

# TODAY'S CATHOLIC

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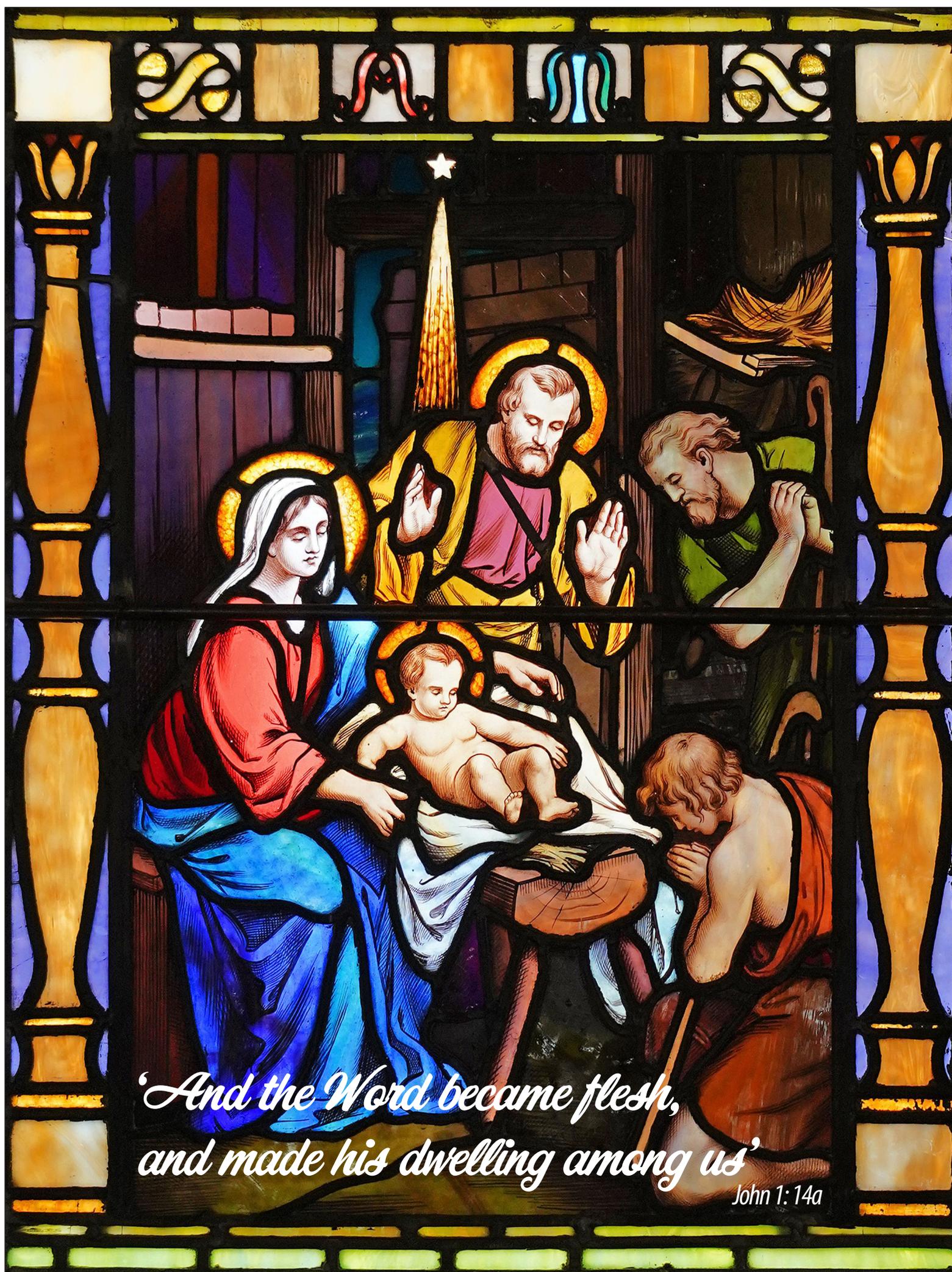
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*'And the Word became flesh,  
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John 1: 14a

CNS photo/Gregory A. Shemitz

The birth of Jesus is depicted in a stained-glass window at St. Mary of the Isle Church in Long Beach, N.Y. The feast of the Nativity of the Lord, a holy day of obligation, is celebrated Dec. 25.

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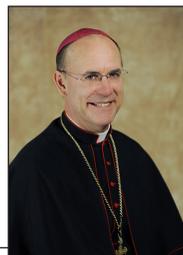
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# A Christmas letter to all the faithful



## IN TRUTH AND CHARITY

BISHOP KEVIN C. RHOADES

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

"Behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Christ and Lord" (Luke 2:10-11).

These words of the angel to the shepherds on the night of the Nativity are, as the angel said, "for all people," including us. They bring us joy and hope. God entered our history. He became Emmanuel, God-with-us. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). He took our sins upon Himself as if they were His own. Out of love, God united Himself to us in order to communicate His life to us, to save us from sin and death. He opened for us the road to His heavenly Kingdom. The Son of God assumed our human nature so that we might share in His divine life.

The great gift of Christmas is Jesus. He is God's gift to us: the gift of Himself. God gave Himself in His only-begotten Son. He took on our humanity to give His divinity to us. This is the most amazing truth of our faith. It was never imagined that God would become man. It was beyond anyone's dreams that the almighty and eternal God would enter history as a newborn baby. The Incarnation was beyond any human expectation. When we contemplate the mystery of Christmas, we become like the shepherds and magi: All we can do is approach the mystery in adoration, with wonder and awe. We sing: "O come let us adore Him."

I hope you will spend time during these days to contemplate the mystery of Christmas, to meditate on the Nativity of Jesus. I like to do so at the side of Mary and Joseph, the privileged witnesses to the birth of the Son of God into the world. I imagine Mary wrapping the infant Jesus in the swaddling clothes and laying Him in the manger (which I imagine Joseph the carpenter prepared for the newborn baby). I think of the love of Mary and Joseph for their infant son, God's Son. The child in the manger looked like other newborn infants, yet His identity as the Son of God, true God and true man, certainly filled Mary and Joseph with the greatest awe.

Pope Francis recently proclaimed a "Year of Saint Joseph." I recommend meditating a bit on Joseph this Christmas. In faith, Joseph understood that the baby in the manger was the Son of God, yet he (Joseph) was called to be His earthly father, to be His guardian. What an amazing vocation! Pope Francis' recent apostolic letter begins with these words: "With a father's heart: that is how Joseph loved Jesus, whom all four Gospels refer to as 'the son of Joseph'."

Blessed Pope Pius IX, 150 years ago, declared St. Joseph the "Patron of the Catholic Church." As St. Joseph guarded and protected Jesus and Mary, so we call upon him to guard and protect us and the universal Church, the Mystical Body of Christ.

St. Joseph was a tender and loving father



CNS/Bridgeman Images

**The Holy Family at the Nativity is depicted in this painting by artist Laura James. The feast of the Nativity of Christ, a holy day of obligation, is celebrated Dec. 25.**

who shows us the tender love of God our Father. We ask him to intercede for us and for the Church, especially during this terrible pandemic. We ask him to protect us from the coronavirus and from the even more dangerous virus, the virus of sin, and to help us to live in God's grace.

At Christmas, in prayerful adoration before the Christmas creche, let us contemplate with Mary and Joseph the infant in the manger, the Word made flesh, Jesus our Savior. May we thus experience the true joy of Christmas and transmit this joy with kind gestures, forgiveness and generosity to all those who are in need, who are suffering or hurting, or who are struggling, especially during this pandemic.

At Christmas Eve Mass in our Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, I will be entrusting all of you, the faithful of our dio-

cese, to St. Joseph. Before a beautiful statue of St. Joseph donated to the diocese by the Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters in Huntington, I will commend our diocese to St. Joseph, imploring his protection and his intercession that we may follow his example of faith and love. I will include the following prayer written by Pope Francis for this Year of Saint Joseph:

*Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.*

*To you God entrusted his only Son; in you Mary placed her trust;*

*with you Christ became man.*

*Blessed Joseph, to us too, show yourself a*

*father and guide us to the path of life.*

*Obtain for us grace, mercy and courage,*

*and defend us from every evil. Amen.*

May God grant all of you a Blessed and Merry Christmas!

# Bishops: Getting COVID-19 vaccine is 'act of charity,' supports common good

BY JULIE ASHER

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The “gravity” of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and “the lack of availability of alternative vaccines,” are “sufficiently serious” reasons to accept the Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna vaccines, the chairmen of the U.S. bishops’ doctrine and pro-life committees said Dec. 14.

“Receiving the COVID-19 vaccine ought to be understood as an act of charity toward the other members of our community,” they said. “In this way, being vaccinated safely against COVID-19 should be considered an act of love of our neighbor and part of our moral responsibility for the common good.”

The bishops addressed the moral concerns raised by the fact the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines have some connection to cell lines that originated with tissue taken from abortions.

However, this connection to morally compromised cell lines is so remote and the public health situation is too grave to reject the vaccines, said Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Doctrine, and Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City, Kansas, chairman of the USCCB’s Committee on Pro-Life Activities.

Late Dec. 11, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration gave emergency-use approval to the Pfizer vaccine, with approval expected for Moderna the week of Dec. 14. UPS and FedEx began shipping the doses across the country Dec. 12, with the first shipments arriving Dec. 14.

Each state has a distribution plan for administering them. National guidelines call for health care workers and those in nursing homes and long-term care facilities to be first in line to get immunized.

On Dec. 8, The Lancet medical journal reported that four clinical trials of a third vaccine, being developed by the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca “appears to have moderate efficacy in preventing symptomatic illness, and may significantly reduce hospitalization from the disease.” AstraZeneca is expected to apply to the FDA for emergency use of its vaccine in the coming weeks.

Bishop Rhoades and Archbishop Naumann said they found the AstraZeneca vaccine it to be “more morally compromised” and concluded this vaccine “should be avoided” if there are alternatives available.

“It may turn out, however, that one does not really have a choice of vaccine, at least, not without a lengthy delay in immunization that may have



CNS photo/Mount Sinai Health System via Reuters

**A pharmacist undergoes training in preparation for the distribution of the Pfizer coronavirus vaccine at a Mount Sinai Health System pharmacy in the Queens borough of New York City in this handout photo released Dec. 10.**

serious consequences for one’s health and the health of others,” the two prelates stated. “In such a case ... it would be permissible to accept the AstraZeneca vaccine.”

Shortly after Pfizer and Moderna announced Nov. 11 and Nov. 16, respectively, that their vaccines were 95% effective against COVID-19, critics claimed the vaccines have been produced using cells from aborted fetuses, leading to confusion over “the moral permissibility” of using these vaccines.

Bishop Rhoades and Archbishop Naumann addressed this issue in a Nov. 23 memo to their fellow bishops and addressed it again in their 2,400-word statement Dec. 12. In the memo they noted some were “asserting that if a vaccine is connected in any way with tainted cell lines, then it is immoral to be vaccinated with them. This is an inaccurate portrayal of Catholic moral teaching.”

In their new lengthy statement, the two committee chairmen emphasized that any such cell lines were derived from tissue samples taken from fetuses aborted in the 1960s and 1970s and have been grown in laboratories all over the world since then.

“It is important to note that the making of the rubella vaccine — or that of the new COVID-19 vaccines — does not involve cells taken directly from the body of an aborted child,” Bishop Rhoades and Archbishop Naumann said. “Cells taken from two abortions in the 1960s were replicated in a laboratory to produce two cell lines that can be reproduced again and again, indefinitely.”

“To make the rubella vaccine, cells from these cell lines are stimulated to produce the chemicals necessary for the vaccine,” they explained. “It is not as if the making of the vaccine required ever more cells from ever more abortions.”

The two committee chairmen said the Vatican, through the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Pontifical Academy for Life, “has offered

guidance on the question of whether it is morally acceptable to receive a vaccine that has been created with the use of morally compromised cell lines.”

Both the congregation and the academy “emphasize the positive moral obligation to do good,” they said, “and in so doing to distance oneself as much as possible from the immoral act of another party such as abortion in order to avoid cooperation with someone else’s evil actions and to avoid giving scandal, which could happen if one’s own actions were perceived by other people to ignore or to minimize the evil of the action.”

“Our love of neighbor should lead us to avoid giving scandal, but we cannot omit fulfilling serious obligations such as the prevention of deadly infection and the spread of contagion among those who are vulnerable just to avoid the appearance of scandal,” the two prelates said.

At the same time, the bishops also cautioned Catholics against complacency about the moral issue of abortion and ethical issues surrounding the development of some vaccines.

“While having ourselves and our families immunized against COVID-19 with the new vaccines is morally permissible and can be an act of self-love and of charity toward others, we must not allow the gravely immoral nature of abortion to be obscured,” Bishop Rhoades and Archbishop Naumann said.

“It is true that one can receive benefits from an evil action in the past without intending that action or approving of it. The association with the evil action that comes with receiving benefits from that evil action, however, can have a corrupting influence on one’s perception of the evil action, making it more difficult to recognize it as evil,” they explained.

“One might become desensitized to the gravely evil nature of that action. One might become complacent about that action and ignore the obligation to do



## Public schedule of Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades

Sunday, December 20: 9:15 a.m. — Mass, St. Catherine of Alexandria Church, Columbia City  
Monday, December 21: 11 a.m. — Mass for Diocesan Employees of Fort Wayne Area, St. Mary, Mother of God Church, Fort Wayne  
Thursday, December 24: 10:30 p.m. — Christmas Eve Mass, Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Fort Wayne  
Tuesday, December 29: 12 p.m. — Virtual Meeting of United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Working Group on Engaging the New Administration



## A statement from Archbishop Charles C. Thompson calling again for an end to federal executions in Indiana

December 14, 2020

As we approach the celebration of the birth of Jesus, who came to give us life, I once again appeal to the conscience of all humanity and ask our federal government to halt the upcoming executions within the Archdiocese of Indianapolis at the U.S. Penitentiary in Terre Haute. Several executions have been scheduled for December and January.

Indiana’s five Catholic bishops, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and other religious leaders in Indiana have respectfully appealed several times to no avail to federal officials to end federal executions since they were resumed this year after a 17-year hiatus. Opposition to the death penalty is rooted in principles of Catholic teaching, grounded in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (cf. CCC, 2267) as well as various papal and curial pronouncements.

We must never forget the victims of violence and their families. In fact, closely related to the Church’s pastoral care of those who have fallen victim to crime, is our moral obligation to protect and defend the dignity of every person, particularly the vulnerable. Our concern for victims and their families must not prevent us from doing what we can to also care for the families of those who perpetrate such violence and crimes. Regarding the death penalty, attention must also be given to its impact on those who work in the prison system with particular concern for those who are designated to carry out an execution.

Among the various threats to human life and dignity in our society, as Pope Francis has stated, the death penalty remains “inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person.” In his most recent encyclical letter, *Fratelli Tutti* (“On Fraternity and Social Friendship”), noting that “arguments against the death penalty are numerous and well-known,” the Holy Father reaffirms the Church’s commitment to calling for the abolition of the death penalty around the world:

*Let us keep in mind that not even a murderer loses his personal dignity, and God himself pledges to guarantee this. The firm rejection of the death penalty shows to what extent it is possible to recognize the inalienable dignity of every human being and to accept that he or she has a place in this universe. If I do not deny that dignity to the worst of criminals, I will not deny it to anyone. I will give everyone the possibility of sharing this planet with me, despite all our differences. [#269]*

The death penalty, far from resolving anything or providing “justice” for victims, ultimately contributes to the perpetuation of a culture of death. The urgency of this appeal is directed toward promoting a culture of life that takes into consideration the ultimate dignity and sacredness of every person as well as society itself. We must be committed to both prayer and action if we are to be agents of divine grace in transforming the hearts of individuals and communities to more fully embrace the sacredness of life. I urge Catholics and all people of good will to join in the urgency of this call, as we ask the federal government to restore its moratorium on the death penalty until it can be formally rescinded.

# Father Charles Herman born into eternal life

BY JODI MARLIN

Father Charles Herman is being remembered this week by parishioners of St. Francis Xavier in Pierceton as someone who was more concerned about how he could be present to them than about the physical challenges he encountered later in life.

Father Herman passed into eternal life Dec. 11 after battling several medical issues, including Parkinson's disease.

He was born March 5, 1947, to George E. and Alvina Herman. His father preceded him in death.

He attended St. John the Evangelist Grade School in St. John, Indiana, and Dyer Central High School before obtaining a master's degree in teaching from Indiana State University, which he applied by teaching high school German for 20 years. He entered St. John Seminary in Brighton, Massachusetts, in 1992.

Bishop John M. D'Arcy ordained Charles Herman to the diaconate Jan. 4, 1997, at St. Matthew Cathedral in South Bend. He entered the holy priesthood at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Fort Wayne, later that same year.

During his diaconate he ministered at St. John the Baptist Parish, Fort Wayne, and served as the chaplain at Bishop Luers High School. Following his priestly ordination, he was appointed associate pastor of the parish.

In July of 1999, Immaculate Conception Parish in Auburn welcomed Father Herman as its pastor. Six and a half years later, he became the associate pastor of his first South Bend parish, Holy Family. He was appointed pastor of St. John the Baptist Parish in the same city in 2010.

While still serving St. John



FATHER CHARLES HERMAN

the Baptist, the following year he also became temporary administrator of Holy Family. He served as pastor of both parishes from June 2011 through June 2012, at which time he was transferred to St. Francis Xavier.

Bishop Rhoades acknowledged St. Francis Xavier parishioners' sorrow at the loss of Father Chuck, as he was known, when he celebrated Mass at the parish on Gaudete Sunday, Dec. 13.

"The origin of naming today Gaudete Sunday is the entrance antiphon of this Third Sunday of Advent, a quote from St. Paul to the Philippians: 'Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice. Indeed, the Lord is near,' he told them. 'The reasons for rejoicing is that Christmas is near, the Lord's coming is fast approaching.'

"I came here to celebrate Mass with you on this Gaudete Sunday when it is not easy for you and your parish family to rejoice. Just two days ago, your beloved pastor, your spiritual father, passed away. How is it

possible to rejoice today when all are naturally feeling sorrow, not joy?"

The answer, he said, is that Christian joy is not simply a feeling; it is a choice.

"We can have interior joy even while we feel grief at the death of a loved one. It is the joy of knowing and experiencing that the Lord is near. He is close to us in our sorrows. His Mother Mary is also close to us in our sorrows. We feel grief because we will miss Father Chuck, but we experience joy when we think about Father Chuck being embraced by the Lord.

"I know Father Chuck loved the Lord and I know that he loved you," the bishop continued. "He loved being here in Pierceton as your pastor. He often told me about your care and loving help during these past couple of years in his health struggles ... In the midst of his pain, especially with his foot and walking, you were there for him, caring for him and encouraging him. When I asked him if continuing as pastor was too challenging or difficult for him, he always said 'no' because he had your love and support.

"St. Paul says to give thanks in all circumstances. I think that includes this circumstance of the death of your pastor. Let us give thanks to God for the gift of Father Chuck's life and his priestly ministry."

Visitation and a rosary for Father Herman took place Tuesday, Dec. 15, at St. Francis Xavier Church. On Wednesday, Dec. 16, visitation took place at Holy Family Church, South Bend. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated Thursday, Dec. 17, at Holy Family Church, 56405 Mayflower Rd., South Bend, and will be livestreamed for those who are not comfortable attending. Burial will take place at St. Joseph Cemetery, South Bend.

# Pope proclaims year dedicated to St. Joseph

BY JUNNO AROCHO ESTEVES

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Marking the 150th anniversary of St. Joseph being declared patron of the universal Church, Pope Francis proclaimed a yearlong celebration dedicated to the foster father of Jesus.

In a Dec. 8 apostolic letter, "Patris Corde" ("With a father's heart"), the pope said Christians can discover in St. Joseph, who often goes unnoticed, "an intercessor, a support and a guide in times of trouble."

"St. Joseph reminds us that those who appear hidden or in the shadows can play an incomparable role in the history of salvation. A word of recognition and of gratitude is due to them all," he said.

As Mary's husband and guardian of the Son of God, St. Joseph turned "his human vocation to domestic love into a superhuman oblation of himself, his heart and all his abilities, a love placed at the service of the Messiah who was growing to maturity in his home."

Despite being troubled at first by Mary's pregnancy, he added, St. Joseph was obedient to God's will "regardless of the hardship involved."

"In every situation, Joseph declared his own 'fiat,' like those of Mary at the Annunciation and Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane," the pope said. "All this makes it clear that St. Joseph was called by God to serve the person and mission of Jesus directly through the exercise of his fatherhood and that, in this way, he cooperated in the fullness of time in the great mystery of salvation and is truly a minister of salvation."

St. Joseph's unconditional acceptance of Mary and his decision to protect her "good name,



CNS photo/Paul Haring

**A statue of St. Joseph is seen at St. Mary Josefa Parish in Rome Feb. 19, 2017. In a Dec. 8 apostolic letter, Pope Francis proclaimed a yearlong celebration dedicated to St. Joseph, foster father of Jesus.**

her dignity and her life" also serves as an example for men today, the pope added.

"Today, in our world where psychological, verbal and physical violence toward women is so evident, Joseph appears as the figure of a respectful and sensitive man," he wrote.

Pope Francis also highlighted St. Joseph's "creative courage," not only in finding a stable and making it a "welcoming home for the son of God (who came) into the world," but also in protecting Christ from the threat posed by King Herod.

"The Holy Family had to face concrete problems like every other family, like so many of our migrant brothers and sisters who, today, too, risk their lives to escape misfortune and hunger. In this regard, I consider St. Joseph the special patron of all those forced to leave their native lands because of war, hatred, persecution and poverty," the pope said.

As a carpenter who earned "an honest living to provide for his family," Christ's earthly guardian is also an example for both workers and those seeking employment and the right to a life of dignity for themselves and their families.

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# Religious issues played big part in 2020 Supreme Court

BY CAROL ZIMMERMANN

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The busy year for the Supreme Court had the attention of the Catholic Church from major decisions it announced this past summer to oral arguments this fall around key issues impacting Church belief and practice.

The court ended its previous term this summer with rulings on Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, or DACA, and decisions about Catholic school teacher firings, the inclusion of religious schools in a tax credit scholarship program and an opinion about abortion providers.

In one of the most anticipated cases of the previous term, the court issued a 5-4 decision June 18 against efforts by the Trump administration to end DACA, which has enabled about 700,000 qualifying young people, brought to the U.S. as children by their parents without legal documentation, to work, go to college, get health insurance and a driver's license and not face deportation.

The high court called the Trump administration's attempts to end the program "arbitrary and capricious."

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops praised the court's decision.

"To DACA youth, through today's decision and beyond, we will continue to accompany you and your families. You are a vital part of our Church and our community of faith. We are with you," said the statement by Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles, USCCB president, and Washington Auxiliary Bishop Mario E. Dorsonville, chairman of the USCCB's Committee on Migration.

At the end of June, in another 5-4 decision, the court said the exclusion of religious schools in Montana's state scholarship aid program violated the federal Constitution.

When this case was argued before the court, two USCCB committee chairs said it was primarily boiled down to whether or not the "Constitution offers states a license to discriminate against religion."

The USCCB also filed a friend-of-the-court brief, along with several other religious groups, in support of the plaintiffs, which said: "Families that use private schools should not suffer government discrimination because their choice of school is religious."

Another case involving religious schools specifically focused on two California Catholic schools being sued for job discrimination for firing teachers. In a 7-2 decision issued in July, the court said the schools had acted within their rights.

The National Catholic Educational Association, in a friend-of-the-court brief in



The U.S. Supreme Court building is seen in Washington Nov. 10.

CNS File photo/Hannah McKay, Reuters

support of one of the schools, stressed the fired teacher, the school's only fifth grade teacher, "bore particular responsibility for effectuating — and embodying — the integral formation that is distinct to Catholic schools."

The court also ruled this past summer that a Louisiana law requiring that doctors who perform abortions have admitting privileges at nearby hospitals could not stand.

The opinion, written by Justice Stephen Breyer, said the case was "similar to, nearly identical with" a law in Texas that the court four years ago found to be a burden to women seeking abortions. He said the Louisiana law, similarly, was unconstitutional because it posed a "substantial obstacle" for women seeking abortions while providing "no significant health-related benefits."

"The court's failure to recognize the legitimacy of laws prioritizing women's health and safety over abortion business interests continues a cruel precedent," said Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City, Kansas, USCCB chairman for pro-life activities.

The Supreme Court ended the year with decisions in late November and early December siding with worshippers who argued being constrained by state pandemic-related restrictions on attending in-person religious services was a violation of their religious freedom.

On Dec. 3, the court said federal judges should reexamine pandemic limits on attendance at California churches, based on its decision a week earlier lifting similar pandemic restrictions on congregations in New York.

"Even in a pandemic, the Constitution cannot be put away and forgotten," the court's majority opinion said, regarding California churches. "The restrictions at issue here, by effectively barring many from attending religious services, strike at the very heart of the First Amendment's guarantee of religious liberty."

These two court decisions were reversals from the court's action this summer when Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg was on the bench. The court then upheld Nevada's limits on congregation sizes, denying a request by

a Nevada church for permission to have larger gatherings, like those permitted in the state's casinos, restaurants and other businesses.

Ginsburg died Sept. 18 at age 87 and was replaced on the bench by Justice Amy Coney Barrett on Oct. 26. Barrett, a graduate of the University of Notre Dame's Law School, is the sixth Catholic judge on the current court. Reaction to her confirmation was just as divided as it was on the announcement by the president that she was his nominee choice just weeks before the presidential election.

Barrett's first major case, just days after she was confirmed, was on a Catholic social service agency shut out from Philadelphia's foster care program for not accepting same-sex couples as foster parents because of the Catholic Church's teaching upholding traditional marriage.

In this case, the justices seemed willing to find a compromise balancing the rights of religious groups against state discrimination laws.

After the Nov. 4 arguments, the chairmen of three USCCB committees pointed out that "Catholics have been called to care for children who have been orphaned, or whose parents face unique difficulties in providing care, since the earliest days of our faith." They also said they hoped the court would "reject a hollowed-out pluralism that permits people of faith only to preach but not to practice" their beliefs.

A week later, the court took on the Affordable Care Act and during oral arguments it seemed as if the justices were inclined to leave the bulk of the law in place.

Mercy Sister Mary Haddad, president and CEO of the Catholic Health Association, urged the court to uphold the current law, saying that striking it down would be devastating to millions of Americans, including those with COVID-19. She said doing away with the health care law would "wreak havoc on the U.S. health care system and irreparably harm those most in need of care" in the middle of a pandemic.

The U.S. bishops have long emphasized that the poor and vulnerable must have access to

health care, but they have objected to the legislation's contraceptive mandate, requiring employee health insurance plans to provide contraceptive coverage.

Another November case examined President Donald Trump's order to exclude immigrants living in the country illegally from the 2020 census for purposes of redrawing congressional districts. The U.S. bishops defended these immigrants' right to be counted.

In a statement, Bishop Dorsonville said: "Denying the undocumented and the states in which they reside their rightful representation in Congress is counter to the Constitution and makes people feel invisible and not valued as human beings."

"The church's teaching is clear: Human dignity is most sacred, regardless of legal status," he said. "For that reason, we once again affirm the need to count all persons in the census, as well as in the apportionment of congressional representatives."

The USCCB, along with other Catholic organizations, also filed a friend-of-the-court brief in this case, arguing that excluding those without legal documentation from the apportionment base of the census sends a message that these individuals are not equal members of the human

family.

In the summer and fall, the court gave the approval for a number of federal executions to take place, denying the appeals of the death-row inmates.

The court also sent some death penalty cases back to lower courts. In June, it sent a case back to the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals for further review, saying the death-row inmate had not been given sufficient legal counsel. It also granted a last-minute stay of execution for another Texas death-row inmate later that month saying the state prison officials needed to reexamine their rule that bans clergy from being with prisoners to the execution chamber.

The U.S. bishops have spoken against the federal executions which the federal government resumed this year after a 17-year hiatus and urged the Trump administration to end this practice, including in a Dec. 7 statement.

Catholic Mobilizing Network and Sister Helen Prejean, a Sister of St. Joseph of Medaille and longtime activist against the death penalty, have similarly called to an end to these executions and have also spoken against the Justice Department's plan to expand how it carries out federal death sentences — to include electrocution, gas or firing squads along with lethal injections.

Sister Prejean told a reporter that a likely reason for this policy change was to "make sure that they can expedite these executions without any court cases about lethal injection."

She noted that in many states there have been questions about the use of lethal injections as well as botched executions, which she said is the Supreme Court's fault for having "allowed states to just experiment widely with drugs to kill people."

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# Vatican will offer Pfizer vaccine against COVID-19 to employees

BY CINDY WOODEN

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The Vatican health service will begin vaccinating employees and Vatican citizens against COVID-19 using the Pfizer vaccine, the director of the Vatican health service told Vatican News.

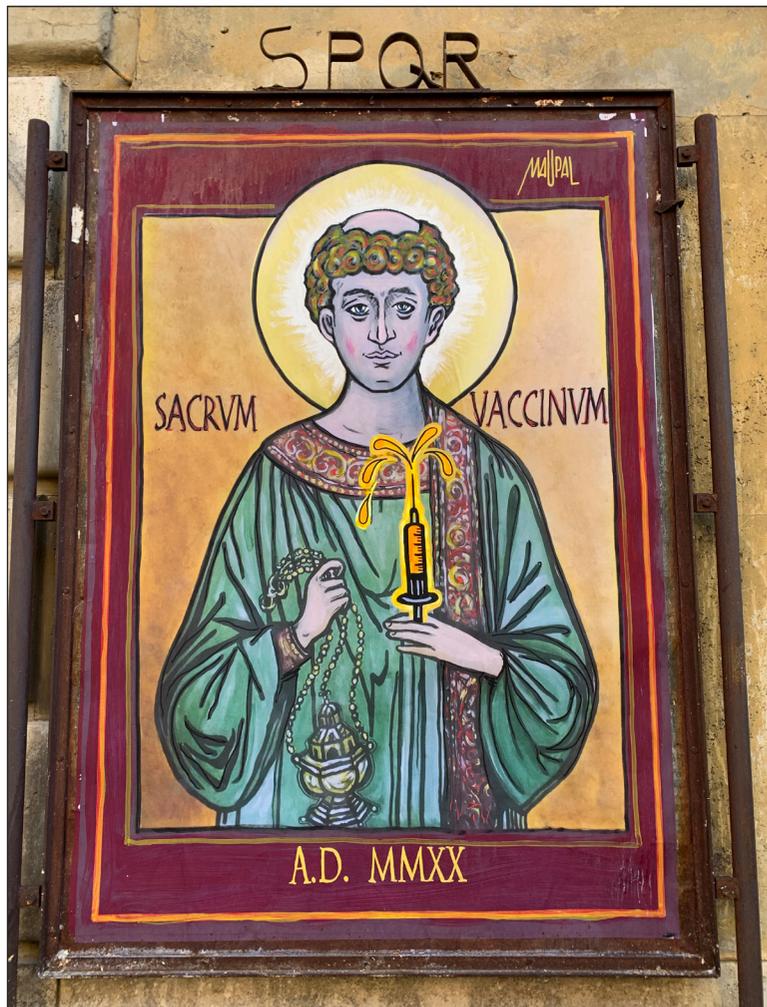
“Only through a widespread and capillary immunization of the population will it be possible to obtain real advantages in terms of public health to achieve control of the pandemic,” Dr. Andrea Arcangeli said Dec. 11.

“Therefore, it is our duty to offer all residents, employees and their families the opportunity to be immunized against this dreaded disease,” he said.

The Vatican News story said the vaccination program would begin “in the first months” of 2021, but a Vatican official posted on Facebook Dec. 11 that employees were told they would be vaccinated in January.

“It is important to educate everyone that the vaccine is not only to protect one’s own health, but also that of other people,” the Vatican News story said.

Dr. Arcangeli said the Pfizer vaccine, developed in conjunction with BioNTech, was chosen



CNS photo/Cindy Wooden

A poster of St. Stephen holding a “Holy Vaccine,” by the Rome street artist known as Maupal, is seen near the Vatican Dec. 11. Maupal told the newspaper *Corriere della Sera* that he chose St. Stephen, whose feast day is Dec. 26, after the Italian government said a COVID-19 vaccine might be available shortly after Christmas.

because it is the leading candidate for both European and U.S. approval, is already being used in England and has tested at 95% effective.

“Other vaccines produced with different methods may be introduced after evaluating their efficacy and full safety,” he added.

Vatican News did not ask Dr. Arcangeli about reports that in the early stages of testing, the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine was tested on cells lines produced from cells that originally came from an aborted fetus. The vaccine, however, is not one of those that use abortion-derived cell lines in the manufacturing process.

The Pontifical Academy for Life and Catholic bishops around the world, including the chair-

men of the U.S. bishops’ doctrine and pro-life committees, have said it is not immoral to be vaccinated with vaccines like the Pfizer/BioNTech product because any connection they have to aborted fetuses is extremely remote. Such cells derived from those fetuses were used only in a testing phase but not in the production phase.

Vatican News did ask Dr. Arcangeli about concerns over the safety of the vaccine.

“It is understandable that there may be some fears about a vaccine that has been developed in such a short time, but there have been very rigorous tests on safety,” he said.

For the time being, he said, the Vatican will not be recommending the vaccination of anyone under age 18 since “studies including this age group have not yet been carried out.”

As an independent country, the Vatican has its own health service, with doctors’ offices, a pharmacy, a laboratory, a walk-in clinic and first-aid stations. Many of the services are free to employees and their family members as well as retirees; the service covers about 15,000 people, including the pope and cardinals resident in Rome.

# Catholic agencies deliver aid to Ethiopia’s Tigray region

BY FREDERICK NZWILI

NAIROBI, Kenya (CNS) — Amid fears that many areas in Ethiopia’s Tigray region remained unsafe, Catholic humanitarian agencies and their partners were moving food and other supplies to locations near the border of Tigray, where a month of fighting has left thousands without food, medicine and other basic needs.

“Catholic Relief Services and its church partners have distributed food to displaced populations in Amhara (region) along the border of Tigray and in parts of western Tigray,” John Shumlansky, Catholic Relief Services’ Ethiopia country representative, told Catholic News Service. “As other areas become accessible, we will continue to support people in need.”

The agency and its church partners have delivered food basics to some 400 families displaced in the conflict and will be “moving temporary shelter materials, blankets, sleeping mats, cooking items and hygiene kits to the same areas to support about 500 families in the coming days,” said Shumlansky.

The fighting in Tigray started Nov. 4 when Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed launched military action against the Tigray People’s Liberation Front. Ahmed, the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize winner, had accused the front of attacking an army base in the Tigray

capital, Mekele.

Although information from the region is hard to verify, reports suggest that the one-month conflict has killed thousands. It has also forced more than 45,000 refugees into eastern Sudan, displaced 1 million people and left nearly 2 million people needing aid around Tigray, according to agencies.

As a member of the board of directors of Catholic Relief Services, Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades visited the Tigray region in 2018. He viewed the extreme nutrition and medical needs firsthand and toured a CNS food distribution warehouse and water projects in Tigray.

On Dec. 2, the humanitarian efforts in Tigray received a boost after Ethiopia and the



CNS photo/World Food Program handout via Reuters

**An Ethiopian who fled the ongoing fighting in the Tigray region prepares a meal before being processed for emergency food and logistics support by the World Food Program at a camp in Kassala, Sudan, Nov. 17.**



**Ethiopians fleeing fighting in Ethiopia’s Tigray region walk toward the Hamdeyat refugee transit camp in Sudan Dec. 1.**

CNS photo/Baz Ratner, Reuters

U.N. signed an agreement to allow “unimpeded, secure and sustained” access to government-controlled areas, including Mekele.

Relief agency officials have warned that unrelenting fighting and lawlessness is making Mekele and the surrounding areas too dangerous for humanitarian convoys.

“The survival of the local community and refugees is becoming a great concern. I hope the agencies will be able to continue assisting the people in need in Tigray,” Andre Atsu, Jesuit Refugee Service regional director in East Africa, told CNS.

However, he said, since the humanitarian access agreement, “We have a team on the ground. They are providing some services.”

The fleeing refugees have told harrowing stories of long treks on foot, death of colleagues and abuses by militias while on the way to the border with Sudan. Some said they saw their homes being burned and their belongings confiscated.

The conflict is expected to force 100,000 refugees into Sudan, where close to 10 million people are food insecure due to the combination of drought, disease and an economic crisis. Concerns have also grown for the 96,000 Eritrean refugees in camps in Tigray, where they have fled to escape repression or mandatory, indefinite military service.

# Our Lady of Guadalupe celebrations still 'full of grace'

BY ESTHER TERRY

Celebrations for the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe were still "full of grace" this year, although they looked different from normal.

Pope Francis granted a plenary indulgence to the faithful who celebrated Our Lady of Guadalupe at home this year. The indulgence was granted to those who created a home altar or place of prayer dedicated to Our Lady and participated in one of the livestreamed Masses on Saturday, Dec. 12, in addition to the usual conditions for indulgences – praying for the pope's intentions, going to confession, attending Mass and receiving holy Communion, as soon as public health conditions permit.

Many of the faithful in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend participated virtually, watching their own parish livestreams, or participating with Pope Francis, who celebrated Mass at St. Peter's Basilica with a limited number of delegates from Latin America. The Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico broadcasted a series of virtual events as well, since public health restrictions forced a decision to close it to the millions of pilgrims who typically make pilgrimages to her basilica in December.

Juana Torres, wife of Deacon Alejandro García and a parishioner at Our Lady of Hungary in South Bend, reflected on the sadness she felt when she saw the shrine in Mexico barricaded to visitors.

"When I was a child my father would take me [there], and I would dance," she remembered. But Torres took comfort in the fact that the Blessed Mother is with her children and interceding for them. "I remembered the words that she said to Juan Diego: 'What is worrying you, the youngest of my children?'"



Provided by Ana Ponce

**The feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe was celebrated not so much in person this year in diocesan parishes, but Masses and other activities were livestreamed or posted online. Altars to the patroness of the Americas were set up in parishes with a large Hispanic population, like Our Lady of Hungary, South Bend, above, and St. Robert Bellarmine Parish, North Manchester, at right.**

Am I not here, who am your Mother?' I know that she visited millions of homes. I watched the transmission from the Basilica of Guadalupe in Mexico, I listened to Mass with Pope Francis, and it filled me with that peace that only God knows how to give."

Parishes in the diocese still found ways to honor the Blessed Mother, even though in-person events were limited. Many parishes, especially those with a large Hispanic community, set up elaborate shrines for Our Lady of Guadalupe, where parishioners placed flowers to show their devotion. Devotions

such as novenas and the 46 days of rosaries leading up to Dec. 12 continued undaunted by the pandemic.

In an attempt to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, St. Joseph Parish in Fort Wayne did not ask people to gather and sing the usual "mañanitas" songs, play music and reenact the apparitions during Masses, but found other ways to encourage parishioners to celebrate Our Lady.

"Our Lady of Guadalupe is one of the biggest celebrations for Hispanic Catholics, and although we had to change the

way we celebrated this year, we did not change the great devotion and love with which we express our gratitude towards her," said Ana Ponce, director of religious education at St. Joseph. "I think this year was a great opportunity for us to celebrate as a domestic Church, to welcome our 'Morenita' into our homes."

Since parish children were in religious education classes on the 12<sup>th</sup>, Ponce took the opportunity to highlight the feast day: "I took a replica of the 'tilma' to each class and explained the meaning of the image, something most students had never heard. They were listening with great attention and looking at the different parts of the image as I pointed them out. We then had the students make a beautiful craft of Our Lady to take home."

At St. Robert Bellarmine Parish in North Manchester, Father Dennis Di Benedetto surprised the parish community during Mass on Saturday by unveiling a third-class relic of Our Lady of Guadalupe – a certi-

fied copy of the image Our Lady left on Juan Diego's tilma, which had touched the original tilma. The image was a gift from an anonymous group of parishioners and will be displayed prominently in the parish.

When asked about the significance of the relic, Father Di Benedetto said, "I had never attended any festivities for Guadalupe until I was a priest and celebrating las mañanitas at St. Patrick's in Fort Wayne. I am learning more about Our Lady of Guadalupe from the community, even as I am fostering devotion to her. But that's the message of Guadalupe: It's about cultures that wouldn't have been together otherwise, coming together and actually forming a brand-new fusion. She herself appears as a 'mestiza.' We need to be one community, and not just two that live next to each other in silos.

"That's what is so beautiful about it to me. And only the Catholic faith can bring everyone together. Love for Our Lady brings together all kinds of people!"



Provided by Father Dennis Di Benedetto

## JOSEPH, from page 4

"In our own day, when employment has once more become a burning social issue, and unemployment at times reaches record levels even in nations that for decades have enjoyed a certain degree of prosperity, there is a renewed need to appreciate the importance of dignified work, of which St. Joseph is an exemplary patron," he said.

The Apostolic Penitentiary, a Vatican tribunal that deals with matters of conscience, also issued a decree Dec. 8 stating that plenary indulgences will be granted to Catholics not only through prayer and penance, but also through acts of justice, charity and piety dedicated to the foster father of Jesus.

Among the conditions for receiving an indulgence are a spirit detached from sin, receiving sacramental confession



CNS photo/Paul Haring

**Pope Francis shows the sleeping posture of a statue of St. Joseph he keeps on his desk while giving a talk during a meeting with families in Manila, Philippines, in this Jan. 16, 2015, file photo. In a Dec. 8 apostolic letter, Pope Francis proclaimed a yearlong celebration dedicated to St. Joseph, foster father of Jesus.**

as soon as possible, receiving Communion as soon as possible and praying for the Holy Father's intentions.

However, the decree also highlighted several ways to obtain the indulgence throughout the year, including to those who "meditate on the prayer of the 'Our Father' for at least 30 minutes or take part in a spiritual retreat of at least one day that includes a meditation on St. Joseph."

As a "just man," the document continued, who guarded "the intimate secret that lies at the bottom of the heart and soul," St. Joseph practiced the virtue of justice in "full adherence to the divine law, which is the law of mercy."

"Therefore, those who, following the example of St. Joseph, will perform a corporal or spiritual work of mercy, will also be able to obtain the gift of the ple-

nary indulgence," it said.

Indulgences will also be granted to families and engaged couples who recite the rosary together and thus imitate the "same climate of communion, love and prayer lived in the Holy Family."

Other acts of devotion include entrusting one's daily activities and prayers for dignified employment to St. Joseph, reciting the litany or any "legitimately approved" prayer to St. Joseph.

During this time of pandemic, the Apostolic Penitentiary also decreed that special indulgences will be granted to the elderly, the sick and all those who "for legitimate reasons are prevented from leaving their home" by "reciting an act of piety in honor of St. Joseph and committed to fulfilling the conditions as soon as possible."

## VACCINE, from page 3

what one can to oppose the evil action," they said, adding that others might see "one's acceptance of benefits from an evil action" and feel the action isn't really evil, feel less urgency "to oppose that evil" or even miss opportunities to do what they can "to oppose it."

"We should be on guard so that the new COVID-19 vaccines do not desensitize us or weaken our determination to oppose the evil of abortion itself and the subsequent use of fetal cells in research," Bishop Rhoades and Archbishop Naumann said.

**Editor's Note:** The full text of Bishop Rhoades and Archbishop Naumann's statement can be found online at <https://www.usccb.org/moral-considerations-covid-vaccines>.

## Jupiter, Saturn to put on 'Christmas Star' show at winter solstice

CLEVELAND (CNS) — A once-every-two-decade conjunction involving the solar system's two gas giants will give earthbound observers a look at a so-called "Christmas Star" on the winter solstice. Come sunset Dec. 21 in any time zone around the world, Jupiter and Saturn seemingly will merge into a single bright point of light low in the western sky. The Great Conjunction of 2020 will yield an expected spectacular astronomical sight involving the two planets unseen in nearly eight centuries. The two planets have been approaching conjunction — a point when planets or other bodies as seen from earth are near each other in the night sky — all year. That the conjunction is occurring near Christmas Day has given rise to talk about the Star of Bethlehem that the Gospel of Matthew describes in his telling of the birth of Jesus. But the description of the star "is a very minor part of the infancy narrative," Jesuit Brother Guy Consolmagno, director of the Vatican Observatory, told Catholic News Service. "It's so unimportant that Luke doesn't talk about it and yet it has captured our imagination." It's what the star represents — the birth of Jesus — that is the real story, Brother Consolmagno said.

## Bishops' migration chairman welcomes ruling fully restoring DACA

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The chairman of the U.S. bishops' migration committee Dec. 8 welcomed the court ruling fully restoring the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, but said only Congress can "take up and pass legislation granting Dreamers a path to citizenship." The bishops "are particularly pleased that with this ruling," handed down late Dec. 4 by Judge Nicholas G. Garaufis of the U.S. District Court in Brooklyn, New York, because "youth who are first-time applicants are allowed to apply for the program for the first time since 2017," said Auxiliary Washington Auxiliary Bishop Mario E. Dorsonville, chairman of the USCCB's Committee on Migration. He urged Congress to pass the measure needed to provide "a path to citizenship (that) will give Dreamers and their families true security and the ability to fully thrive." DACA was suspended this summer by Chad Wolf, acting Homeland Security secretary. In his ruling, Garaufis said in fully restoring DACA, the Trump administration must reopen the program for first-time applicants and reinstate the period of protection for DACA recipients to its initial two-year extension not one year, as Wolf's memo specified.

## As pandemic devastates Latin America, pope prays to St. Juan Diego



CNS photo/courtesy Archdiocese of Los Angeles

A painting by Rick Ortega in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe and St. Juan Diego is pictured Nov. 20, 2019, at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in Los Angeles. Pope Francis has invoked the intercession of St. Juan Diego, the first Indigenous saint of the Americas, as COVID-19 continues to devastate many Latin American countries. While greeting Spanish-speaking faithful during his weekly general audience Dec. 9, he marked the feast day of St. Juan Diego, "whom Our Lady of Guadalupe chose as her envoy." According to a Dec. 8 report by Bloomberg News, Latin America accounts for 30% of the deaths related to COVID-19.

## Michigan project to replicate Padre Pio's famed hospital in Italy underway

DETROIT (CNS) — On a 40-acre plot of land in Howell, in the Diocese of Lansing, Michigan, stands the humble foundation for the establishment of a worldwide

network of health care facilities that St. Pio of Pietrelcina set in motion nearly 70 years ago. In 1956, Padre Pio, as he is best known, founded Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza, or Home for the Relief of Suffering, in San Giovanni Rotondo, Italy. The world-renowned Catholic international research hospital serves the poor and destitute, and today houses up to 1,000 patients. Padre Pio once said this was the

most important thing he did. His dream was the project would one day expand to other parts of the world. That day has now come. Thanks to the vision, faithfulness and tenacity of several Catholic health care organizations, individuals and the patronage of Lansing Bishop Earl A. Boyea, the Howell project, known as "Casa USA," seeks to duplicate St. Pio's hospital complex for the first time outside of Italy, includ-

ing an exact replica of the great Capuchin Franciscan saint's original friary church. The idea has been in the hearts and minds of many for decades, but efforts to establish a campus began when Bishop Boyea donated the land.

## Annual #iGiveCatholic Giving Day breaks record on fundraising, donor numbers

NEW ORLEANS (CNS) — The sixth annual #iGiveCatholic Giving Day raised nearly \$13 million from more than 48,000 donors on #GivingTuesday Dec. 1, "smashing previous records," according to Cory J. Howat, president of #iGiveCatholic. "We are overwhelmed by the generosity of so many people across this country and throughout the world," Howat said in a statement Dec. 10. "These gifts will be used to meet the spiritual, physical and educational needs that exist every year but are especially acute during this time of global suffering," he said. "We are extremely grateful to Our Sunday Visitor, our national sponsor, for their support and belief in what can be accomplished for the Church through #iGiveCatholic." At a rate of 24.7 gifts per minute, 48,273 donors in all 50 states gave \$12,703,973 to benefit 2,600 Catholic parishes, schools and nonprofit ministries through #iGiveCatholic, according to a news release. Donations also came from people in 12 other countries in support of these U.S. Catholic organizations. In 2019, #iGiveCatholic raised \$7.4 million from approximately 23,000 donors.

## Pope plans to visit Iraq in March

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Barring any obstacles caused by the global pandemic, Pope Francis is set to begin international travel again in 2021 by visiting Iraq in March, which would make him the first pope to visit this nation. "Pope Francis, accepting the invitation of the Republic of Iraq and of the local Catholic Church," will visit Iraq March 5-8, said Matteo Bruni, head of the Vatican press office. "He will visit Baghdad, the plain of Ur, linked to the memory of Abraham, the city of Irbil, as well as Mosul and Qaraqosh in the plain of Ninevah," Bruni wrote Dec. 7. Details about the trip "will be made known in due course and will take into consideration the evolution of the worldwide health emergency," he added. It would be the pope's first international trip since his journey to Thailand and Japan in November 2019. From Baghdad, Iraqi Cardinal Louis Raphael Sako, patriarch of Chaldean Catholics, told Catholic News Service that news of the papal visit was a "huge hope." "We are so thirsty for hope," he said of the Iraqi people.

## Exodus 90 spiritual exercise for men begins Jan. 4

FORT WAYNE — Exodus 90 arose in response to a need for renewal in the Church, especially among men.

Many men today find themselves isolated, distracted, addicted, stuck living in a cycle of mediocrity or complacency. Exodus 90 invites them to walk — with the Israelites — out of the slavery of sin and into freedom.

The program is as a 90-day spiritual exercise based on Christ's own road map to freedom: prayer, asceticism and fraternity.

The next Exodus journey begins Jan. 4. Each day over the 90 days, participants and their brothers in Christ will prayerfully walk the path of the Israelites from slavery to freedom. The day's readings include a passage from the Book of Exodus, as well as a reflection and "bearings" to keep in mind for that day and the rest of the week. Local groups will meet together, talk, pray and commit to a daily holy hour. At the heart of this holy hour is time spent in silent, contemplative prayer. Other practices are also incorporated to help keep participants' mind and heart focused on the Lord during the three-month experience.

To find out more or to register, visit <https://exodus90.com>.

# AROUND THE DIOCESE

## Knights build outdoor Nativity scenes



Dennis Redding/Provided by Justin Purdy

St. Charles Borromeo Parish Knights of Columbus Council 451, Fort Wayne, was asked during the fall to build a couple outdoor Nativity scenes that could be raffled off at fundraising events. Knight Bob Current and his brother, David, used a CNC machine to rout the displays and fellow Knights did the final touch-up. Above, council members Frank Koehl, Jim Keefer and Doug Baisinger, from left, paint the Nativity scenes before they are assembled.

## Remember the less fortunate this Christmas

FORT WAYNE — It's hard to imagine spending the holidays worrying about how to pay the rent, feed a family or keep the lights on. The St. Vincent de Paul Society of Northeast Indiana is getting more and more calls for help as the pandemic continues.

The St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store is currently in need of new underwear, new socks, men's shoes/boots, men's coats, new blankets, kids' coats, pots and pans, basic toasters, toothpaste/toothbrushes, shampoo, liquid soap/body wash, deodorant and adult diapers to hand out.

Drop-off times are 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Saturday at the store, 1600 S. Calhoun St.

Volunteer opportunities are also available. The agency is in need of Care Van drivers and people to help with the sorting and organizing of items donated to the thrift store.

One way to be the light of Christ to others is by donating to the St. Vincent de Paul Society. Visit [www.svdpsfw.org](http://www.svdpsfw.org) or mail a check to: St. Vincent de Paul Society, 1600 S. Calhoun St., Fort Wayne, IN 46802.

# Local March for Life events: in-person, in-vehicle, in prayer

BY NICK HANKOFF

Forty-eight years after Roe v. Wade, pro-life supporters will continue the tradition of marches for life, even though this year that means no trip to Washington, D.C.

Turning lemons into lemonade is what's happening across north-central and northeastern Indiana as local alternatives to the Jan. 29 National March for Life in Washington, D.C., are now confirmed.

The impacts and risks of COVID-19, the restrictions and guidelines were enough to cancel the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend's Youth Ministry trip to the national march. That usually consisted of some 10 buses carrying 50 students each, according to John Pratt, the director of youth ministry.

"Instead, our pilgrimage efforts will focus on local participation in right-to-life events," Pratt told Today's Catholic. "We are inviting participation from our students and their families." Events scheduled in Fort Wayne, South Bend, Elkhart and Goshen will follow all COVID-19 restrictions and guidelines.

There are five events across the region and several ways to participate, including prayer sponsorships or simply tuning in to the radio.



Fort Wayne will see two marches for life on back-to-back Saturdays in January. Saturday, Jan. 16, the "Moving the Movement" Midwest tour brings a drive-in rally to Concordia Theological Seminary, 6600 N. Clinton St. Starting at 4 p.m. in the parking lot near the soccer fields, this in-vehicle rally is co-hosted by the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod and Right to Life of Northeast Indiana and is sponsored by March for Life Chicago. The event's speakers will be broadcast on Redeemer Radio, 106.3 FM. The event also includes a diaper drive, with a donation goal of 130,094 diapers, the average total number of annual abortions in the Midwest.

More details about the event can be found at <https://marchforlifechicago.org/tour>.

The following Saturday, Jan. 23, a rally at noon inside the University of Saint Francis Performing Arts Center at 431 W. Berry St. will be followed by a march through downtown Fort Wayne at 1 p.m. The rally will begin with a prayer offered by Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades. The keynote speaker will be Mark Vandersteeg, brother-in-law to deceased abortionist Ulrich Klopfer.

The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, only six minutes away by car from the rally location, will offer a special Mass at 11:30 a.m. that morning for the souls lost to abortion.

For more information, visit [www.ichooselife.org/marchnorth-eastin](http://www.ichooselife.org/marchnorth-eastin).

Bishop Rhoades will also attend two other local pro-life

events, one in South Bend and the other in Elkhart, on Jan. 29 and 30 respectively.

From noon to 1 p.m. Jan. 29, outside the Federal Courthouse at 204 S. Main St. in downtown South Bend, the bishop will offer prayers during a peaceful protest sponsored by Right to Life Michiana. There is free two-hour parking nearby, and masks and social distancing are required.

The following day in Elkhart, he will also offer prayers and join with local pro-life advocates at a gathering from noon to 1 p.m. at St. Thomas the Apostle Church, 1405 N. Main St. The protest is sponsored by Right to Life Michiana, and masks and social distancing are required.

Also happening from noon to 1 p.m. Jan. 30 will be a prayer gathering outside the Elkhart County Courthouse, 101 N. Main St., Goshen, sponsored by Right to Life Michiana and requiring masks and social distancing.

For more details on the events in South Bend, Elkhart, and Goshen, visit <https://www.pro-lifemichiana.org/march>

For those who can't attend a rally or protest in person, there is a free Spiritual Sponsorship Program offered through the University of Notre Dame Office of Life and Human Dignity.

Young people planning to attend an event may take advantage of the evangelist program and be

sponsored by someone who will pray for their pilgrimage and follow up with prayers and conversation afterward.

Olivia Warden, a senior at Bishop Dwenger High School, Fort Wayne, came up with the sponsorship idea. Warden is on the youth leadership planning committee for the diocese and has attended two national marches for life. She said she was "devastated" when news broke that the regular bus trip to Washington, D.C., was canceled this year. And while she's being very careful regarding COVID-19, she is looking forward to finding out how many people in her area will show up for the local pro-life events and support the pro-life cause.

Adam Ramirez, a youth leader and junior at Marian High School, went to the national march last year on a bus with his youth group. It was his first pro-life rally, and while he didn't know what to expect, he remembers feeling the unity among the crowd. This year, he's considering the drive-in rally, which he considers a good idea because some of his close relatives have been quite sick with COVID-19.

All youths and adults across the diocese are encouraged to support life and help raise awareness of the life-affirming alternatives to abortion by joining in with the local pro-life activities scheduled near them.



Provided by John Felts

Bishop Luers High School, Fort Wayne, struggled through a competitive and unpredictable season to reach the state Class 2A football championship Nov. 27. The opportunity to play despite the COVID-19 pandemic brought the school community much joy, united them and taught them perseverance, their coaches and parents said.

## Success comes to football programs despite pandemic's challenges

BY JENNIFER MILLER

Both schools have the same mascot, a knight, and players acted on and off the field much like the Catholic young men they are striving to be.

Two diocesan high school football programs excelled this year despite a global pandemic and players' personal losses. Bishop Luers, Fort Wayne, advanced to state competition, and Marian High School, Mishawaka, to semi-state. But their records and final scores show only a piece of the hard work and dedication offered daily. As a result of their efforts, community developed, comradeship built and the continuous care that was demonstrated led to a fall football season no one who was involved with the teams will forget.

Both schools have the same mascot, a knight, and players acted on and off the field much like the Catholic young men they are striving to be. They persevered, were faith-filled, tough and unified on and off the field.

"The players this year understood these lessons in a very real way, as they were asked to implement policies and procedures that made the sport even more challenging," said Marian principal Mark Kirzeder. "As an educator, I was grateful that our players were given this opportunity, because what they learned will stay with them the rest of their lives. Playing football this year also allowed our students to participate more fully in Marian's mission to 'strive to live the example of Jesus Christ as teacher and servant.'"

Bishop Luers principal Jim Huth concurred.

"The ability for our athletes to be able to compete and have some sense of normalcy in their lives was and is a blessing. It has been very challenging on

the emotional level and spiritual level for our students and athletes this school year; this was a great opportunity for our players to see the power of God's love in the midst of this dark time. On the personal side, it was fun to see kids being kids again."

The Bishop Luers team grew and improved every week, he said, and recovered from lopsided losses to talented and bigger 4A, 5A and 6A schools. Through those games the players continued to care for each other and support each other, he observed.

"The team showed great guts, grit and class as we advanced toward state finals and continued to show those qualities even in a bitter defeat," he said. "I believe our work with the Virtue = Strength program — formerly called SportsLeader — helped our athletes not only show grace in victory but in defeat also."

The school's championship game ended in a one-point loss to Western Boone, 36-35, on a last-second field goal, which

challenged the players' emotions. But the team's character shined through and was even recognized by the opposing team on social media.

The forging of a strong Catholic community during the process was what hallmarked the season for Bishop Luers head coach Kyle Lindsay. The team handled adversity well, he said,

players were supportive of each other after mistakes were made.

"Football is a game of emotion, and I am proud of how our kids played and showed character and class through it all."

"Hopefully, our kids took away how much our faith helps in everyday life," Lindsay reflected. "This belief in something

greater than us translated to the field, as the kids had to have faith that what we were doing and how we prepared for the games would lead to something special." COVID-19 and the many procedures it forced them to follow also contributed to the sense of community and instilled discipline in the student-athletes.

"All in all, the kids learned what it means to be a part of the Bishop Luers football program ... That faith, unity and family are the central compo-

nents to football success here," he shared. "Kids learned to put others before themselves, to hold themselves accountable, and to work hard even when our bodies are exhausted or our minds tell

us to take plays off."

For sophomore Brayden McInturf, this football family support was most meaningful when his best friend, 15-year-old Clayton Stuart, suddenly passed away. Friends since preschool, they had grown especially close in the past year, living near each other and playing football outside throughout the pandemic. "He called my family his and I called his family mine."

Clayton, a freshman, had started as No. 34 on one of the crosstown Bishop Dwenger football teams. He was "genuine, a role model," McInturf said of his friend. "I always could talk with him, always could count on him. Clayton was relentless in his work ethic, especially in football."

To honor his friend, McInturf asked coach Lindsay if he could switch his No. 22 jersey to No. 34; but another player already had the number.

Lindsay and the other player were agreeable to the switch. With the IHSAA's approval, McInturf wore No. 34 for the remainder of the season.

"The kids had been supporting each other all season so it's not a surprise they did everything they could to support Brayden in this time of need," said Lindsay.

Marian head coach Mike Davidson also took away spiritual lessons from the fall football season — especially gratitude for each other and for all of God's blessings.

"My favorite part of the season was the joy these kids experienced for one another on the football field. They were part of a brotherhood they'll cherish forever, and that they were able to bring a sense of pride and joy



Jennifer Miller

Marian High School offensive linemen coach Joe Calderone, offensive center coach Bret Bajdek and running back coach Bobby DeArmond review the next play during the Mishawaka school's run for state at the Knights' home field in Mishawaka this fall.

because they played as a family and "were there for each other when times were rough — kids losing relatives, best friends and season-ending injuries." That translated to the field in that the

to the community through this pandemic that many didn't think could happen."

"The cancellation of the Elkhart game (due to quarantines) was certainly the low point of our season," he admitted. His No. 1 concern was the mental health of the players, both those who had been quarantined and might feel they responsible for the cancellation and those players who weren't but had that game taken away from them through no fault of their own.

While COVID-19 drove people apart physically this past year, in the fall Marian football players, their families and the school community became closer, supporting one another in creative ways. The season became an antidote for the year.

Carol Daher said game time was the best part of her week. Her son, senior Lawrence Daher, said, "I would absolutely choose to play my senior year again because of all the memories I made. Getting to start on one of the top teams in the state meant everything to me, and it made all the work I put in worth it." The ability to get through a complete season was an accomplishment as well.

"The highlight of the season for me was the Week 1 win over Mishawaka. Coming into the season, I was honestly unsure of how successful we would be. The whole game was back and forth, and we eventually scored with 6 seconds left on the clock. Our QB Maddix Bogunia made an incredible play for us to win the game. The excitement following the game was amazing, because we realized how good we could be (even) with two of our best players not playing."

"Our biggest opponent was really COVID," Courtney Bogunia, mother of the senior quarterback and a member of the Parents' Touchdown Club Committee, shared. "We had to be creative from the very beginning; This was not what we were expect-



The Bishop Luers No. 34 jersey was worn for most of this season by Brayden McInturf, a close friend of the jersey's original owner, Clayten Stuart. Stuart, a Bishop Luers freshman, died unexpectedly at the beginning of the season.

ing for his senior year. Maddix wants to play football in college, but there were no camps this summer ... so the practices were virtual, the boys had to be self-motivated and they found out if they really loved the sport of football or not."

The first game of the season set the tone. "We just prayed. We didn't know if we would even have next week."

"This team was resilient," Marian principal Mark Kirzeder said. "Not only did they have to overcome the challenges posed by COVID-19, but they also won some very tough football games, coming from behind to beat Penn and Mishawaka."

Davidson said that in July he would've laughed if anyone had told him the team would make it safely through the whole season. He is grateful for the

commitment that the coaching staff, players and families demonstrated and for everyone's sacrifice. The field managers, for example, "did a tremendous job of wiping down equipment, pads and practice dummies after every practice and maintenance sprayed down the locker room and common spaces every morning," he acknowledged, and Davidson himself brought home practice clothes and washed three to four loads of laundry each night. Monitoring players' physical and mental health was important, too.

"The comeback is always greater than the setback," Bogunia told her son during the season. "You give back from what God what gave you. Don't take anything for granted."

The team played with a lot of heart this year, she observed. "They felt like a family unit more than other years. Everyone did the job that was asked of them, which is why they were so successful. You don't need a ring to show you are a champion."



Photos provided by John Felts

A one-point loss in the Class 2A IHSAA championship in Indianapolis felt devastating to the Fort Wayne team.



Jennifer Miller

Marian High School senior quarterback Maddix Bogunia, No. 13, signals a touchdown during the semi-state championship game against Bishop Chartard, together with seniors Kyrell Franklin, left, and Malcom Andersen and Brayden Berry, right.

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# Superstars of service: Kate Coates

BY TAMI DELUCENAY

St. Thomas the Apostle Parish youth group, also known as STYG, looks a little different this year. Normally a Sunday evening would find the Elkhart young people meeting in the parish's youth house, which would be filled with activities of fellowship and service. But when Kate Coates, youth minister since 2016, gathers this year's group of teens, a socially distanced area in the church basement is the new norm.

"We were able to set up Wi-Fi in our new meeting space so that we could continue our YDisciple program," stated Coates. "And just like every other year, our goal for the students each year is to help them grow in their faith and leadership abilities through service activities, faith-based curriculum and fun."

The teens come from several different high schools around the area, she noted, and find at STYG a place where they feel at home and can support one another. "We help each other with our spiritual walk and hold each other accountable to grow in our faith."

Coates and her husband, Ryan, have been parishioners of St. Thomas for more than 20 years. They have been married for 23 years and are parents to

## Youth Ministry Leaders

five children ranging in age from 10 to 23.

"Being a busy mom, I have always loved working with young people. Our pastor was looking for a youth minister and my name was mentioned, and I have continued to answer the call for the past four years. I'm also a high school substitute teacher and I'm pursuing my degree in secondary education," said Coates. "It's a blessing to be able to minister to the young people of our parish along with my own teenage boys."

The group spent the last few months studying a special series through the Y-Disciple program, focusing on five spiritual disciplines: Scripture, sacraments, overcoming sin, service and sharing the Gospel.

"We spend time helping each other be accountable for these disciplines of the Church. It was unanimous that praying with Scripture each day is what the

teens wanted to focus on.

"Praying with Scripture each morning helps the teens begin their day with Christ as the center, and knowing their peers are doing the same thing helps them to not feel alone in their faith journey. I will send them a reminder text each week to check in and let them know I'm supporting them in their efforts."

One of the traditions of STYG is an annual fall trip to the A-mazing Acres corn maze; this is always a fun fellowship event, Coates said.

Supportive parents who have transported the students and provided snacks have enabled the youth ministry at St. Thomas has continued to thrive," Coates stated. "Although some of our service activities have not been able to take place and our annual trip to the March for Life will not take place this year, we continue to gather and enjoy our time together."

**Members of the St. Thomas the Apostle Youth Group in Elkhart attend an annual fall trip to the A-mazing Acres corn maze in Edwardsburg, Mich., Oct. 25. The ministry is led by St. Thomas parishioner Kate Coates, second from right in front row.**



Provided by Kate Coates

Glory to God in the highest heaven,

and on Earth peace among those He favors.

Luke 2:14

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# Catholic Charities brings assistance, cheer to those struggling during pandemic

FORT WAYNE — “I’m not working right now because of COVID,” said Jesse. “And I really want Isaiah’s first Christmas to be special. This really helps a lot!”

Jesse is a participant in the Catholic Charities Education Creates Hope and Opportunity Program, part of the agency’s pro-life services. The program provides teen moms with high school-based support and transition assistance to college. Jesse and her 8-month-old son are also recipients in this year’s Share the Warmth of Christmas Appeal, which brings warm clothing, educational toys and much-needed financial assistance to families in the diocese.

“Because of the pandemic, there are many out of work through the Christmas season,” said Gloria Whitcraft, CEO of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. “As a result, we are seeing requests for material assistance go even higher than usual as the cold weather sets in.”

Because of the persistence of the pandemic, CCFWSB launched its Share the Warmth of Christmas Appeal to aid those affected by COVID-19 and others in need. The agency has been soliciting donations of gift cards, winter coats and financial contributions to assist the thousands in the area who are still out of work, homeless or low-income.

Jasmine and her family are also Share the Warmth recipients. Like Jesse, she is a participant in the ECHO Program. She too has had to suspend her education because of the pandemic. Her work hours were also curtailed because of COVID-19, so family finances are tight. Fortunately, she and her children — Mi-heirah, age 1, and Kannin, age 3 — are eligible to receive coats and toys from Catholic Charities.

“This is such a blessing,” said Jasmine. “These gifts will bring great joy to my kids this Christmas.”

For some recipients, Share the Warmth goes beyond coats and toys. Qualifying households are also eligible for rent and utilities assistance so they can avoid eviction. Resources for this assistance come from separate COVID-19 related funds.

“Thanks to the generosity of donors and funders, we are able to pay rent and utilities directly to the landlord or utility,” said Whitcraft. “This way we can be assured that the vulnerable are housed and warm during the cold weather.”

Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades added that Share the Warmth and ECHO are consistent with the goals of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Walking with Moms in Need initiative, a year of service in which Catholic



Photos provided by Bob Floyd

**Christmas gifts, and in some cases even food, rent and utilities are expenses some families in the diocese can’t afford this year due to unemployment forced by the coronavirus pandemic. Catholic Charities is grateful for the support it has received that enables the organization to help. Participants in the Catholic Charities’ Share the Warmth program have received winter coats, like Mi-heirah, 1, mom Jasmine, and Kannin, 3, above; below, Jess and her son, Isaiah, receive a gift box.**



Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend thanks the people and parishes of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend for their generosity this holiday season. Because of this support the diocese, through Catholic Charities, has able to serve 22,564 people this past year, just as Christ has called all Christians to do. As the human service arm of the Church, Catholic Charities offers 20 different services to 14 counties to aid people on their journey toward self-sufficiency, including:

- Alleviating poverty
- Healing mind, body and spirit
- Building strong futures
- Developing financial security

To learn more about Catholic Charities’ impact in the diocese, visit [EradicatePoverty.org](https://www.eradicatepoverty.org).

parishes and communities “walk in the shoes” of local pregnant and parenting women in need so they can learn how to help moms who are in difficult circumstances.

“In keeping with Walking with Moms in Need, we are always striving to lend support to pregnant and parenting women,” said Bishop Rhoades. “So it’s very important for the Church’s charitable arm, Catholic Charities, to be providing pro-life services such as ECHO and Share the Warmth of Christmas.”

CCFWSB will spend the remaining days before Christmas distributing goods to low-income families from its three locations in the diocese: Fort Wayne, Auburn and South Bend.

Because of a great response, CCFWSB is no longer accepting coats, toys and other material donations. However, cash donations are still much appreciated because many families across the diocese will continue to need financial assistance into the new year. To make financial contributions, please call 260-422-5625 or visit: <https://www.ccfwsb.org>

“The response has been overwhelming,” said Whitcraft. “We are blessed to have so many good and generous supporters across the diocese.”

*Editor’s note: Clients’ last names were not used to protect privacy.*

# Doctrine committee sets standards for evaluating, improving church hymns

BY GREG ERLANDSON

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Expressing concern for the doctrinal soundness of some of the lyrics of Catholic hymns now available for use in Catholic liturgies, the U.S. bishops' doctrine committee in a forthcoming report suggests guidelines for bishops in evaluating hymn lyrics and for selecting hymnals being considered for use in churches.

An accompanying memo said the document is to "assist bishops in their oversight of liturgical celebrations in their dioceses and in the granting of the imprimatur."

It also encouraged bishops to "share this resource with composers and hymn publishers in their dioceses" as well as "diocesan worship officers, pastors and parish musicians." It also said that the doctrine committee

"is available for any bishop who desires assistance in the evaluation of hymns or hymnals."

The committee document identified six areas of particular concern, a principal one being the treatment of the Eucharist. It warned that "a steady diet" of doctrinally deficient hymns "would erode Catholic sensibility regarding the fullness of Eucharist teaching, on the Mass as sacrifice and eventually on the Church, as formed by that sacrifice."

The document, titled "Catholic Hymnody at the Service of the Church: An Aid for Evaluating Hymn Lyrics," was produced by the Committee on Doctrine of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

A copy of the report and memo were obtained by Catholic News Service.

The report acknowledged several areas of doctrinal deficiency in some contemporary hymns

and suggests two guidelines in "determining whether a hymn is doctrinally suitable for liturgical use":

— "Is the hymn in conformity with Catholic doctrine?"

— "Is the hymn expressed in image and vocabulary appropriately reflective of the usage of Scripture and the public liturgical prayer of the Church?"

The report focused on six key deficiencies in some current hymns: the presentation of eucharistic doctrine; the presentation of Trinitarian doctrine; deficiencies in the doctrine of God and his relation to humans; "hymns with a view of the church that sees her as essentially a human construction"; "hymns with doctrinally incorrect views of the Jewish people"; and "hymns with incorrect Christian anthropology."

In a memo accompanying the

**HYMNS, page 18**

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# Needing and wanting

There are some things we want more than we need. And then there are things we need more than we want.

Writing more than 1,600 years ago, St. Augustine observed that fallen humans desire temporal goods with greater fervor than eternal goods. However, once possessed, these temporal goods are almost immediately less desirable than when they were not yet possessed. Remember that new product or device you just had to have two years ago? The one that is probably long forgotten or collecting dust somewhere?

He then pointed out, conversely, that eternal goods are actually more desirable once they are possessed, than when initially desired. This is why the world, the flesh, the devil and all that they pander to us are always more desirable than an hour spent in church before the Blessed Sacrament or the recitation of the rosary, for example.

There are some things we want more than we need. Dark chocolate, for example, is something I certainly want more than I need. But there are things we need more than we want. Temporal or material goods are almost always wanted more than they are needed. God, and the life of the Spirit, however, are always needed much more than they are desired or wanted. We need God, even if we do not desire Him or aren't aware that we do desire Him; St. Augustine tells us that, whether we are willing to realize or admit it or

not, God created us for Himself, and our hearts will be restless until they rest in Him.

The Christian life is a continual journey of training our desires and of working to overcome — always under the aspect of grace — the gap that exists in our daily experience between our desire for God and our need for God. Our wanting, or desire, for God should, over time and with the right exercise and tutoring, be moving ever closer to the point of our absolute need for Him. We should always be working to want God more and more and need temporal and material goods less and less. This is the work of a lifetime of faith, hope and charity. This is the life of heroic sanctity witnessed in the saints and martyrs. But it is also the life that each of us is called to. And nothing less.

Ironically, God desires us, but does not need us. Our "fiat," our "yes" to Him, adds nothing to His majesty, grandeur or goodness. God, as St. Irenaeus would point out two centuries prior to Augustine, stands in need of nothing, and there is nothing that any creature can contribute to God's utter blessedness or goodness. Even in the face of that fact, He desires us: He wants to be invited into the life of those rational beings He created in love. Yet His entrée can be blocked by the very freedom with which he had so generously endowed these very creatures.

He desires it not because it adds anything to His own goodness, but because it is for our



## THE HUMAN CONDITION

MSGR. MICHAEL HEINTZ

good, our flourishing. The Lord wants to become part of every element of our life: not just our Catholic, or faith, life (if such a thing actually exists as an abstracted part of our life, which is dubious at best and downright dangerous at worst), but He desires to enter into every fiber of our being — body and soul — and purify, heal, enrich, transform and elevate us, enabling us to share more and more in His own divine life: the communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is why the Catholic Church, in its handing on of the Gospel of Jesus, offers authoritative guidance and moral teaching concerning every aspect of our lives, including, but not limited to, human sexuality, marriage, medical and health care practices, the economy, political and social life, and the raising and formation of children. There is simply no part or area of our life where the Lord Jesus does not wish to enter and to transform.

Strictly speaking, there is no "Catholic part" of our life. Either the whole thing is handed over to the Lordship of Jesus Christ or it's not: There can be no compartmentalization of our faith to a cordoned-off area that

is private. This false distinction or compartmentalization is what leads some Catholics in the social and political sphere to act publicly in ways that are an affront to the Gospel and at the same time claim that they, personally, hold different views. The only way we can truly be happy, the only way we can truly be free, the only way we can truly flourish and attain the destiny, joy and love for which we were made is to allow Jesus Christ to be Lord of every inch of our life, body and soul: every inch of our

family, every inch of our job, every inch of our free time, hobbies and recreation.

In the end, when the Son has made all things subject to Himself and has destroyed His last enemy and ours, death, we, in union with Him, will be made subject to the Father. (cf. 1 Corinthians 15.28) And then we will discover that we want Him as much as we need Him.

Msgr. Michael Heintz is on the faculty at Mount St. Mary's Seminary, Emmitsburg, Maryland.



## CATHERINE LABOURE

FEAST: DECEMBER 31  
1806-1857

Born Zoe Laboure, this visionary lived simply and anonymously for 45 years as a Sister of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul in Paris. But during her novitiate, Sister Catherine had visions of Our Lady, shared then only with her confessor and a tribunal that investigated and authenticated them. In the visions, Our Lady stood on a globe, with light shafts beaming from her hands and these words around the image: "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee." The Miraculous Medal devotion was born immediately, but credited to Catherine's visions only eight months before her death. Her incorrupt body lays in her convent chapel.

# The kingship of David is fulfilled in the Son of Mary



## THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

MSGR. OWEN F. CAMPION

### Fourth Sunday Of Advent Luke 1:26-38

The first reading for this weekend is from the Second Book of Samuel. Once, the two Books of Samuel were a single volume. Translations and editions over the centuries divided this one volume into two.

David is the principal figure in these books. The ancient Hebrews looked upon David as much more than a king. Beyond all else, he was God's chosen representative, given the kingship so that laws and circumstances would provide an atmosphere in which the people more fervently would follow God

and be loyal to the Covenant.

For this weekend's second reading, the Church offers us a reading from St. Paul's Letter to the Romans.

Scholars unanimously say that Paul of Tarsus indeed authored this letter, and that this epistle was his theological masterpiece. For this reason, it appears first in sequence among the 14 letters attributed to Paul, placed in Bibles immediately following the Acts of the Apostles.

As indicated by its title, Paul sent this letter to the Christian population of Rome. In the first century A.D., Rome was the center of the Mediterranean world in every respect: political, economic and cultural. Also, it was the largest city in the Roman Empire. Not surprisingly, Rome, the great imperial capital, had within its borders a great array of ideas and religions, Christianity among them.

In this weekend's reading, and often elsewhere, Paul asserts his own vocation as an apostle. His vocation from God came so that "all the Gentiles" might believe in, and obey, God, "who

alone is wise."

For the final reading this weekend, the Church proclaims a beautiful part of St. Luke's Gospel, Luke's infancy narrative. It is the story of the Annunciation, the event when Gabriel, the angel, came into the presence of Mary, a young Jewish woman, in Nazareth in Galilee, to inform her that she would be the mother of the long-awaited Redeemer.

The reading abounds with meaning. Luke makes clear that Mary was a virgin, and that the conception of the Redeemer would not be the result of any human relationship. Behind this fact is the reality that God, as Creator and the provider of order to the universe, can do anything. He is almighty. The Redeemer will be the Son of God. He will be David's successor.

The Redeemer's coming will fulfill God's promises, spoken by the prophets all through the ages, to bring life and salvation to the people. The birth of this Redeemer will be the ultimate satisfaction of the ancient Covenant.

Vital to the message of the

story is Mary's response. "I am the maidservant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say."

## Reflection

In each of these readings, drawn from the Scriptures, the Church makes a vital point. God reaches out to us. This outreach is not vague, pointed only to a few, or impossible to see. It came in the persons of individuals with whom we can relate — David, Paul and Jesus — so that we all may comprehend.

This outreach has critical implications for us in our own inadequacy and limitations. God is almighty, but God's supreme power over all creation is not the most consoling point here. Rather, the most reassuring factor is that God loves us. He continually dispatched messengers such as David, Paul and Jesus, to rescue us from ourselves and to guide to peace in our hearts and life in eternity. He sent us Mary in her faithfulness.

The Church approaches Christmas in its solid conviction of God's love. We are not

helpless and doomed. God reaches out to us.

Now, each of us must respond. Do we accept God? Do we love God? Or do we reject God? It is that simple.

## READINGS

**Sunday:** 2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16 Ps 89:2-5, 27, 29 Rom 16:25-27 Lk 1:26-38

**Monday:** Sg 2:8-14 Ps 33:2-3, 11-12, 20-21 Lk 1:39-45

**Tuesday:** 1 Sm 1:24-28 (Ps) 1 Sm 2:4-7, 8abcd Lk 1:46-56

**Wednesday:** Mal 3:1-4, 23-24 Ps 25:4bc-5ab, 8-10, 14 Lk 1:57-66

**Thursday:** 2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16 Ps 89:2-5, 27, 29 Lk 1:67-79

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

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

# For unto us a child is born

There is nothing like the birth of a child to make one appreciate Christmas. Four times, I have experienced such Christmases. Now I am experiencing my fifth. It was the birth of my first grandchild. He was named after my father, Theodore, who died 25 years ago.

The arrival of a child is a moment of great joy and great hope. With his birth, I feel as if I have a presence in a new generation that will long outlast me. I'm invested in a future I will not share. This is strangely comforting.

And though he was born in August, he is helping my experience of Advent. In prayer I am awaiting the birth of the savior, but the arrival of Theo makes this anticipation more real to me. In fact, a new birth is not just about arrival, but anticipation of what is to come next, what this tiny new birth will become. Birth is a moment to revel and yet to dream.

Advent is a time of anticipation, too. The daily readings are meant to accompany us, to focus us, to prepare us. We are asked to make ourselves ready. We wait, marking the passage of time with our Advent candles, counting the days. Drawing closer to Bethlehem.

This year has felt more Lent than Advent, but it has been a time of waiting, a year of mandat-

ed patience. We have not all done this equally well. Many of us have grown impatient at the long austerity of the COVID-19 crisis. We don't all feel we are sharing the same burden.

Those untouched by illness may shrug off the risks or disbelieve them. Others try their best to abide by the rules, but even after months, the death toll continues to climb, the surges come in waves. The waiting seems hopeless sometimes.

The hospitals are full of suffering madonnas, nurses in an endless Pietà, stand-ins for families who cannot be at the deathbeds of their loved ones. Trailers fill with bodies and mortuaries are overwhelmed. It may be easier this Advent for some of us to believe in Good Friday than to anticipate Christmas.

Yet when I said that a new birth is not just about arrival, but anticipation of what is to come next, that is a part of Christmas. This babe that is born to us is destined to suffer and to die. This is true of every human life.

Christmas implicitly contains within it Good Friday, visualized in the Eastern icon of the manger scene nested in a cave under Golgotha. The baby in the manger, like my grandson in my arms, is not immune to this reality.

And yet this painful realization is tempered by our faith that death has been defeated once and



## AMID THE FRAY

GREG ERLANDSON

for all by that child whose birth we anticipate now. This is our message; this is our joy. It is why so much of the Christmas season seems unsatisfying. So much of the commercial celebration is a distraction. It misses the point, really.

We celebrate the birth of our Savior because we know it to be the harbinger of the story's end. This is God become man. This is death on the cross, yes, but it is the final victory of Easter.

So when I hold my grandchild, I hold someone who has been saved by that sacrifice, saved by that babe born so long ago.

We are waiting now. Waiting for Christmas. Waiting for the end of the pandemic. Waiting for my grandchild to become a boy, to become a man. And while we wait, we give thanks that we know how the story ends.

Greg Erlandson, director and editor-in-chief of Catholic News Service, can be reached at [gerlandson@catholicnews.com](mailto:gerlandson@catholicnews.com).

# SCRIPTURE SEARCH®

Gospel for December 20, 2020

Luke 1:26-38

Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for the fourth Sunday of Advent: The Annunciation. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

- |            |           |          |
|------------|-----------|----------|
| ANGEL      | GABRIEL   | NAZARETH |
| VIRGIN     | HOUSE     | DAVID    |
| MARY       | PONDERED  | CONCEIVE |
| BEAR A SON | GREAT     | THRONE   |
| FOREVER    | KINGDOM   | NO END   |
| CHILD      | ELIZABETH | OLD AGE  |
| BARREN     | NOTHING   | DEPARTED |

## NO END

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

# Jesus is coming

My younger sister and I used to fight over who would get to blow out the candles of the Advent wreath. We'd light the candles at dinner, and as soon as we were finished eating, the back and forth of "You did it last night, it's my turn!" would start. My parents would referee, insisting we could figure it out as they cleaned the kitchen.

We'd sit there, waiting each other out to see who would get up from the table first, leaving the more patient one to finish the job.

Well into young adulthood the battle continued, and even just the other night as my family gathered at my home for dinner, my sister and I sat at the table for an extra 20 minutes to see who'd get the prized task of blowing out the candles. I lost only because I had to go feed the baby.

The Advent wreath has long been a great comfort for me. We'd sit around the wreath after long days at work and school and talk about our day, the candles like magnets holding us all together. I'd come home from college, the long fall semester behind me, and there it would be, sitting on the table.

My husband and I made one the first year we were married, and at the Third Week of Advent we lit the pink candle to celebrate joy, both of Christ's birth and the news we were expecting our first child. And now, that little girl insists we light the candles of

the wreath at every single meal, because this shouldn't just be a dinnertime practice.

When we pull out our Advent wreaths, we're beginning to close the year, with the wreath as an anchor. It's familiar. The four candles, three purple, one pink, fashioned in a circle, the greenery holding them together, remind us of what's coming — new life in the one who is to come. And with that new life, a new year, perhaps one filled with all the things we pray on in this final month of the year: hope and peace, love and joy.

This year has proven remarkably difficult and profoundly sad, and I think we could all use the symbolism and stability of an Advent wreath: light, flickering in the dark. Candles, burning bright, growing shorter as we get closer to the joyful Christmas day, lighting for warmth and comfort.

Countless times this year I've asked, "Where are you, Lord?" When my grandmother died in June, when two hurricanes hit my hometown six weeks apart, when my income was lost from canceled events, when I had to give birth away from home, with a new doctor. At each turn, I've asked, "Where are you, Lord?"

Even though I've always loved the Advent wreath, I almost didn't pull it out this year. As comforting as it's been, and as much as I love the tradition, I was resentful of the idea that I should be



## WINDOW SEAT WISDOM

KATIE PREJEAN MCGRADY

joyfully anticipating the birth of Jesus in a year when He seemed to be hiding.

But the first night I reluctantly set it out on our table, and lit the first candle, my 3-year-old daughter insisted I light all four candles at once. Even as we explained that we light them just one at a time, symbolizing our patience as we wait for Jesus, she proudly declared, "But Jesus is right here, in my heart!"

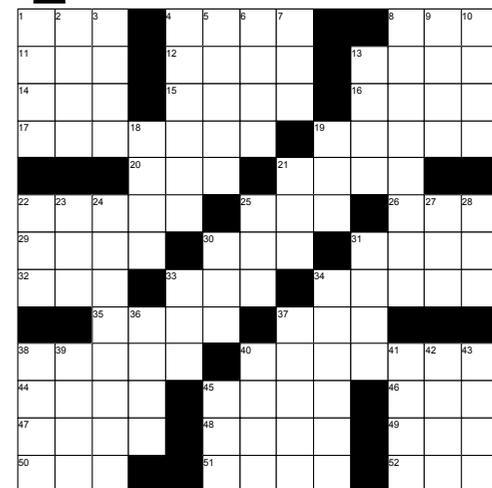
That's where he's been. In this oh-so-challenging 2020, with so much death and suffering, so much heartache and defeat, we've asked, "Where are you, Lord?" and he's whispered in the quiet, "I'm right here — in your heart."

As we light the candles of our wreaths, trim the trees strung with lights and long for better days ahead, may we hold fast to the promise of this season: Jesus is coming. In fact, He's already here.

Katie Prejean McGrady is an international Catholic speaker and author.

# The Cross Word

December 20 and 27, 2020



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Readings: 2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16; Lk 1:26-38 and Gn 15: 1-6; 21:1-3; Heb 11:8, 11-12, 17-19; Lk 2:22-40

### ACROSS

- 1 In possession of
- 4 Face disease
- 8 BB association
- 11 **Rosary month**
- 12 **Abbr. for Philippians**
- 13 **Peter and \_\_\_**
- 14 \_\_\_ Lanka
- 15 **Advent color**
- 16 **Jewish scribe**
- 17 Tightly woven cotton
- 19 "Count the \_\_\_"
- 20 **Abraham and Sarah were**
- 21 Former Soviet Union
- 22 Dorm dwellers
- 25 "Blessed \_\_\_ thou"

### DOWN

- 26 Airport abbr.
- 29 **Prophetess**
- 30 Gray sea eagle
- 31 **Magi followed**
- 32 Affirmation
- 33 Gall
- 34 Red pigment
- 35 **Abraham's promise**
- 37 Resort hotel
- 38 Sarah's original name
- 40 Not thinness
- 44 Belongs to Avi
- 45 Former French Sudan
- 46 Shriill bark
- 47 **Ark of the Covenant place**
- 48 Ditto
- 49 Epoch
- 50 Bard's "before"
- 51 Tribe
- 52 Gels
- 1 Hospital (abbr.)
- 2 Land unit
- 3 Mix with spoon
- 4 Shocks
- 5 **They brought him to the Temple**
- 6 "Novena" means
- 7 Deer relative
- 8 **Mary's home town**
- 9 Sharp sticky seed pod
- 10 Alack's partner
- 13 Our animal friends
- 18 Musical repeat
- 19 Concord e.g.
- 21 Big coffee container
- 22 Coral reef
- 23 "We believe in \_\_\_ God"
- 24 Cherish
- 25 "\_\_\_ of the Covenant"
- 27 Sticky black substance
- 28 Is
- 30 **To sin**
- 31 Look over quickly
- 33 **Next Vatican Council's #**
- 34 Choice
- 36 **Magi came from**
- 37 Spicy condiment
- 38 Satiare
- 39 Maintain
- 40 "Destined for the \_\_\_ of many"
- 41 **Simeon's \_\_\_ had seen salvation**
- 42 Father
- 43 Small quarrel
- 45 Scottish nickname

Answer key can be found on page 19

**HYMNS, from page 15**

document, the committee said its report is modeled on a 1997 report by Indianapolis Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein on "Ten Common Deficiencies in Catechetical Materials."

Archbishop Buechlein's report prompted a long-running and wide-ranging review of catechetical materials used in religious education. The bishops' Subcommittee on the Catechism met annually with religious publishers and set up an exhaustive voluntary review process to determine if texts were in conformity with the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

The memo accompanying the hymnal document acknowledged "over the years concerns have been raised regarding the lyrics of hymns and songs used in the liturgy that may be misleading or lacking in substance."

"Given the power of music to reinforce the words that are sung by the people, great care must be taken to ensure the doctrinal



CNS photo/Chaz Muth

**Members of The Catholic University of America Chamber Choir sing during an Oct. 10, 2017, rehearsal at St. Vincent de Paul Chapel on the campus of the Washington university. The U.S. bishops' doctrine committee, in a forthcoming report, suggests guidelines for bishops in evaluating hymn lyrics and for selecting hymnals being considered for use in churches.**

integrity of the lyrics," it said.

The first and lengthiest area of concern in the document focused on the presentation of eucharis-

tic doctrine, reflecting a growing urgency among the bishops to address deficiencies in how some Catholics understand the

Eucharist.

A 2019 survey by the Pew Research Center found that only about half of those surveyed correctly understood that the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ in the Mass, while half of respondents thought of the bread and wine as merely symbols of the body and blood of Christ.

The document said language that implies the bread and wine remain bread and wine after the consecration should be avoided, as should language that implies that the bread and wine "are merely symbols of another reality or person."

The document cited examples of current hymnody that fail to make the distinctions required.

The concern, the bishops said, is that "Catholics nurtured on a steady diet of certain hymns will learn from them that at Mass we come together to share bread and wine, which remain bread and wine, a common meal, even if under special circumstances."

Further, "these hymns correspondingly also downplay or

eliminate entirely reference to the sacrifice of Christ, his priesthood, and his status as both priest and victim, as well as to the role of the ministerial priesthood in the church."

Regarding the doctrine of the Trinity, the report criticized hymns where there appeared to be a "reluctance to use the word 'Father.'" Sometimes the word "Creator" is substituted for Father, although it applies to all three persons of the Trinity, and may imply that the Son and the Spirit are not God. "This is (the heresy of) Arianism, however unintentionally," the report concluded.

The document concluded with an exhortation that "sacred song united to the words ... forms a necessary or integral part of the solemn liturgy."

"It is our hope," added the bishops, "that this guidance will help ensure that all the sacred music employed in liturgical celebrations will achieve its purpose, which is the glory of God and the sanctification of the faithful."

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**Epiphany concert at St. Vincent de Paul FORT WAYNE** — An Epiphany Concert will be at St. Vincent de Paul Church, 1502 E. Wallen Rd., Wednesday, Jan. 6, at 7 p.m. Members of the Fort Wayne Philharmonic will help celebrate the Christmas season with beautiful music. No charge. This performance will also be streamed at [saintv.org](http://saintv.org), YouTube and Facebook. Contact Anthony Andorfer at 260-489-3537 or [church@saintv.org](mailto:church@saintv.org) for details.

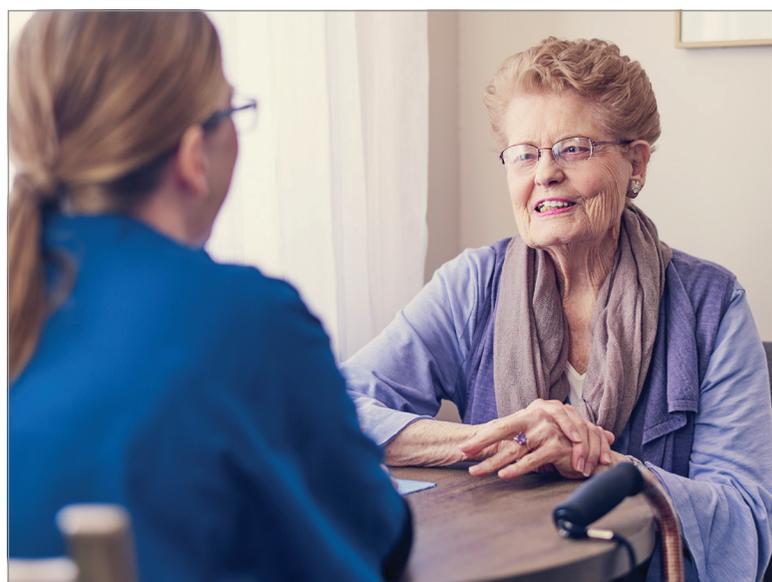
**Disciple series begins MISHAWAKA** — Disciple is a 10-session course over Zoom on Monday evenings from 7:30-9 p.m. to help commit-

ted Christians put Jesus more at the center of their lives and daily decisions. Each session will look at a different aspect of discipleship as well as practical guidance in building up a life of prayer. Daily homework assignments of 15 minutes will make use of selected Scripture readings and time for personal prayer. Contact Deacon Frederick Everett at 574-234-0687 or email [feverett@diocesefwsb.org](mailto:feverett@diocesefwsb.org) for details.

**Alpha Online - Young Adult Series MISHAWAKA** — Register for Alpha Online FWSB – Young Adult Series, a 10-week small-group discussion series featuring the highly-acclaimed Alpha film

series that explores the Christian faith in an engaging, contemporary style with inspiring stories and interviews from around the world. The free series will take place over Zoom on Monday evenings from 7:30 to 9 p.m. Jan. 18 through March 22. For more information and to register, visit [diocesefwsb.org/alpha](http://diocesefwsb.org/alpha).

**Little Flower Holy Hour FORT WAYNE** — Little Flower Holy Hour for Vocations is sponsored by the Vocation Office and takes place from 7-8 p.m. on the first Tuesday of each month at the St. Mother Theodore Guerin Chapel next to the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, 1102 S. Clinton St. The January holy hour will be led by Father Thomas Shoemaker. Contact Christine Nix at 260-422-4611 or [cbonahoom-nix@diocesefwsb.org](mailto:cbonahoom-nix@diocesefwsb.org).



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## The CrossWord

December 20 and 27, 2020

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This Mass is also open to the public but limited seating is available for social distancing and masks will be required.

# Parishes plan carefully to accommodate Christmas crowds

BY JENNIFER BARTON

How will the season's liturgical celebrations look this year? That's the question that many people have been asking as Dec. 25 approaches.

The Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend has been working to ensure a safe means of worship at Mass while still allowing those who feel safe to honor Christ's birth with in-person attendance at the liturgies of Late Advent, Christmas and the Christmas Octave.

Masks and social distancing requirements will still be in place across the diocese as they are in all of the state of Indiana and expected to be enforced. So in order to allow as many Catholics as possible to participate in the liturgical joys of the season, parishes are planning extra Masses and other special accommodations.

## Ministering to older populations

St. Bernard Parish in Wabash is attended primarily by retirees. There are very few young families, which has made ministering during pandemic easier in some ways, pastor Father Levi Nkwocha said, because many older parishioners have been staying at home due to risk of contracting COVID-19.

Fortunately, St. Bernard had online capability even prior to the spring suspension of Masses in the diocese. "Wherever you are, you can see all the Masses, not just Sunday," Father Nkwocha noted.

"My parishioners are not disconnected, I can tell you that," he said. Father Nkwocha makes it a point to look directly at the camera during his homilies, he said, to speak comfort to those who cannot physically attend.

Wi-Fi connections were also installed in the church this year, so parishioners will be able this season to watch the Mass in the parking lot, if they choose, and receive Communion from Father Nkwocha afterward. The parish also canceled its midnight Mass so that older parishioners won't be put at risk by making the drive at night. It will be replaced with a 5:30 p.m. Mass.

St. Louis, Besancon Parish in New Haven will also move up the time of the midnight Mass to 9 p.m. so that online viewers do not need to stay up as late.

St. Bernard has a tradition of sending Christmas cards to parishioners with hopeful messages. Father Nkwocha also hopes to send flowers to nursing home residents if regulations allow. In the meantime, he has been making random phone calls to members of the parish and visiting those who allow him to do so. "We have Advent hope to give to the people."

One such member is an older



File Photo

St. Louis, Besancon Parish, New Haven, celebrates a Christmas Mass in 2015.

man whose wife is bedridden. "This man, this wonderful man, doesn't leave the house because of her ... He works all day to take care of her," Father Nkwocha said. "I go to him — that's the only way to reach out, but I am super-careful. I encourage him to come to church." Sometimes, when he can find someone to stay with his wife, the man does attend Mass, proclaiming his joy at being in the presence of Christ.

Father Nkwocha admits to feeling that lack of normalcy as Christmas approaches, but sees it as a means of growing closer to God. "We try to reach that internal connectivity, to not depend so much on the physical presence. God is not a physical entity."

## Additional Masses

For the celebration of Christmas, priests of the diocese will be permitted to say up to four Masses per day on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Most parishes in the diocese have added at least one Mass time on Christmas Eve to try and avoid overcrowded situations.

A "pretty extensive Christmas schedule" at St. John the Evangelist in Goshen means that four Mass times, in English and Spanish, are scheduled for both days. The parish even set aside one Mass specifically for people who are at higher risk for suffering severe effects from COVID-19.

"We expect that numbers will be lower than in past years, but we also foresee the very real possibility that we will not be able to accommodate everyone who would like to come to our after-

noon Masses on Christmas Eve," pastor Father Royce Gregerson stated. To offset this, the school gym will be utilized for overflow crowds and Masses will be livestreamed to YouTube and Facebook.

There is certainly a concern about priests potentially becoming overwhelmed by the additional duties needed to bring this festive occasion to the faithful, but Father Gregerson felt that this was more of a pressure that priests might place on themselves because of "wanting to do as much as possible for the people we serve."

"I think that people have been very understanding that what we are able to do as priests is limited," he continued. "They appreciate the extra effort that we are making to help them celebrate Christmas."

Aside from adding Mass times, other larger parishes are creating overflow spaces in their gymnasiums and parish halls.

At St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Fort Wayne, pastor Father David Voors stated that on a normal basis the church can pack in a thousand worshippers; but with social distancing, that number decreases to around 180. To accommodate a parish of over 8,000 on one of the most crowded days of the liturgical year, the staff came up with a solution.

"We're using our usual Christmas schedule — three Masses on Christmas Eve and three on Christmas Day — but we're opening our parish hall and gym, livestreaming the Mass from the church to those locations." This will allow a maximum of 450 attendees per Mass.

Father Voors does not expect overwhelming numbers for these Mass times. For Communion, he plans on having extraordinary ministers of holy Communion take the sacrament to the overflow areas.

## Reservations

Some parishes, such as Sacred Heart in Warsaw, St. Jude in Fort Wayne and St. Michael in Plymouth have set up a reservation system for the season's Masses at which they expect the highest attendance. This also allows the priests to know in advance approximately how many worshippers to expect. Sign-up sheets are accessible through the parish websites.

St. Thomas the Apostle in Elkhart has utilized a reservation system from the onset of the pandemic restrictions. Members can reserve a particular area of the church to sit in, and the program automatically reserves three additional seats to allow for social distancing. Registration is not a requirement unless families prefer a specific location, and St. Thomas ushers are trained to seat walk-in attendees in a responsible manner.

The most popular Mass, said pastor Father Jason Freiburger, is the 4 p.m. Christmas Eve one, which began filling up as soon as reservations opened. As of Dec. 11, over 200 of the seats had been filled. Father Freiburger planned to use parts of the school for overflow. But otherwise, he has not altered the regular Christmas Mass schedule and expects around the same

number of participants as at recent Sunday Masses.

## Surveys

St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Angola is taking a somewhat different approach to their Christmas Mass offerings: The parish sent out a survey asking parishioners about their Christmas Mass plans. According to the parish website, many people declared their intention to attend a Mass in person.

With limited seating at both St. Anthony of Padua and the nearby St. Paul Chapel at Clear Lake, the parish decided "to give people more options and, hopefully, to spread things out a little." Three Masses are scheduled for Christmas Eve and two for Christmas Day, with four additional Christmas Masses to be celebrated over the weekend.

To allow those who wish to receive Communion without risking the potentially larger crowds, pastor Father Robert Showers, OFM Conv., will continue remaining in St. Anthony of Padua's nave on Sundays from noon until 6 p.m. Father Showers said he has found this method an appropriate means of distributing Communion. Reservations are not required to attend the parish's Masses.

## Reconciliation

Many parishes have had to reassess their yearly Advent penance services as well. For example, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton generally receives such a high number of penitents that the parish chose not to have a penance service at all. Instead, all three of the parish's priests have been spending an hour and a half on Saturdays in the confessional, and after each weekday Mass.

Other parishes have opted to continue with their planned services, respecting social distancing requirements.

## Singing

Late Advent and Christmas are the liturgical seasons most often associated with their own repertoire of favorite songs that worshippers look forward to singing. However, congregational singing will not be part of this year's liturgies.

Some locations, such as St. Francis Xavier Parish in Pierceton, plan to have only instrumental music. Others expect to feature only a cantor or small choir.

"We all want to shout with joy and thanksgiving," Father Voors commented. Instead, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton will have a cantor and will choose songs that are not as well-known, in an effort to discourage singing throughout the congregation. He is considering having some of the traditional songs played prior to the start of the service, however.