and whatever form it takes, the Christmas creche speaks to us of the love of God, the God who became a child in order to make us know how close he is to every man, woman and child, regardless of their condition,” the pope wrote in his apostolic letter, “Admirabile Signum” (“Enchanting Image”).

Pope Francis signed the short letter Dec. 1, the first Sunday of Advent, during an afternoon visit to Greccio, Italy, where St. Francis

of Assisi set up the first Nativity scene in 1223.

When St. Francis had a cave prepared with a hay-filled manger, an ox and a donkey — no statues or actors or baby, even — he “carried out a great work of evangelization,” Pope Francis said, and Catholics can and must continue that work today.

“With this letter,” he wrote, “I wish to encourage the beautiful family tradition of preparing the Nativity scene in the days before Christmas, but also the custom of setting it up in the workplace, in schools, hospitals, prisons and town squares.”

“It is my hope that this custom will never be lost and that, wherever it has fallen into disuse, it can be rediscovered and revived,” the pope said.

At the heart of even the simplest Nativity scene, he said, there is a reminder of “God’s

tender love: the Creator of the universe lowered himself to take up our littleness.”

Then, he said, there is the fact that this baby is “the source and sustenance of all life. In Jesus, the Father has given us a brother who comes to seek us out whenever we are confused or lost, a loyal friend ever at our side. He gave us his son who forgives us and frees us from our sins.”

The magic of the season goes deep when someone — child or adult — gazes upon a Nativity scene, he said. And whether or not they can put what they experience into words, they come away knowing that “God’s ways are astonishing, for it seems impossible that he should forsake his glory to become a man like us.”

“To our astonishment, we see God acting exactly as we do: He sleeps, takes milk from his mother, cries and plays like

every other child! As always, God baffles us. He is unpredictable, constantly doing what we least expect,” Pope Francis wrote. “The Nativity scene shows God as he came into our world, but it also makes us reflect on how our life is part of God’s own life. It invites us to become his disciples if we want to attain ultimate meaning in life.”

Knowing that some families keep to the essential characters and setting while others add all sorts of characters and buildings and streams and towns, Pope Francis said even “fanciful additions show that in the new world inaugurated by Jesus there is room for whatever is truly human and for all God’s creatures.”

But he focused in the letter on some key elements, starting with

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End-of-year giving in the diocese

BY JENNIFER BARTON

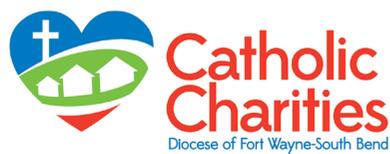
As the year draws to a
close, the light of the
Christmas season signals
the light of the world. And as
gifts are given to friends and
loved ones, it is also a time to
remember the poverty taken on
by Christ during His time on
earth and consider offering, as
He did, the gifts of joy, encour-
agement and support even to
those with whom one is not
closely acquainted.

Knowing all that God has
given, and that He cannot be
outdone in generosity, Today's
Catholic takes a look this season
at some of the diocesan initia-
tives and organizations whose
evangelization and works of
mercy would greatly benefit from
a gift this Advent season.



Annual Bishop's Appeal

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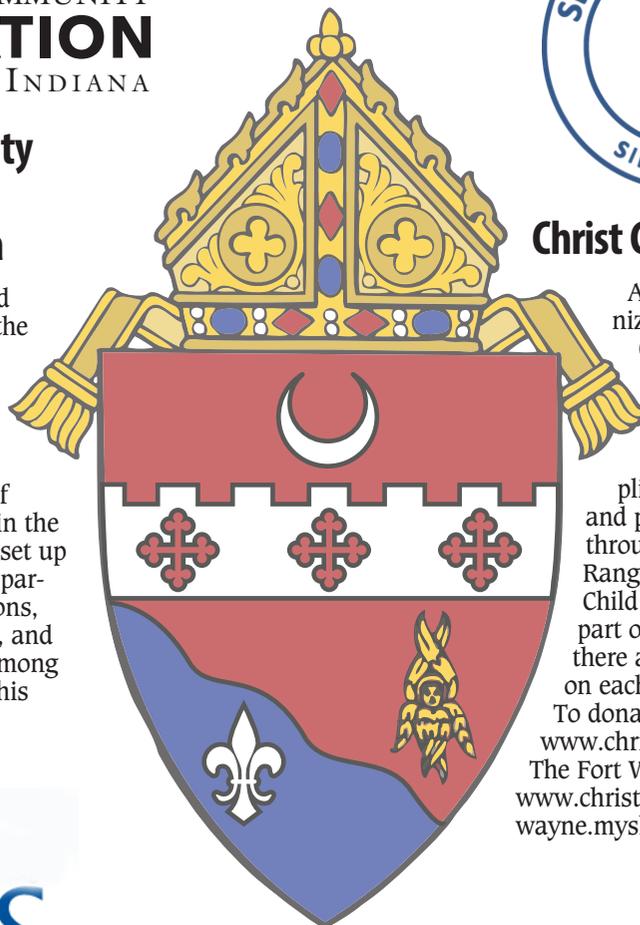
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# Young people take 'Deep Dive' into becoming vibrant Gospel witnesses

BY NATALIE HOEFER

INDIANAPOLIS (CNS) — Katie Prejean McGrady acknowledged a truth about the National Catholic Youth Conference and similar events.

"All of us hit these walls when we leave these big events," the well-known Catholic speaker and youth minister from Louisiana said. "We don't know how exactly to take what we've heard, take what we've felt and articulate it in a way that is engaging, that is dynamic and that actually moves somebody to want to know and love Jesus."

NCYC planners recognized the phenomenon, too. Addressing a packed hall in the Indiana Convention Center Nov. 23 during NCYC, Prejean McGrady recalled an NCYC committee meeting she attended some time ago.

"The thought was, what if we went deeper with the young people who were ready to go deeper?" she said.

"A lot of NCYC is introductory. But NCYC is such an on-ramp for so many people who want to go deeper in faith."

Prejean McGrady said the committee asked, "What does it look like when you take a couple thousand of you, throw you in a room and actually equip you to go and be vibrant, visible witnesses to the Gospel of Jesus Christ?"

That's how NCYC's new "Deep Dive" series of sessions was created.

Presenters offered practical tips during the new sessions about how young people — and anyone — can live their faith more intentionally through prayer and Scripture and by asking "How can I help?"

Franciscan Father Agustino Torres mentioned the "out of sight, out of mind" tendency after NCYC.

Afterward, he said, "You're like, 'Woo, yeah!'"

"Then two weeks later things get back to normal," he continued. "Sometimes you go home changed, but things at home haven't changed. ... You go back home to the same mess."

"My solution is prayer, love — and TACOS," he said, laughter filling the room as a slide appeared spelling out the acronym: "Telling Another Christ Overcomes Sadness."

Prayer is a must to keep-



CNS photo/Bob Nichols, Catholic Moment

**Victoria Hermann of Tucson, Ariz., adds her name and comment Nov. 17 to a wall in the Thematic Village at the National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis. The biennial conference draws some 20,000 Catholic teenagers from across the country.**

ing personal faith alive, Father Torres said.

"We must pray, because if we're going to dive deeper, we can't give what we don't have," he said.

Mass is the highest form of prayer and worship, but only for those who fully participate he told his young audience.

"If you go to Mass without putting anything into it, how can you expect to get anything out of it? I don't care if what the priest says in the homily is boring, Jesus is coming down in the Eucharist. He is being made present. Every single Mass is a miracle," he said.

His next tip focused on love, which he defined as when "we don't think first of ourselves but begin to think more of the person right in front of us." That includes God.

"How many of you, the first thing you do when you wake up is check your (phone)?" Father Torres asked. "Don't think first of who contacted me; think first of contacting God. Just make the sign of the cross and say, 'Lord, help me to love like you today.' Then you can check your phone."

"The best way for you to live what you receive" at NCYC, he suggested, "is for you to go up to other people, especially if they're down, and share a word of encouragement: 'Can I pray with you? Here's a Bible verse that's helped me.'"

"You never know how you sharing this message that Christ overcomes sadness can change a life."

Mark Hart, executive

vice president of Life Teen International, didn't mess around in his Deep Dive session.

"If you actually want to live — not just to be, but to live — as a Catholic, you are going to have to get to know this book," he said, holding up the Bible. "This is nonnegotiable."

His first suggestion was to read upcoming Sunday readings in advance.

"The Catholic Church actually believes, this is so ridiculous, that in the 167 hours that you're not in Sunday Mass, that you would set aside some time to read the readings for Mass," Hart said in mock indignation.

Acknowledging people's busy lives, he suggested reading each of the Sunday readings, including the Psalm response, on separate days of the week rather than all in one sitting.

Hart's second practical tip for reading Scripture is not to read the Bible in order from cover to cover.

"Start with the Gospel of Mark," he suggested. "It's the shortest, easiest, most action-packed Gospel. And it has stories you're accustomed to hearing." He recommended reading a few verses at a time rather than the entire book or even a chapter, and to use the "lectio divina" ("holy reading") approach to reading Scripture: Read the passage, reflect on a word or phrase that got your attention, respond to God in prayer about the word or phrase, and rest in God, listening for a response.

If Mark's Gospel, at 16 chapters, is too intimidating, Hart said, "go to the book of James." With only five chapters it's one of the shortest books in the Bible, "and it's basically how to put up with really annoying people," he added.

Hart recommended downloading free apps that use either the Revised Standard Version or New American Bible, both of which are approved Catholic versions of the Bible.



## Public schedule of Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades

Thursday-Friday, December 5-13: Ad Limina Visit, Rome

In the final Deep Dive session, Prejean McGrady identified the young people present as belonging to "Generation Z," those born in 1996 and later.

"There are three things about Gen Z ... that I think make you uniquely suited to help the Church," she said.

The first trait is that "you believe you can change the world," she explained, citing a poll of 3,000 young people in which 64% responded that they believe they could make a difference in the world.

Second, she said, is that Generation Z "longs for presence. ... You crave quality time." So when it comes to helping others, she said, "you are uniquely suited to give that quality time to people, to look up from the phone, to stare into the face of another."

Finally, she continued, "You like to tell your story," a trait essential to evangelization. "When you've met Jesus Christ, you can't help but give testimony to how he's changed your life — and if your life wasn't changed, then it wasn't Jesus that you met."

Prejean McGrady said such traits enable young Catholics to imitate Christ by saying, "How can I help?" She offered four practical ways on how to do that.

First is to study the faith. "Buy books. Read the catechism. Put Scripture in your life," she suggested. "You need to know what we believe and why we believe it ... especially in the relativistic culture we live in where everybody has a question and wants to disprove you."

The second step is to pray. Prejean McGrady likened the essential act of praying to

"charging your phone. ... You have to take personal quality time with the one who is just enraptured by you and just wants to see your face."

She also encouraged the young people to "get out of your comfort zone."

"It takes a little while to get there, but there does come a time when talking with people about Jesus does become comfortable. You have to ask God to take those uncomfortable moments and make them comfortable for you," she said.

And evangelizing doesn't have to mean talking, she added.

"Wear a cross. Put a Catholic sticker on your water bottle or a Catholic background on the back of your phone," she said. "Maybe grab a few friends and pray the rosary in the lunch room. Is it countercultural? ... Yeah. But get over yourself. Jesus died on a cross. You can say a rosary in front of other people."

Prejean McGrady's last tip was to "be generous."

"Generosity is the way we're called to see the people in front of us, to ask in every moment, 'How can I love them like Jesus loves them?' and 'How does that bring me closer to Jesus?'"

Prejean McGrady closed with words of encouragement.

"You are the generation that will revive and renew our Church," she said. "You will do it through your witness, through your joy, through your stories, through your study and through your generous spirit."

Hoefler is a reporter at *The Criterion*, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.



# Minnesota high school prepares for beatification of one of its own

BY CHRISTINA CAPECCHI

ST. PAUL, Minn. (CNS) — A man who scrubbed toilets and shoveled sidewalks at Cretin-Derham Hall High School is on his way to becoming a saint, and the school is celebrating his beatification by elevating his presence on campus and connecting students to his legacy.

Christian Brother James Miller taught at then-Cretin High School in St. Paul from 1966 to 1971 and again from 1979 to 1980, teaching Spanish, founding the soccer team and serving as maintenance supervisor.

Brother Miller was martyred in 1982 — at age 37 — during the Guatemalan Civil War. Three hooded men found him on a ladder repairing a wall and shot him. Many assume he was killed because he fought to keep his students from being forced into the military.

Pope Francis officially recognized Brother James as a martyr last year, clearing the way for beatification. He will be beatified on Dec. 7 in Guatemala, a ceremony that four members of Cretin-Derham Hall will attend, including President Frank Miley.

Reminders of the late teacher pop up throughout the school. The chapel is being renamed in honor of “Blessed Brother James”; staff is working with the archdiocese to make the rededication official. The school commissioned a bronze statue of him that was recently installed in the courtyard, which is also being renamed after him.

Meanwhile, the original icon of Brother Miller painted by Nick Markell is displayed in the school's History Walk alongside other noteworthy memorabilia. A reproduction hangs in the classroom where he taught.

The students' education on Brother Miller is enhanced spiritually. Multiple times a day they participate in a call-and-response invocation that now includes, “Blessed Brother James Miller,” “pray for us.”

“He has a big footprint here,” Miley said, “and the beatification is making that footprint even bigger.”

The administrator said he could not hope for a more inspiring example to lift up to the students.

“One of the things we're in dire need of is heroes, especially heroes who point us to helping each other, loving each other and directing each other toward God,” Miley said.

Brother Miller's courage in the face of danger is particularly appealing to young men, who are more likely to engage in service opportunities that are challenging or feel risky, Miley said. “For young men, that sense of adventure is another element that Brother James embodies.”



CNS photo/Dave Hrbacek, Catholic Spirit

**Frank Miley, president of Cretin-Derham Hall High School in St. Paul, Minn., stands next to a bronze bust of Brother James Miller that sits in the courtyard of the school. Brother Miller, who taught at the school from 1966-71 and again from 1979-80, was officially recognized by Pope Francis as a martyr last year, clearing the way for beatification. He will be beatified Dec. 7 in Guatemala.**

Brother Miller was a farm boy from Stevens Point, Wisconsin, whose work ethic prodded him to quietly help across campus: mopping floors, cleaning furnaces and plumbing.

Students watched him lumber down the halls in his long black robe, tools strapped to his belt, and took to calling him “Brother Fixit.” No work was beneath him.

He lived simply, wearing the same overalls every week. He coached soccer and taught Spanish. He related to his students, maintaining high standards that were softened by his ready humor and belly laugh.

But the plight of Third World countries was no laughing matter. Brother Miller seized every opportunity to educate his students. They collected money for their mission schools, and Brother Miller spoke passionately about his dream of becoming a missionary.

He never took for granted the luxury of being an American and had no patience for what today are dubbed “first-world problems,” said Donny Geng, who taught at the school during the same time and is now retired. “He was tired of the American cavalier-ness about education. It's an entitlement.”

Brother Miller's knowledge of Central America expanded the teens' horizons.

“It was clear from the beginning that he was a champion of the poor and wanted desperately to serve down there,” said Christian Brother Pat Conway, a humanities professor at St. Mary's University in Winona, who was a student when Brother Miller began teaching.

Brother Miller was alternately firm and flexible. Once, Brother Conway was given a detention for missing school. As punishment, he had to take down hockey boards after school. Brother Miller knew the boy had been

hospitalized at the time and discretely informed the dean. A few minutes later, the dean called out: “Conway, go home.”

“It was that human side,” Brother Conway said. “He was very quiet about it.”

He likewise remained relatively quiet about the danger of his mission work but confided in close friends. Once, a round of machine gun had sent him for cover, Geng recalled. “He said, ‘I never knew I could pray so fervently as when under my bed.’”

To teach at a Christian Brother school in Guatemala was the fulfillment of a dream. He felt purposeful and needed. Three days after his death, a crowd gathered at the Cathedral of St. Paul for his funeral Mass celebrated by then-Archbishop John Roach. “The beauty of the life of James Miller, and those who serve God's poorest in that part of the world, is that they serve with faith and an absolute commitment to the belief that that's where the Lord wants them,” the archbishop said.

Service to the neighbor in need is a charism of Christian brothers that Cretin-Derham Hall tries to instill in its students, pointing to Brother James as a poignant case study.

“We are really dedicated to keeping the notion of the needy right before our students,” Miley said, “and Jim would be part and parcel in this.” Food drives throughout the year are an obvious first step, but weaving service into the curriculum sets Cretin-Derham Hall apart, he said.

Every Thursday, seniors leave for a two-hour window to serve those in need. “A requirement of that is they must be in one-on-one contact with human beings,” Miley said. “We believe that if you're going to embrace the poor, you need to know them. I don't know of another school that has embedded that in the program.”

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# Indiana Catholic Conference welcomes new executive director

Angela Espada knows how to connect with people. Her friend and former dean of Loyola New Orleans Law School, Maria Pabón, is one of many who can attest to that. In 2002, Espada was serving as assistant dean of admissions at Indiana University's McKinney School of Law when Pabón was hired for a faculty position there. Unexpectedly, Pabón received a call while in Indianapolis to search for a house. It was Espada, extending an invitation to a woman she had not yet even met.

"Angela builds community," Pabón said. "That's who she is." She is aware of the humanity of us all.

Espada will use these attributes in her new role as executive director of the Indiana Catholic Conference, effective Jan. 1. Since her Oct. 7 appointment as incoming executive director, Glenn Tebbe, the ICC's executive director for the past 16 years, has been acclimating Espada to the role. Tebbe will continue to work closely with Espada during the next session of the Indiana General Assembly before his anticipated retirement in late spring.

The ICC serves as the official public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Indiana, requiring the executive director of the ICC to articulate the Church's position on key issues and speak for the bishops of the five dioceses around the state. Espada will be the first woman at the helm of the ICC since its inception in 1966 and the first woman of color to hold a Catholic Conference directorship position nationwide.

"The executive director of the Indiana Catholic Conference is a unique position requiring a variety of skills and exceptional intellect as well as a strong Catholic faith," said Archbishop Charles C. Thompson of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, speaking of Espada's selection following an exhaustive search. "Angela strikes me, first and foremost, as a lifelong Catholic who takes her faith very seriously and lives according to her Catholic beliefs. She has a great deal of experience in education, diversity training and resource management. I have been impressed with her people skills and quick learning ability. There is quite a learning curve for anyone to step into this role, serving with bishops and staffs of five dioceses, engaging in



ANGELA ESPADA

dialogue with political representatives from different perspectives and both sides of the aisle, coordinating various groups and organizations, and maintaining a consistent Catholic ethos while working with people of various faith traditions and beliefs."

Archbishop Thompson noted that while women have held key leadership positions in the archdiocese and other dioceses around the state and the nation, "especially in light of comments and encouragement provided by Pope Francis, I believe that it is very timely and appropriate to have the first woman to serve as ICC executive director in Indiana."

The archbishop also acknowledged the groundbreaking nature of having an African American woman in this role. "To be clear, although it is quite historic to have a woman of color in this very important position for the Catholic Church in Indiana, Angela was chosen as the best person from among several highly qualified candidates," he said.

"While Glenn will be greatly missed upon his retirement next year – his contributions have been immeasurable – I am excited about Angela stepping into this role and I look forward to working with her," Archbishop Thompson added. "She exudes confidence, compassion and enthusiasm, and along with her distinguished professional background, these qualities will serve her – and the Catholic Church in Indiana – exceedingly well."

In approaching her new position, Espada will draw upon her varied personal and professional experiences as well as her solid grounding in the Catholic Church.



VICTORIA ARTHUR

## 'A catalyst for good'

Angela traces her Catholic roots and strong moral compass to her family and the parish where she was baptized. She attended St. Rita Catholic Church and School in Indianapolis, which was founded a century ago as the city's first parish for African American Catholics.

Later she attended St. Joan of Arc Parish before enrolling in public school. The curriculum was not challenging enough and Espada returned to St. Rita, graduating from there and then Scecina Memorial High School. After earning two undergraduate degrees from the University of Indianapolis, she headed to Indiana University in Bloomington, where she earned her J.D. as well as a master's degree in higher education.

Newly married to José Espada, whom she met when they were both graduate assistants, she worked as a deputy prosecutor. She then moved to the Indiana Supreme Court as a staff attorney before joining the administration of the Indiana University Robert H. McKinney School of Law in Indianapolis while her husband also pursued a career in administration at the Indiana

University School of Medicine. By this time, she had been a guardian for a younger sister, a therapeutic foster parent for a niece and nephew, and finally a parent to her daughter, Maya.

After being appointed the first African American associate dean in the IU system, Espada was selected by the American Council on Education for its prestigious fellows' program. ACE fellows, identified as emerging leaders in higher education, immerse themselves in administration at a host institution. Espada's fellowship year was in Nashville, Tennessee. While there, the chancellor of Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis appointed her to a new position: which would become the associate vice chancellor for diversity, equity and inclusion.

Dr. Dereck Rovaris Sr., vice provost for diversity and chief diversity officer of Louisiana State University has been a friend of the family since Espada's days in university admissions and was a member of her fellows' cohort. Espada's gifts were apparent to everyone in the program.

"Angela is a very focused, compassionate, intelligent individual who is always on the right side of justice," Rovaris said. "And that's not just from her education and legal training, but her family. She comes from a family where doing the right thing was always the expectation, and nothing short of that was acceptable. She and José have raised their daughter Maya, a magna cum laude graduate of

Harvard University, in the same fashion."

A lifelong Catholic himself, Rovaris predicts that Espada will be "a catalyst for good" in her new role.

Those sentiments were echoed by Stephanie Whitley, director of religious education at Holy Angels Parish in Indianapolis, the Espadas' church home for the past decade. Whitley got to know Espada during their work together on the parish's capital campaign to construct a new church. She also noted Espada's diligent efforts on the Holy Angels social concerns commission.

## Making connections

Since early October, Espada has been traveling the state with Tebbe, meeting key individuals and entities. The 2020 session of the Indiana General Assembly begins Jan. 6, and the ICC once again will weigh in on the issues facing the legislature. Tebbe and Espada anticipate the return of many issues that have dominated past legislative sessions – from predatory lending to pro-life matters.

"The key issues continue to be protecting religious freedom, promoting the common good, and the dignity of life and dignity of the person," Espada said. "Glenn has been wonderful in connecting me with key players on all the issues."

Those who know Espada best say they are inspired by her – and that she will do great things in her new role, guided by her devotion to the Catholic Church and its teachings.

*"I have met so many people who are passionate about their faith and who try not only to do good, but to be led by the Spirit and to do God's will. It is inspiring."*

ANGELA ESPADA

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# NEWS BRIEFS

## Pope advances sainthood causes of Canadian missionary, Polish martyr

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis advanced the sainthood cause of Bishop Ovide Charlebois — a Canadian Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate who ministered to First Nations peoples and migrant workers scattered throughout the vast, lake-covered province of Manitoba. The pope recognized the Quebec native, who lived from 1862 to 1933, as having lived the Christian virtues in a heroic way. The pope also recognized the martyrdom of Father Jan Franciszek Macha, a Polish priest who began his parish ministry when the Nazis invaded Poland and was imprisoned and murdered by its elite force, the SS, despite his mother's efforts to secure a pardon from Adolf Hitler. The pope also formally recognized the martyrdom of 16 victims of the Spanish Civil War and advanced the causes of eight other men and women. During a meeting Nov. 28 with Cardinal Angelo Becciu, prefect of the Congregation for Saints' Causes, the pope signed the decree approving the heroic virtues of Bishop Charlebois, making him "venerable." Before he can be beatified, the Vatican must recognize that a miracle has occurred through his intercession.

## Most Americans support life in prison over death penalty, says new poll

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Most Americans support life imprisonment over the death penalty, according to a Gallup poll released Nov. 24, revealing a shift in the majority opinion on this issue for the first time in 34 years. The poll, based on results from telephone interviews conducted October 14-31 with a random sample of 1,526 adults in the U.S., showed 60% prefer that convicted murders receive a sentence of life imprisonment while 36% said capital punishment would be better. This view marks a shift in Americans' opinion over the past two decades. In the 1980s and 1990s, the majority opinion leaned toward the death penalty. The survey is also just the second time more people said they thought life in prison was a better punishment than the death penalty which they did by 1 percentage point in 2007 — 48% favoring life in prison to 47% favoring the death penalty. The current poll, with a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 3 percentage points, breaks down respondents by age, sex and party affiliation. Within these groups there were differing opinions: Women showed stronger support for life in prison (66%) than men (53%). Younger people were also more likely to show support for life in prison (68%) than older people (57%). Along party lines: 58% of

## Bethlehem Church of the Nativity



CNS photo/Debbie Hill

Visitors stand in line in the Church of the Nativity Dec. 1 in Bethlehem, West Bank. Because of a large number of visitors, the church, which is built on what is believed to be the site where Jesus was born, has extended its visiting hours.

Republicans supported the death penalty over 38% saying life in prison was the better option and 79% of Democrats preferred life in prison over 19% who preferred the death penalty be administered.

## Pope returns part of relic of Jesus' crib to Holy Land

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — As Advent approached, Pope Francis gave a small fragment of Jesus' crib back to Catholics in the Holy Land. At the Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome Nov. 22, experts from the Vatican Museums extracted a small fragment from the relic of what has been venerated as Jesus' manger. The relic, given to the Vatican in the seventh century, has been kept in a chapel under the basilica's main altar. Pope Francis gave the relic fragment to the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land, which oversees the main churches and shrines

associated with the birth, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus. Describing the fragment as "a small piece of the precious relic of the Holy Crib of the Child Jesus," the Franciscans said it arrived in Jerusalem Nov. 29 and was present during a Mass celebrated by the nuncio, Archbishop Leopoldo Girelli, in the chapel of Our Lady of Peace at the Notre Dame Center.

## Duluth bishop dies after heart attack; he was 'greatly loved' by all

ST. PAUL, Minn. (CNS) — Bishop Paul D. Sirba of Duluth, Minnesota, died at Essentia Health-St. Mary's Medical Center in Duluth Dec. 1. He was 59. According to a statement from the diocese's vicar general, Father James Bissonette, Bishop Sirba suffered cardiac arrest at St. Rose Catholic Church in Proctor and was rushed to the medical center

where lifesaving measures were unsuccessful. He died shortly after 9 a.m. He received last rites from Father John Petrich, a hospital chaplain. "Words do not adequately express our sorrow at this sudden loss of our shepherd," Father Bissonette said. "We have great hope and faith in Bishop Sirba's resurrection to new life, and have confident assurance that he will hear the words of our Lord: 'Well done, good and faithful servant, enter in the joy of your Master.'" After studying at the St. Paul Seminary in St. Paul, Paul David Sirba was ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis in 1986. He was named vicar general and moderator of the curia for the archdiocese in July 2009. Pope Benedict XVI appointed him bishop of Duluth and he was ordained a bishop in December 2009. He would have celebrated his 10th anniversary as a bishop Dec. 14.

## New book on the rosary highlights St. John Paul II's devotion to it

WASHINGTON (CNS) — If the use of the rosary as a devotion fell off at some point in the past, that's not the case now, according to Gretchen R. Crowe, Our Sunday Visitor's editorial director for periodicals. Under St. John Paul II, "we saw a real resurgence in praying the rosary," said Crowe, author of "Praying the Rosary With St. John Paul II." "He had such a great devotion to this Marian prayer that he inspired an entire generation of Catholics to come back to the rosary." Crowe added. "I think there's a great power to the rosary, a great devotion to the rosary. I think John Paul exemplified that. I want to do, and try, everything I can, to help people reclaim that great gift of the rosary," she told Catholic News Service in a Nov. 26 phone interview from Our Sunday Visitor's offices in Huntington, Indiana. The book, published Oct. 4, includes chapters for each set of mysteries — Joyful, Sorrowful, Glorious and Luminous, the last developed by the Polish-born pope — and each mystery contains a biographical note about St. John Paul as well as words from his writings or speeches. It's Crowe's second book on the rosary. Her first — "Why the Rosary, Why Now?" — came out in 2017. Both are published by Our Sunday Visitor.

## Trajectory of hateful rhetoric led to Holocaust, say speakers at dialogue

WILMETTE, Ill. (CNS) — Hate speech must be stopped "in its tracks," Chicago Cardinal Blase J. Cupich said in remarks during an interfaith dialogue during their July visit to Auschwitz, the concentration camp operated by the Nazis in occupied Poland, and to make the point that the horror of the Holocaust started with hateful rhetoric. During their visit, Fritzshall, president of the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center, asked Cardinal Cupich as a religious man, a man of God, how such things could happen. At the time, the cardinal had no answer. About a month later, he wrote a column titled "Words Matter," published July 28 in the Chicago Catholic, the archdiocesan news outlet. It took some time for him to formulate his response, Cardinal Cupich told over 800 people who attended the mid-November dialogue in Wilmette. "I reflected on it, and there is an answer," Cardinal Cupich said. "It happens in the human heart when we begin to criticize people, marginalize them, and then eventually call them 'other,' 'alien,' to ourselves."

# AROUND THE DIOCESE

## Ring in the season



Photos by Bradley Spaulding

St. Patrick Oratory in Lagro, a historic church in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, hosted a Christmas concert performed by members of the Southwood Jr.-Sr. High School choirs Nov. 22. The choir performed in the church because the school's auditorium is closed for renovations. St. Patrick was formerly the oldest parish in the diocese. It was founded in 1834 by Irish immigrants working on the Wabash & Erie Canal. Formally designated an oratory in 1997 by Bishop John M. D'Arcy, it became a part of St. Bernard Parish in Wabash. Parishioners continue to celebrate a monthly Mass at the oratory from May through September. The Friends of St. Patrick's maintains the current church, which was dedicated in 1873.



Soloist Cage Dubois and the Southwood Senior High Choir entertain a large crowd of parents and supporters during the concert.

## Cathedral tour



Joshua Schipper

Members of the youth group at St. Michael the Archangel Parish, Waterloo, toured the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception Dec. 1 with chaperones and guide Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades. At the end of the tour the bishop blessed and distributed miraculous medals to the young people.

## St. Mary, Mother of God Parish serves Thanksgiving dinner



Jodi Marlin

Volunteers prepare place settings the morning of Nov. 28 at St. Mary, Mother of God Parish for a free Thanksgiving meal that would be served. For years the parish has offered both a sit-down meal and carryout portions, free of charge, to the homeless and anyone else who can't afford one or can't fix it for themselves.

# Finding friendship: disability awareness

BY JILL A. BOUGHTON

Susan Bear sees her son Ryan as an ambassador. Although the chromosomal abnormality Wolf-Hirschhorn syndrome has limited his learning, speech and mobility, Ryan loves to be around people and to do things in the wider community.

Students respond enthusiastically to his affection during Ryan's twice-monthly visits to St. Anthony de Padua School, South Bend. They were thrilled when, in October, he accompanied them trick-or-treating at the University of Notre Dame. And one student recently saw him at a park and came right over to say hello.

"I remind them that Ryan is perfect in God's eyes," explained Susan. "He can do almost anything you're doing. We just need to figure out how to adapt the activity so he can participate."

During a recent visit, students were doing an art project. They found a hard surface for Ryan and taped the paper to it, found him a giant marker and helped steady his arm as he drew.

Ryan was born in Indianapolis, where an alert physician was able swiftly to diagnose Wolf-Hirschhorn syndrome. He has had multiple medical and developmental challenges, including a 2006 kidney transplant, but his parents have been determined to make his life as normal as possible.

The Bears didn't want their firstborn to be an only child, so he has a younger brother and sister, Tyler and Lauren. The children attended Good Shepherd, a Catholic school in Evansville, where the family lived until six years ago.

Susan made sure Tyler and Lauren and all their peers were comfortable around Ryan. She spent a great deal of time in the school, presenting her own program of disability awareness to every grade level. Ryan was always her helper.

After the family moved to Mishawaka, Ryan completed the young adult program at Penn High School then enrolled in the adult day program at Logan Center. The family joined St. Joseph Parish, South Bend, but Susan wasn't sure how to resume the disability awareness work that had made such an impact in Evansville.

Ryan enjoyed outings with other Logan clients to restaurants, entertainment and athletic events, but his mother wanted a way for him to be of service to others. During a case conference at Logan Center, Susan looked out the window and her eyes lit on St. Anthony de Padua School across the street.

She approached principal Karen Bogol to see whether Ryan could interact with students on a regular basis.



Students of St. Joseph School, South Bend, accept chocolate suckers from Ryan Bear, a young man with a chromosomal abnormality. Bear visits the school regularly with his mother and an assistant from the Logan Center so he and the students can interact and learn to work with one another.

"As a Catholic school, we want to include everyone," stated Bogol, "yet our resources are limited."

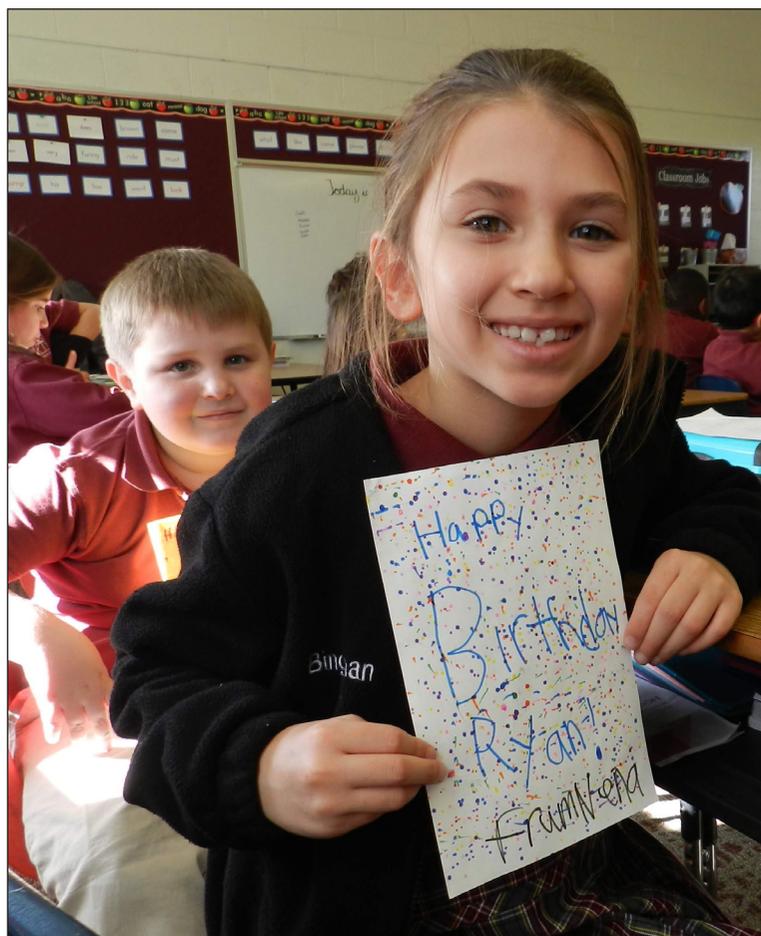
When a parish family approached her wanting to pull their son with Down syndrome out of public school for junior high, St. Anthony was able to work things out, admitting him in fall 2018.

"We have been so blessed!" exclaimed Bogol. So when the Bears brought their proposal, Bogol was eager to try that as well.

"Having him come regularly is so much more profound than a one-time outing," she explained. "It's a safe opportunity for our students to enter into a relationship with someone who initially seems so different. It opens their minds and hearts and awareness so they won't hold back when they meet differently-abled folks elsewhere."

Bogol admitted, "It has opened my eyes to how important genuine community partnerships are. Of course, as a Catholic school we try to make a difference in the world, but it's easy to be absorbed in the details of life inside these walls. Having Ryan here makes us more aware of the transcendent dimension of what we do here. Our going out and others coming in on a regular basis are essential."

The arrangements were made patiently and deliberately. All parents received a letter intro-



The students made cards for Ryan and sang to him on his birthday.

ducing Ryan. In it, his mother wrote: "Throughout his life, Ryan has been instrumental in helping others better understand the capabilities of those labeled with disabilities. He has heightened the sense of empathy of

those who interact with him, and Ryan has become a friend to many."

She also set up a disability awareness session with stations that allowed the young students to try out dealing with vision or

hearing loss or using a wheelchair. Then, last spring, Ryan visited the second grade classrooms several times as a trial and they learned that second grade teacher Joseph Bagiackas had been Ryan's counselor the previous summer at Camp Millhouse. That was the last confirmation they needed.

Students quickly got to know Ryan. They were surprised to learn that he can walk with assistance. After they found out he wears a necklace to give him something to do with his hands, some of them made him jewelry.

Although he is fed through a G-tube, he can taste soft foods for comfort, so when one student brought in a birthday treat for the class, she included pudding for Ryan.

When Ryan visits a second or third grade classroom, he enters into whatever activity the teacher has planned for the day. He is part of a "house," or "family" consisting of students from every grade level who participate together in special outings and events.

This year each house is interacting with an organization in the community, including Logan Center.

On a day Ryan was to visit her classroom, second grade teacher Abigail Stopczynski was hesitant to write "Happy Birthday, Ryan" on the classroom screen because she knew her students would hardly be able to contain their enthusiasm once they realized Ryan was on his way. When he arrived students from both second grade classrooms gathered near him, his maroon shirt blending with their uniforms.

He came in his wheelchair, accompanied by someone from Logan; but on this particular day, Susan also was helping. She shared with them that Ryan had gone to Hacienda on his 26<sup>th</sup> birthday two days earlier and a Notre Dame basketball game.

Each student had made Ryan a birthday card. They were eager to sing him their jazzy version of the birthday song, complete with "cha cha chas." As they do at every visit by Ryan, they played "Ryan Says," imitating him as he raised his arms in the air, grabbed his ankle or crossed his arms over his chest, which is sign language for "I love you."

After the game, they tried "Sound Bingo": listening to tape-recorded sounds and marking pictures of what they heard on special bingo cards, and they talked about the accommodations that might enable a person with hearing or visual challenges to play bingo.

Before leaving for the day, Ryan handed each child a homemade chocolate sucker in the hand shape that means "I Love You." And there was plenty of love to go around.

Photos provided by Lesley Kirzeder

# Prepare a place for the Lord

BY LISA KOCHANOWSKI

**S**OUTH BEND – Christmas card list: Check. Cards ordered: Check. Christmas presents: Check. Christmas dinner planned: Check.

People get so bogged down preparing for the holidays with gifts, food and cards that it's easy to forget about spiritual preparation. One way to start preparing for the Christmas season is by going to reconciliation during Advent.

"Canon law requires that we go to confession at least once a year, or whenever we're in a state of mortal sin: but whenever people ask me how often they should go I always answer, 'As often as you need to,' said Father Stephen Lacroix, pastor at Christ the King Parish in South Bend. "Confession is this tremendous gift that Jesus left us. He knows that we sin, but He gives us a way to reconcile with Him, over and over again, as often as we need it.

"It's amazing how often you see people leave the confessional as if a big weight has been lifted off of their shoulders, especially if it's been awhile since they received the sacrament. There's something about saying those sins out loud and hearing those words 'I absolve you of your sins' with our own ears. It helps us to really accept that forgiveness and move forward like nothing else can."

Becoming reconciled with Christ through a penance service is also a way to concentrate one's focus on the great gift from God that is His Son, Jesus.



"Just as a parent readies the expectant newborn's nursery with fresh paint, clean or new carpet, a crib washed clean from previous use, and so on, why not do the same to prepare for the newborn Jesus, who comes to us once again and repeatedly, through the celebration of the seasons of the Church year?" stated Father John Delaney, pastor at St. Jude and Sacred Heart of Jesus parishes in South Bend.

Part of what Christians do during Advent is to prepare a place in their hearts to welcome the Lord when He comes. "When we receive a guest into our home for Christmas, we clean it up as much as we can, as a sign of

how much we love that guest and how glad we are to welcome them. Confession helps clean out our souls so that we can welcome Jesus with the greatest possible joy, without our sins hanging over our heads and dampening the celebration," commented Lacroix.

Once that has happened, continue the preparation with other forms of outreach and participation, "as with the advice Jesus Himself gives — through works of charity and almsgiving; addressing the needs of the poor or poor-of-heart, such as nursing home patients, the homebound and the recently bereaved," shared Delaney.

Prayer is a very important part of Advent preparation, added Lacroix.

"There's so much busyness going on in the secular world in the weeks before Christmas that it can be difficult to pre-

pare. That's why carving out some quiet time in prayer — whether liturgical prayer in church, family prayer, or personal prayer — is so important in maintaining our focus during our Advent preparation. Works of service to the less fortunate also are really important, since Jesus promised us that we encounter Him in the faces of the poor.

"Finally," he said, "I think that doing our secular preparations with great love is important. This is a time of year when people can feel stressed out because they feel pressure to do too much and spend too much. Simple things like praying for a person while you're buying their gift, or thanking God for the people who are about to come over to your house, can transform our attitude and transform some of these secular preparations into real acts of love."

As you seek for ways to share Christ's love within you, please consider leaving a part of your legacy to the Church.

For more information about how you can include your parish or the Diocese in your will or estate plan, contact Michael Shade, executive director of the Catholic Community Foundation of Northeast Indiana at 260.949.2441.

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# Marriage: accepting each other as God does

BY SAMANTHA ROHLOFF

**T**he Eucharist is my favorite part of the Catholic faith. It is like having a taste of heaven every day," said Don Craighead. His wife, Kay, agreed. "The best part of any Mass is receiving the Eucharist."

In their strong marriage, the Fort Wayne residents remember to keep Christ the King above all else. The Craigheads celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary by renewing their vows at a Mass with Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades in September at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. Making it a triple-milestone day, both of their children also renewed their wedding vows with their spouses at the same Mass, in commemoration of 25 years of marriage.

Their relationship began at a lake but developed more during high school in 1965. Don and Kay Craighead fell in love.

"Don was in the military, and we spoke every week on the telephone. The proposal took place during a telephone call," Kay said. The two married after a yearlong engagement and started their family in 1971 with the birth of their first child, Rob. The year 1974 brought another miracle, the birth of their daughter, Melissa.

Strong and healthy marriages are a part of Don and Kay's children's lives as well. Rob met his future wife, Kim, at Purdue University Fort Wayne, then known as Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne, and the two then started a family of three boys: Conner, Logan and Camden. They also have a grandson, Archer. Their wedding was May 14, 1994. Melissa met her future husband, Gumesindo, at North Side High School. They too started a family, consisting of three children: Gabriella, Gina and Gavin. Their wedding date is Dec. 3, 1994. Don and Kay were married on April 19, 1969.

Recounting the actual day of their marriage, Don said he remembers liking the opportunity to spend time with Kay all that day. Kay said she really enjoyed celebrating with their friends and family. "Our Mass, shared with each other and God, was the perfect union that I had always



Provided by Kay Craighead

**The Don and Kay Craighead family pose with Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades at St. Mary, Mother of God Parish in September following a Mass of blessing at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Fort Wayne, for those celebrating anniversary milestones. The Craigheads, on either side of the bishop, were observing their 50th wedding anniversary, while their children, Melissa and Rob, were both celebrating their 25th wedding anniversaries.**

craved," said Don.

The anniversary Mass they attended with Bishop Rhoades, and where the two renewed their vows, was especially important for both Don and Kay. "Personally, I felt that the vow renewal was a private moment," said Kay. She enjoyed the bishop's sermon, as did Don. He also recalls appreciating the Gospel reading, as well as the bishop's words of blessing.

Their faith has impacted Don and Kay's family in other ways. "Seeing the Catholic faith in the examples of my parents loving each other, God instilled in me the desire to have that relationship," recounted Don. "I prayed that God would send me a woman to help me [in]

that quest. I thank God every day that He answered my prayer. We also pray for our children every day, that their relationship [with] God continues to grow deeper and closer with Him."

Don also said his and Kay's faith has brought them closer to

each other and let them accept each other as God does, unconditionally. It has also shaped the lives of the children. "Our children's Catholic faith has helped them more than [once] to rise to the challenges that they have faced in their lifetime."

"The Catholic faith has given us a ... strong feeling of knowing that no matter what, God is there to depend on and direct you. Faith has been a foundation for our marriage because it taught us that marriage is a total commitment — not temporary — and it involves the husband, wife and God," said Kay.

After 50 years, the two spouses have marriage advice to give.

Don said to remember that "In God we trust, all others pay cash," and to keep a sense of humor during the trying times. Kay said couples should talk to each other and respect each other. "God should be the center of all your decisions." Practically, she noted that she also advised her daughter after she was married to "engrave the date on the inside of your husband's wedding ring."

In the words of a grateful married man, Don declared: "I'd do it all over again in a heartbeat."

*"The Catholic faith has given us a ... strong feeling of knowing that no matter what, God is there to depend on and direct you."*

DON CRAIGHEAD



CNS photo/Gregory A. Shemitz

**Doves and interlocking wedding bands symbolizing the sacrament of marriage are depicted in a stained-glass window at Sts. Cyril & Methodius Church in Deer Park, N.Y. Last year, Pope Francis released a document that said to discern a vocation, people have to realize it's a calling from a friend, Jesus. The document, "Christus Vivit" ("Christ Lives"), was the pope's reflection on the Synod of Bishops on young people, the faith and vocational discernment.**

# Knights of Columbus state deputy presents awards

BY JOSHUA SCHIPPER

The Knights of Columbus Father Dominic Duehmig Council 14214 of St. Mary of the Assumption Parish, Avilla, received its first Star Council Award, an annual threefold Knights of Columbus honor, on Nov. 16 in Avilla.

After the celebration of Mass, Knights of Columbus State Deputy Paul Zielinski and his wife, Sheila, presented the award to the council, citing outstanding achievement in membership, insurance and service program activities.

"Our councils need good men," Zielinski told those gathered. "Our Church needs good men and our parishes need good active men."

"Jesus commanded us to love," he continued. "He tells us to love God and our neighbor. I believe, I think you do too, that the Knights of Columbus is the best organization to help good Catholic men become better Catholic men, husbands and fathers."

"You have the opportunity this year to create a legacy," Zielinski concluded. "Make this year your best year yet."

The Star Council Award requires a Knights of Columbus council to qualify for three separate awards.

The Columbian Award, the first of the three, is given to councils that conduct and report at least four major programs in each of the categories of faith, family, community and life.

The Father McGivney Award,

named for Knights of Columbus founder Father Michael J. McGivney, recognizes the council's membership growth. To receive this award, a council is required to meet or exceed its yearly membership quota of 7% net growth.

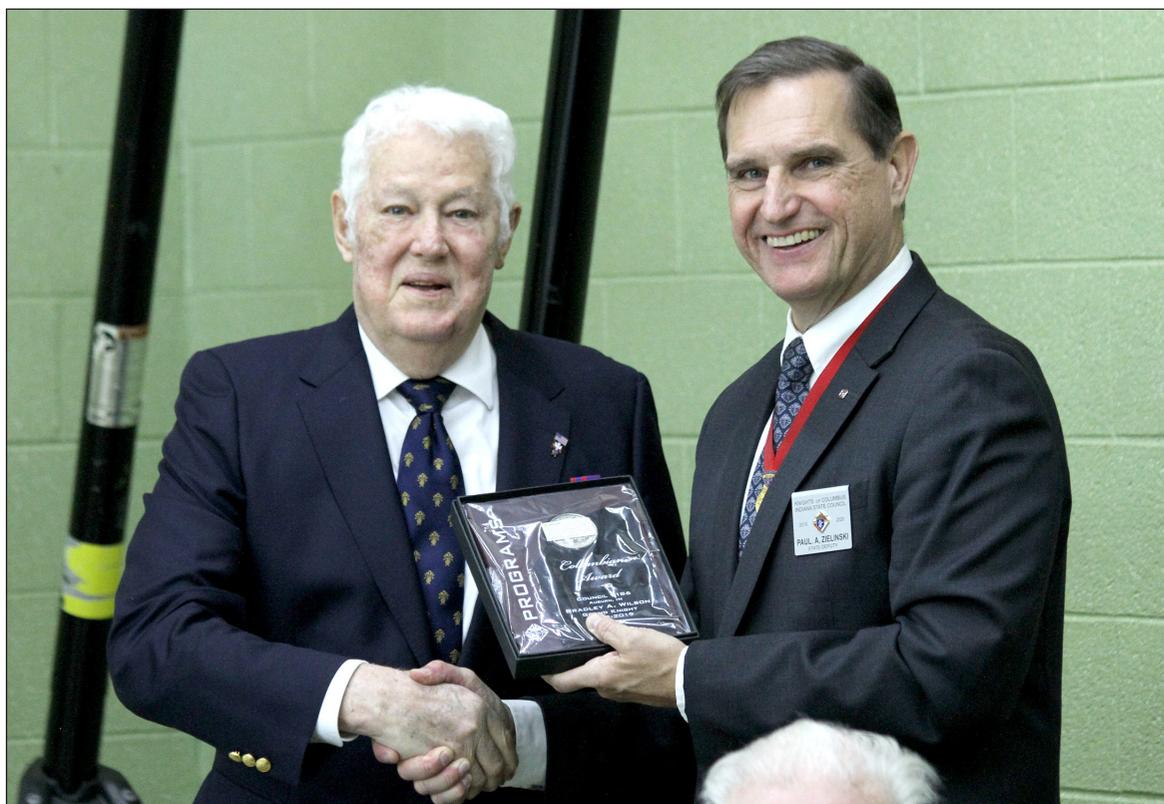
The Founder's Award, the final qualification, requires councils to meet or exceed the annual insurance membership quota of 1.5% net growth.

Zielinski also presented a Star Council Award to the Father August Young Council of Garrett, as well as a Columbian Award to the Father Lawrence Weber Council of Auburn.



Photos by Joshua Schipper

Grand Knight Dave Roesener of Avilla receives the Knights of Columbus Star Council Award from Knights of Columbus State Deputy Paul Zielinski Nov. 16. It is the Avilla council's first time earning the award, which is for an outstanding fraternal year regarding membership, insurance and service.



Knights of Columbus State Deputy Paul Zielinski presents a Columbian Award to the Auburn council.



The Garrett council receives a Star Council Award from Knights of Columbus State Deputy Paul Zielinski.

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## A home for generation woke

“Oh, you’re a millennial.” He said it like a curse word, his voice dripping with sarcasm and contempt. I nodded. “Born in 1989. Full blown, through and through.” I thought about adding, “I’m sorry ...” apologizing on behalf of a generation born from 1981 to 1996, who grew up with MTV and Nickelodeon, came of age during the Clinton impeachment and distinctly remember where they were on Sept. 11.

I almost joked, “We’re what’s wrong with the world, aren’t we?” as I sat next to the baby boomer who resented my entire generation, simply because we chose skinny jeans and dared to question why college is so expensive, crushing us under student debt that will follow us well into middle age.

I nearly threw my generation under the bus, all so this man would feel better about his dislike of the kids who grew up receiving participation trophies.

But I didn’t. Because why should I?

No generation is perfect, each facing unique challenges, each having distinct personality and peculiarities that others mock and question. But, millennials seem to carry the ire of everyone. I can see why, in some ways.

We millennials worship at the altar of wokeness, give praise at Sunday brunch, rejoicing in bottomless mimosas and a well-made frittata with turkey bacon or vegan tofu. We claim knowledge about all things but won’t definitively declare anything. We are in constant fear of being outed as a fraud that embodies

the mantra we hold dear: Fake it till you make it.

We’re confident, but most of us feel like imposters. It’s why we post Instagram stories declaring, “I adulted,” in search of affirmation that we’re doing the right thing. We’re arrogant on the outside but feel woefully unprepared, desperate to make an impact, but unsure where to begin.

Perhaps it’s very millennial of me to say, but we’re resented because we’re misunderstood.

What’s seen as “woke” is actually our desire to not offend. What’s seen as “arrogance” is an overcompensation for feeling like we’re unqualified. What’s seen as “privilege” is our projection of desperately needing a place to fit in.

And so as we’re mocked, written off and talked down to, we puff up our chests, hold our heads high and talk a little louder about “what’s wrong with this world,” and “why we can fix it,” not necessarily because we know, but because we want you to think we do.

The Church can serve this millennial generation — enter into the mess that is the millennial experience — not by pandering or dumbing things down, not by acquiescing or sweeping things to the side, but by being a home — a haven — for those who seek to find a place to belong.

The Church can be the landing pad for a confused, scared, searching millennial, a place to turn to when the chaos and noise of young adulthood, new marriage, young parenthood or perpetual singlehood rages on.



KATIE PREJEAN MCGRADY

### WINDOW SEAT WISDOM

The Church can be home for a generation woke, but homeless.

A home is sacred. Home is the place where we know we matter, where we’re seen as valuable, taken care of and accepted.

Home is where we find our family, whom we put up with on even the worst days and with whom we celebrate on the best. Home is where we hear the truth — honestly told, passionately shared and in an environment where we’re open to accept it.

And who more needs a home than millennials desperate to find a place to belong, where they can be heard, be given advice, find solace and know they matter?

We millennials are open-minded, a little scared and woke: So let’s hear from, be comforted by and truly be awakened by the Church.

Katie Prejean McGrady is an international Catholic speaker and author.

## God’s power paradox

One of the great cries of Advent is for God to rend the heavens and come down (Is 64:1), for Him to stir up His mighty power and come to save us. (Ps 80:2) But what is it that we really seek? Is it armies with thunder and lightning? Is it vindication and peace on our terms?

In a way, it is a dangerous cry if we mean it that way, for who of us can say that no wrath should come to us but only to those other people who deserve it? If God should come in thunderous judgement, are you and I really so sure we could endure and be numbered among the just? It is clear that we need the Lord to save us, but is that salvation seen only in earthly terms where salvation is from my enemies and I myself remain largely unharmed?

In the final essay of Volume 11 of his collected works, which I just finished reading, Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI) ponders a similar Advent theme. I’d like to present his reflections and add a few of my own. In a sermon from December 2003, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger taught,

“Stir up your might O Lord and come! This was the cry of Israel in exile ... this was the cry of the disciples on the Sea of Galilee [in the storm] “Wake up O Lord and help us!” ... And throughout all of history, the little bark of the Church travels in stormy waters ... Stir up your might and come! ... What really is this might of God that seems to be asleep and must be awakened? St. Paul gives the answer in 1 Corinthians



MSGR. CHARLES POPE

### COMMUNITY IN MISSION

when he says that Christ the Crucified One, who is foolishness and weakness to men, is the wisdom and power of God.

“Therefore, when we ask for this real power of God, we are not asking for more money for the Church, for more buildings, for more structures, for more political influence. We are praying for this special, entirely different power of God. We are praying with the awareness that he comes in a powerful way that seems to the world to be weakness and foolishness.”

Yes, here is the paradox of God’s power: He defeats Satan’s pride by the humility of His Son; disobedience and the refusal to be under any authority are defeated by the obedience and submission of Jesus.

Once stirred, God’s power will not always — or even often — manifest itself in thunder and lightning or in armies that shatter and destroy. Rather, His “strong and outstretched arm” is often found nailed and bloody on the cross. Yet here, and in this way, He defeats Satan. How? Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hatred cannot drive out hatred; only love can do

POPE, page 13

## Prepare a fitting dwelling place for the Lord



### THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

MSGR. OWEN F. CAMPION

### Second Sunday of Advent Matthew 3:1-12

Indicating the importance of Advent and the message of these readings, the Church this weekend celebrates the Second Sunday of Advent, rather than the great feast of the Immaculate Conception. The feast of the Immaculate Conception will occur this year on Dec. 9 instead.

This weekend’s reading again is from Isaiah. Isaiah was very unhappy with the turn of events of his time. As was so often the case with the ancient Hebrew prophets, Isaiah saw the misfortunes facing his people as the

result of their own disloyalty to God. His words, however, were neither menacing nor hostile. Rather, they were reassuring. They declared the prophet’s firm belief that despite the sins of the people God would not forsake them. Furthermore, in due time, God’s holy will would be vindicated. Wrongs would be righted. Errors would be corrected. Justice and peace would prevail.

St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans supplies the second reading. In this reading St. Paul repeats the basic message given earlier by Isaiah. It is a testimony to God’s love. Throughout history, St. Paul maintains, God guided the Chosen People to righteousness and ultimately to union with the divine. Paul sees God as the source of all patience and encouragement. Human failings notwithstanding, God’s love is constant.

The Apostle also counsels the Christian Romans to accept each other in love and good will. After all, he insists, Christ accepted them. Christ was the visible and effective instrument on earth of God’s goodness, the model for all human behavior.

For its third reading, the Church offers us a passage from the Gospel of Matthew. The central figure is John the Baptist, mentioned in Luke as the child of Elizabeth and Zachary. Elizabeth of course was a “kinswoman,” probably cousin, of Mary. Therefore, John was related to Jesus.

From the earliest days of Christianity, John the Baptist has been a favorite figure. His absolute commitment to the all-encompassing majesty of God’s perfect order has made him a paragon of devotion.

John clearly was on a mission. Gospel testimony is plentiful. Travel in ancient Palestine was understandably rare. It was very difficult and time-consuming. It was unpredictable and risky. Very few would ever have traveled for diversion or leisure.

That John journeyed far and wide evidenced his sense of mission, and he encountered many people.

John was not hesitant or vague in confronting sin. He chastised his listeners, in effect, for their differences of opinion.

Self-interest drove them too much. Their lack of obedience to God only strengthened the reign of sin in the land. Thus, their personal failings contributed to the burdens weighing heavily upon the entire society.

Understandably, he challenged the people to purge themselves of this self-interest and sin and humbly to turn to God.

### Reflection

Throughout Advent, the Church calls us to receive God in our hearts. The Lord’s coming at Christmas is symbolic of divine entry into human life.

It frankly places before us our own sins and the sins of all humanity. John himself was stark and direct, absolutely and completely committed to God. His words are sharp and unequivocal. In like manner, for our own good, the Church calls us to a thorough examination of conscience.

Using the very words, and example, of John the Baptist, the Church bluntly urges us to put first things first. Following

worldly self-interests will lead nowhere — certainly not to God.

Advent’s purpose is not just to plan for a memorial of Christ’s birth. It primarily calls us to make our hearts fitting dwelling places for the Lord. To be such fitting dwelling places, we must rid ourselves of sin. It is that simple.

Isaiah and Paul remind us that God will empower us in our quest for holiness. God wants us to live. He loves us.

### READINGS

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

**Monday:** Gn 3:9-15, 20 Ps 98:1-4 Eph 1:3-6, 11-12 Lk 1:26-38

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

**Wednesday:** Is 40:25-31 Ps 103:1-4, 8, 10 Mt 11:28-30

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

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

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

# Medicine and a 'sense of the sacred'

As clergy, we touch upon very holy realities when we baptize, consecrate the Eucharist, give absolution to sinners or anoint the sick. These special moments engage divine grace in deep and important ways in the lives of those to whom we minister.

In the midst of these sacred realities, we remain, nonetheless, very human and fallible instruments. I remember one time when a bishop contritely divulged in my presence that during the consecration that morning all he could think about was a good cup of hot coffee.

We clergy need to attend carefully to the graced realities we regularly handle lest we end up squandering or losing our sense of the sacred. The old adage reminds us: familiarity breeds contempt. An elderly priest and professor in Rome used to urge us as seminarians: "Seek the grace to celebrate each holy Mass as if it were your first Mass, your last Mass and your only Mass."

Similar challenges exist in the world of medicine. Physicians who work with frail and vulnerable human beings every day must be attentive when it comes to the sacredness of their subjects and their profession.

One of the lesser-known lines from the famous Hippocratic oath has always intrigued me: "In purity and holiness I will guard my life and my art." Doctors face a range of unique temptations that the oath enumerates: It counsels them to swear off "all mischief and in particular of sexual relations with both female and male [patients]" as well as all abortions and acts of euthanasia. To engage in any of these activities is to lose one's way, forswearing the sacredness of the medical profession's calling.

Yet some doctors, not unlike some priests and bishops, end up losing touch with this "sacred dimension."

An article in the Irish Times, written by a physician in the run-up to the 2018 abortion

referendum in Ireland, exemplified this loss and profanation of medicine's sacredness.

Following a routine 20-week ultrasound of her third pregnancy, Dr. Caroline McCarthy described her sadness at learning that her baby "had no kidneys and as a result there was no amniotic fluid. His lungs could not develop properly without the fluid, but he wouldn't need his lungs or his kidneys until after birth, so the pregnancy would probably carry to term." She was told she had two options: "Carry my baby to term and he would either be born dead or die shortly after birth or travel to the UK to end the pregnancy."

After a few days spent in a haze of panic and tears, Dr. McCarthy and her husband, Michael, took a flight out of Ireland to undergo a "compassionate induction" of labor at Liverpool Women's Hospital. The terminology brought to mind an astute observation a friend had once made: "Beware of any medical procedure with the word 'compassion' in its name; it often conceals wrongdoing."

When the hospital clerk arrived to get their informed consent signature, the procedure listed on the form was: "Feticide termination of pregnancy." Feticide is a medical term referring to the killing of a human, in this case during an early stage of development — "fetal homicide." After Dr. McCarthy's labor was induced, a large-gauge needle (termed a "catheter" in the article) was used for the feticide; it passed through her abdomen and uterus into her baby's heart and potassium chloride was injected to stop its beating.

Shortly thereafter, her still-born son was delivered: "I saw his perfect little face for the first time. I felt that same post-birth relief and elation as I had after the birth of my other two children. The midwife wrapped him in a towel and I held him close. I felt at complete peace with my decision and just sat holding and staring at my beautiful son. In



## MAKING SENSE OF BIOETHICS

FATHER TAD PACHOLCZYK

the morning, the midwife helped us dress John. We spent the day holding and looking at him and taking photographs."

It's hard to miss the jolting unseemliness of the family's taking photos of their dead child whose life they had just ended. Dr. McCarthy's actions cannot be squared with her vocation as a mother or with her sacred calling as a physician to "do no harm." That sacred calling translates into helping all those born with birth defects or afflicted by disease, without ever imposing death penalties onto them. Ahead of all others, physicians are tasked with grasping this key truth.

Hippocrates possessed unusual wisdom and foresight to codify these real dangers for the soul of the medical professional millennia ago. As we witness an unprecedented collapse of the sense of the sacred within the world of the healing arts today, we must assiduously pray for those who have turned their backs on that ancient and time-tested oath, and vigorously support those fighting to uphold its tenets within medicine's hallowed hallways.

Rev. Tadeusz Pacholczyk, Ph.D., serves as the director of education at The National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia.

## SCRIPTURE SEARCH®

Gospel for December 8, 2019

Matthew 3:1-12

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

BAPTIST	REPENT	AT HAND
PROPHET	A VOICE	PREPARE
PATHS	CAMEL'S HAIR	BROOD
VIPERS	FLEE	WRATH
FRUIT	ABRAHAM	CHILDREN
TREES	CUT DOWN	WATER
SANDALS	WHEAT	CHAFF

### BAPTIST WORDS

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

### Narcisa de Jesus Martillo Moran



1832-1869 FEAST DECEMBER 8  
 After she was orphaned as a young person in rural Ecuador, Narcisa moved to Guayaquil, a large coastal town, where she did manual labor for 15 years while devoting herself to prayer and good works. In 1868 she went to Lima, Peru, lodging in the hostel of the Lay Brothers of St. Dominic. This laywoman sought holiness through prayer and self-mortification, often praying alone

for eight hours daily and doing penance for four hours nightly, sometimes wearing a crown of thorns or suspending herself from a cross. She was beatified in 1993 and canonized in 2008.

### POPE, from page 12

that. And pride cannot drive out pride; only humility can do that.

And thus the Lord defeats Satan; not by becoming a bigger, fiercer, more vengeful version of Satan, but by canceling Satan's grievous stance with its opposite. It is the Lord's refusal to meet Satan's terms, to become anything like him or in any way enter his world. In this way, the Lord conquers pride with humility and hate with love.

Cardinal Ratzinger continues his essay as follows:

"He does not come with military divisions; he comes instead with a wounded heart that apparently has nothing more to say, yet then proves to be the true and wholly other power and might of God."

This paradox should challenge us mightily, because it means that God's help will often not be on our terms. We would like to have every foe vanquished and every harmful sorrow of our life removed. No cross at all; just stir up your power Lord and take it all away. But that is not usually how God's power stirs in this "paradise lost," which we chose by our own ratification of Adam and Eve's sinful choice. We preferred a tree and its fruit to God and He does not cancel our choice. Instead, He plants the tree of the Cross and saves us by the very suffering and death we chose in the ancient Garden of Eden.

Here is God's true power at work in this sin-soaked and rebellious world: the power of Cross. And if you didn't know what you were asking for when praying,

"Stir up your power, Lord, and come to save us," now you do. We might prefer that God save us on our terms, by the mere vanquishing of our foes and the removal of our suffering, but (as St. Paul teaches) power is made perfect in weakness; it is when we are weak that we are strong, for then the power of God rests on us (cf 2 Cor 12:9-10).

Cardinal Ratzinger then sets forth the challenge of this prayer for us:

"[Hence our true declaration is] 'Lord wake us up from our drowsiness in which we are incapable of perceiving you, in which we conceal and impede the coming of your holy power.'

"... Christianity is not a moral system in which we may merely roll up our sleeves and change the world. We see in the move-

ments that have promised us a better world how badly that turns out!

"... But [on the other hand] Christians are not merely spectators ... rather [the Lord] involves us; he desires to be efficacious in and through us ... And so in this cry we pray to him for ourselves and allow our own hearts to be touched: Your power is in us, rouse it and help us not to be an obstacle to it, but, rather, its witnesses [to its] vital strength."

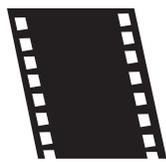
That may well mean suffering, martyrdom and loss. It may not, and often does not, mean that God will simply vanquish our foes and remove all our suffering. In this world the saving remedy is the Cross; not just for others but for us, too. On Good Friday, Christ looked like a "loser." Satan and the world danced. But on

Sunday, the Lord got up. Friday was first, Saturday lingered, and then came Sunday. As for Christ, so also for us: always carrying in our body the death of Jesus, so that also the life of Jesus may be manifested in us (2 Cor 4:10). The victory will come but it comes through the paradoxical power of the Cross.

Does this Advent reflection sound too much like Lent for you? Why do you think we are wearing purple?

Now pray with me (but be sure to understand what you are asking): "Stir up your power, Lord, and come to save us!"

Msgr. Charles Pope is the pastor of Holy Comforter - St. Cyprian Catholic Church, Washington, D.C.



## MOVIE REVIEWS

**NEW YORK (CNS)** — Following are reviews by the Office for Film and Broadcasting of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

# Christmas movie tells story of orphans helped by guardian angels

BY DENIS GRASSKA

SAN DIEGO (CNS) — When it debuted in late 2018, “Buttons: A Christmas Tale” boasted an impressive number of famous names and familiar faces, and it was shown in select theaters only Dec. 8, 2018.

Fortunately for the many who missed their one chance to see it last year, the film is being released on DVD Dec. 3, just in time for the holidays. It was released on digital platforms Nov. 19.

The musical film tells the interconnected stories of two orphans who overcome heart-break and adversity at Christmas time, thanks to the watchful care and timely help of a pair of guardian angels, played by Hollywood legends Dick Van Dyke and Angela Lansbury.

The star-studded film’s cast also includes Jane Seymour (“Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman”), Roma Downey (“Touched by an Angel”), Ioan Gruffudd (“The Fantastic Four” movies), Robert Picardo (“Star Trek: Voyager”), John de Lancie (Q from “Star Trek: The Next Generation”), Charles Shaughnessy (“The Nanny”), and Abigail Spencer



CNS photo/Paramount Home Entertainment

**Dick Van Dyke and Angela Lansbury star as guardian angels in “Buttons: A Christmas Tale.” The 2018 musical film is being released on DVD just in time for the holidays.**

(then the star of NBC’s time-travel drama “Timeless”).

If that weren’t enough, Academy Award-winners Robert Redford and Kate Winslet are the film’s narrators.

American composer Tim Janis, who co-wrote, composed the music for and made his directorial debut with “Buttons,” said the film is a reminder “that you’re not alone and that you should have hope.”

During a Nov. 25 telephone

interview with The Southern Cross, San Diego’s diocesan newspaper, Janis said that in addition to the celestial beings depicted onscreen, he “cannot say that there weren’t angels helping and supporting” his efforts to make the film and to bring it to audiences.

It was his first film and, not only was it blessed with a cast that many veteran filmmakers would envy, but after being shown in theaters for one night

only through Fathom Events, it secured a DVD release through Paramount Home Entertainment.

All of this, he said, is “like a miracle in itself.”

An admitted fan of the many classic Christmas films that have become perennial favorites, Janis said those movies were a source of inspiration for him. He acknowledged that his own contribution to the genre bears some similarity to Frank Capra’s “It’s a Wonderful Life,” another Christmas film concerned with prayer, heavenly help and the triumph of hope over despair.

In Janis’ film, “Buttons” in the title is the nickname of one of the orphans helped by the guardian angels. Forced to work in a mill but too small to work the machines, the girl instead sews on buttons.

What makes Van Dyke and Lansbury so well-suited for the role of guardian angels?

For Janis, it has something to do with the fact that the two nonagenarian actors are “so much a part of our youth” thanks to their lengthy filmographies. And, in such beloved films as “Mary Poppins” (starring Van Dyke) and “Bedknobs and Broomsticks” (with Lansbury), he said, they project “such a

warm, caring presence.”

“You just almost instinctively want to think of them as your guardian angels, if they could be,” he said.

As one who has enjoyed watching Van Dyke sing and dance on film over the years, Janis said he made sure to give the veteran performer a few more opportunities to demonstrate those talents in “Buttons.”

The film’s one-day theatrical run last year represented such “a small window of time,” Janis said, that even some of his own family members were concerned about whether they would be able to see it in theaters.

Of the film’s debut on digital platforms and DVD, he said he considers this “the movie’s real release.”

“I’m glad that people now can have it in their home, and they can purchase it and watch it,” he said. “I think it’ll be able to reach more people, which I really want it to do.”

Among its potential viewers, he hopes, will be those in particular need of having their spirits lifted and hearts touched at Christmas.

Grasska is assistant editor of *The Southern Cross*, newspaper of the Diocese of San Diego.

## ‘Frozen II’

BY JOHN MULDERIG

NEW YORK (CNS) — Both the filmmakers and the central voice cast of the much-loved 2013 original are reunited in “Frozen II” (Disney). They deliver an exuberant animated musical adventure that’s suitable for a wide demographic.

While generally wholesome, however, this sequel is not appropriate for all. Too scary for the littlest patrons, the film’s nature myths — which deals, among other things, with the “spirits” of the four elements, earth, air, fire and water — may also be confusing for impressionable moviegoers. Teens solidly instructed in the faith, by contrast, will easily let such ideas go.

Queen Elsa of Arendelle (voice of Idina Menzel), having succeeded her father on the throne and healed the breach with her younger sister, Princess Anna (voice of Kristen Bell), is reigning contentedly over her realm and has little use for the magical power to create ice and snow with which she’s endowed. But such placidity will never do, so a complication necessarily arises.

Elsa begins to hear a myste-



CNS photo/Disney

**Elsa, voice of Idina Menzel, and other animated characters appear in the movie “Frozen II.”**

rious voice calling her into the wilderness beyond Arendelle and holding out to her the prospect of discovering the origins of her supernatural gift. Rather than consult a psychiatrist, she responds by embarking on a quest.

Along with Anna, Elsa is accompanied on her journey of discovery by Kristoff (voice of Jonathan Groff), the iceman who would like to make Anna his own, and by merry sentient

snowman Olaf (voice of Josh Gad).

As the quartet, together with Kristoff’s faithful reindeer sidekick, Sven, become entangled in a long-standing conflict between the Inuit-like Northuldra tribe and some exiles from Arendelle, Kristoff’s repeated attempts to propose go disastrously — and amusingly — awry. Irrepressible Olaf provides further comic relief.

Screenwriter and co-director Jennifer Lee and her partner

at the helm, Chris Buck, stress teamwork, family solidarity and upright values. But, along with the somewhat unscriptural outlook on the natural world Lee’s script establishes, at least some adult viewers may find its exaltation of the life of indigenous people over industrialized societies heavy-handed.

But why look beyond the obvious charm of “Frozen II” and the fun it evokes? Its flaws are ultimately outweighed by sym-

pathetic characters, visual flair and skillful, if sometimes overly complicated, storytelling.

The film contains stylized combat and considerable peril. The Catholic News Service classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG — parental guidance suggested. Some material may not be suitable for children.

# WHAT'S HAPPENING?

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

**Saint Joseph High School offers placement tests**

**SOUTH BEND** — Saint Joseph High School, 453 N. Notre Dame Ave., will offer placement testing on Saturday, Dec. 7. Arrive at 8:30 a.m. at the event entrance side of the building (St. Louis Blvd.) with \$20 testing fee and two #2 sharpened pencils. Testing will begin at 9 a.m. and conclude between 12:30-1 p.m. Contact Sue Ushela at 574-233-6137 or [sushela@saintjoehigh.com](mailto:sushela@saintjoehigh.com) for information.

**Patronal feast day celebration**

**KENDALLVILLE** — Immaculate Conception Parish, 319 E Diamond St., will celebrate its patronal feast day on Sunday, Dec. 8, at 11 a.m. The festivities will begin with a bilingual celebration of the Mass, followed by a spaghetti dinner.

**Surviving Divorce program information session**

**GRANGER** — St. Pius X Parish, 52553 Fir Rd., will offer the 12-week Surviving Divorce program beginning in late January and will offer an information session in the parish Life Center, Rm. 105, on Sunday, Dec. 8, at 11 a.m. for anyone who might be interested in attending the program created to bring hope and healing to those who have experienced the pain and loneliness of a broken marriage, and feature a 30-minute DVD each session. Contact Peg Brinig at 574-360-2814 or [mbrinig@nd.edu](mailto:mbrinig@nd.edu) or visit <https://stpius.net/divorcesupport>.

**Sixth annual Crèche pilgrimage**

**NOTRE DAME** — The Notre Dame community will walk through campus on Sunday, Dec. 8, to view nativity sets from

throughout Africa. The pilgrimage begins at Jenkins Nanovic Halls at 2 p.m. and includes prayer, Scripture readings and song while traveling to Eck Visitors Center, Coleman-Morse Center, and ends with a blessing and reception at Main Building. Contact Ciara Kanczuzewski at 574-631-0472 or [cmccance@nd.edu](mailto:cmccance@nd.edu).

**Advent lessons and carols**

**FORT WAYNE** — St. Francis Oratory on the University of St. Francis Campus, 2701 Spring St., will host a quartet Sunday, Dec. 8, of young adults from Toledo, Ohio and Fort Wayne who will reflect on the wonder and beauty of the Incarnation through an evening of sacred music, Scripture and prayer. Mass will take place at 7:30 p.m., following lessons and carols at 6:15 p.m. The event is free and open to the public.

**Basilica to host Advent lessons and carols**

**NOTRE DAME** — The Basilica of the Sacred Heart, will have an Advent lessons and carols service Sunday, Dec. 8, from

## REST IN PEACE

**Arcola**

Albert Koontz, 91, St. Patrick

**Fort Wayne**

Agnes Schnelker, 99, St. Charles Borromeo

**South Bend**

Theresa M. Wibbens, 96, St. Jude

**Decatur**

Robert E. Loshe, 63, St. Mary of the Assumption

7:15-8 p.m. and will feature all of the Basilica choirs, including the Notre Dame Liturgical Choir, Women's Liturgical Choir, Folk Choir, Handbell Choir and Basilica Schola. All are welcome to attend free of charge.

**Ireland pilgrimage information nights**

**SOUTH BEND** — An information session Wednesday, Dec. 11, at St. Therese, Little Flower Church, 54191 Ironwood Rd., from 7-8 p.m. will walk through the itinerary of an Ireland pilgrimage for young adults (18-39) that will take place in June 2020. An information night is also planned Thursday, Dec. 12, at St. Charles Borromeo Parish, 4916 Trier Rd., from 7-8 p.m. Ample time will be provided to address questions. Ways to overcome financial barriers will also be discussed. Scholarship funds are available. Visit [www.diocesefwsb.org/yam-pilgrimages](http://www.diocesefwsb.org/yam-pilgrimages) for information.

**Holy Cross School cookie walk**

**SOUTH BEND** — Holy Cross HASA sponsors a holiday cookie walk on Saturday, Dec. 14, 9 a.m. to noon in Crusader

Commons. Cookies and treats are \$6/lb. Contact Marie Spoonhower at 513-668-0361 or [marie.spoonhower@gmail.com](mailto:marie.spoonhower@gmail.com).

**Knights host breakfast at Most Precious Blood Parish**

**FORT WAYNE** — St. Gaspar del Bufalo Council No. 11043 will serve breakfast on Sunday, Dec. 15, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. in the gymnasium at Most Precious Blood, 1515 Barthold St. Cost is \$10 for adults, \$5 for children 6-12, and \$25 per family. \$5 carryout packs will be available. Proceeds this month will help support diocesan and Franciscan seminarians.

**German Christmas concert**

**FORT WAYNE** — The Fort Wayne Männerchor-Damenchor will present a Christmas Concert at St. Peter Parish, 518 East Dewald St., on Sunday, Dec. 15, at 4 p.m. The concert is free and open to the public. Contact Karen Zawodni at 260-744-2765 or [stpeter1872@frontier.com](mailto:stpeter1872@frontier.com).



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# Call me 'Father': Pope's priestly vocation is his favorite gift

BY CAROL GLATZ

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — In Caravaggio's painting of Matthew, the sinful tax collector being called by Jesus to "Follow me," Pope Francis sees the same unexpected, grace-filled moment found in his own call to the priesthood.

A 17-year-old Argentine student headed to a school picnic on Sept. 21, 1953, the feast of St. Matthew, Jorge Bergoglio felt compelled to first stop by his parish of San Jose de Flores.

It was there, speaking with a priest he had never seen before and receiving the sacrament of reconciliation, he was suddenly struck by "the loving presence of God," who, like his episcopal motto describes, saw him through eyes of mercy and chose him, despite his human imperfections and flaws.

This gift from a "God of surprises," a God who offers unexpected, unlimited and unmerited mercy, would change the young man's life.

Four days before Pope Francis celebrates his 83rd birthday Dec. 17, he will celebrate 50 years as a priest — a ministry he sees as being a shepherd who walks with his flock and yearns to find those who are lost.

Even though he served as auxiliary bishop, then archbishop of Buenos Aires, Argentina, for more than 20 years, was elevated to the College of Cardinals in 2001 and elected pope in 2013, he has said, "What I love

is being a priest," which is why of all the titles he could have, "I prefer to be called 'Father.'"

So much of what Pope Francis experienced in life and his vocation — with its many ups and downs — influenced what he says today about the priesthood, what it means and what it should be for the Church.

The main and overriding source of inspiration of who a priest must be is rooted in the figure of Jesus in the Gospels: What did he do? How did he react? What did he feel and say?

Jesus was always on the road and always attentive to the people he encountered, the pope told priests of the Diocese of Rome in 2014.

Like Jesus and the early apostles, the priest is a missionary, and this was part of the reason a 21-year-old Bergoglio chose to enter the Society of Jesus. "I was attracted to its position on, to put it in military terms, the front lines of the church, grounded in obedience and discipline. It was also due to its focus on missionary work," he said in a 2010 book-length compilation of interviews with Sergio Rubin and Francesca Ambrogetti.

But there is a balance the priest must juggle that incorporates Jesus' compassion and that strong discipline, qualities he needed to do well both at school and at work, beginning with part-time jobs at the age of 13. He swept floors in a factory, did administrative tasks, worked at a laboratory while specializing in applied chemistry in high school,



CNS photo/Vatican stamp and coin office

**The Vatican stamp and coin office released these special stamps to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Pope Francis' Dec. 13, 1969, ordination to the priesthood.**

and worked briefly as a bouncer.

The vocation of a priest, on the other hand, would be the exact opposite for Father Bergoglio; it would be drawing people close, not tossing them out, and not worrying about getting dirty in the process.

"Priests who are — allow me to say the word, 'aseptic,' those 'from the laboratory,' all clean and tidy — do not help the Church," the pope told Rome's priests in 2014.

"Today we can think of the Church as a 'field hospital,'" he said, because "there are so many people who are wounded by material problems, by scandals, also in the Church. People wounded by the world's illusions. We priests must be there, close to these people," immediately treating those wounds with

mercy before delving into the details.

In his many interviews, the pope has acknowledged his failings as a priest, Jesuit provincial, bishop and pope.

But within Christianity, there is "a theology of failure," according to a 1974 book with the same title written by U.S. Jesuit Father John Navone. The book and its theology, which emphasized God's patience, had an important impact on the future pope, who was going through a difficult, dark time after ending a six-year term in 1979 as a young provincial superior who struggled with stark divisions among his confreres.

"There was a blessed juncture between my theology and his crisis," Father Navone has said. "It was a kind of light in the darkness to him."

## NATIVITY, from page 1

the starry night, the simplicity of the stable and the poverty of the shepherds.

Giving the Nativity scene a nighttime backdrop, he said, respects the Gospel account of Jesus' birth but also serves to remind people of times when they've experienced darkness. The creche, he said, says, "Even then, God does not abandon us, but is there to answer our crucial questions about the meaning of life. Who am I? Where do I come from? Why was I born at this time in history? Why do I love? Why do I suffer? Why will I die?"

"It was to answer these questions that God became man," the pope wrote. "His closeness brings light where there is darkness and shows the way to those dwelling in the shadow of suffering."

The simple shepherds, who were the first to go to the stable to see the newborn Jesus, are reminders that "the humble and the poor" are the first to welcome the good news, the pope said. "In a particular way, from the time of its Franciscan origins, the Nativity scene has invited us to 'feel' and 'touch' the poverty that God's son took upon himself in the incarnation."

That, in turn, calls Jesus' disciples "to follow him along

It is only by recognizing and admitting one's failures, the pope has said, then seeing that God still awaits, still offers mercy and forgiveness like the father of the prodigal son, that a priest will be able to see familiar wounds in others and share, in turn, that same undeserved mercy.

It's a form of "pastoral suffering" he told priests in Rome in 2014; "it means suffering for and with the person. And this is not easy! To suffer like a father and mother suffer for their children."

At a time when the priesthood continues to suffer, most visibly with the scandal of abuse and negligence by its members, the pope has continually offered priests a hopeful understanding of their vocation.

Change, transformation and holiness are painful, but "the Lord is purifying His bride and is converting all of us to Him. He is making us experience the trial so that we may understand that without Him we are dust. He is saving us from hypocrisy, from the spirituality of appearances. He is blowing His Spirit to restore beauty to his bride," he told Rome's priests in 2019.

In a letter to priests in 2019, he said, "Our age, marked by old and new wounds, requires us to be builders of relationships and communion, open, trusting and awaiting in hope the newness that the kingdom of God wishes to bring about even today. For it is a kingdom of forgiven sinners called to bear witness to the Lord's ever-present compassion. For His mercy endures forever."

**TODAY'S CATHOLIC**

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the path of humility, poverty and self-denial that leads from the manger of Bethlehem to the cross," the pope wrote. "It asks us to meet Him and serve Him by showing mercy to those of our brothers and sisters in greatest need."

"Jesus, 'gentle and humble in heart,' was born in poverty and led a simple life in order to teach us to recognize what is essential and to act accordingly," he said.

Mary is a model of discipleship, faithfully accepting God's will for her life and sharing Him with others, inviting them to obey Him. Joseph, too, accepts the role God assigned Him, protecting the baby Jesus, teaching Him and raising Him.

And, of course, the pope wrote, "when, at Christmas, we place the statue of the Infant Jesus in the manger, the Nativity scene suddenly comes alive. God appears as a child, for us to take into our arms."

The whole scene, he said, reminds adult Catholics of their childhood and of learning the faith from their parents and grandparents. Each year, it should be a reminder that the faith needs to be passed on to one's children and grandchildren.

Standing together before a Nativity scene, in wonder and awe, he said, is a simple way to start.