



TODAY'S CATHOLIC

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Photos by Jennifer Barton

Patrick and John Olson take up the gifts at the sensory-friendly Mass at St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Fort Wayne Nov. 28. Their mother, Sarah, worked with Father Jay Horning to institute the special Mass to meet the needs of people who have disabilities.

BY JENNIFER BARTON

According to the National Autism Association autism is the fastest-growing developmental disorder, with one in 54 children diagnosed with it. Autism is often accompanied by sensory processing disorder, which can cause overstimulation to the affected person when lights are too bright, sounds are too loud or things happen unexpectedly.

The sensory-friendly Mass addresses some of those reactions, and the practice is growing within the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Fort Wayne recently began hosting a special Sunday afternoon Mass dedicated to meeting this need.

Father Jay Horning is one



Accommodations are made at sensory-friendly Masses for people in wheelchairs, those with hearing loss, anxiety and various other developmental disorders.

of the parish's parochial vicars and was appointed interim pastor while Father Daniel Scheidt went on sabbatical during the fall. Father Horning had already been considering reinstituting a Sunday afternoon Mass when parishioner Sarah Olson approached him about the possibility of a sensory-friendly Mass, so he chose to "give it a distinct purpose," he stated.

Olson is the mother of nine children, one of whom – John – has autism and two others who were born deaf and now have cochlear implants. "We've always been on this journey, this search for how we can have a big family, go to Mass together and have our son with us and our other children and be part of the Mass," she said.

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God dreams of a world where all are welcomed as family, pope says

BY CINDY WOODEN

NICOSIA, Cyprus (CNS) — Pope Francis told migrants that, like them, God dreams of a world where everyone recognizes each other as brothers and sisters.

God “asks us not to be content with a divided world, divided Christian communities, but to journey through history drawn by his own dream: the dream of a humanity freed of walls of division, freed of hostility, where there are no longer strangers, but only fellow citizens,” he told migrants during an emotional ecumenical prayer service Dec. 3 in the Church of the Holy Cross in Nicosia.

Thamara da Silva, who came from Sri Lanka, told the pope: “Every day, I have to reduce everything that I may be, or hope to be, or want to become, into a check mark next to a box on a form. I have to use a word or two to explain myself to one of the few who might choose to ask or to acknowledge that I am even here. What do I say? Usually I must choose ‘xenos,’ ‘foreigner.’”

“But what I want to scream is ‘person,’ ‘sister,’ ‘friend,’ ‘believer,’ ‘neighbor,’” she said.

The Holy Cross church compound, which includes the Vatican nunciature and the offices of Caritas Cyprus, is on the U.N.-patrolled green line separating the largely Greek Cypriot southern two-thirds of the island from the predominantly Turkish Cypriot northern third.

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Two years ago, Olson quit her job to stay home and focus on advocating for her special needs children. In learning how to meet her kids' physical and spiritual needs, she turned to the diocese for assistance, sending emails to various departments asking what resources were available. This led her to the Belonging ministry and a meeting with Allison Sturm, ministry specialist in pastoral care for the diocese.

In that meeting, Olson asked if a sensory-friendly Mass that meets a family's Sunday obligation could be celebrated. She decided to approach her pastor about it.

Father Horning took it to prayer and to his staff and began discussing what the parish would need to do to move forward. He expressed his hope that offering the special Mass will encourage those who may be nervous about returning to church for any reason to come back. “We need to be at Mass,” he reiterated.

Olson admitted she was terribly nervous to ask for something from her priest but felt called to do so. And since she was asking something of her pastor,



CNS photo/Paul Haring

A banner showing Pope Francis hangs on a barricade made of barrels in the U.N. Buffer Zone in Nicosia, Cyprus, Dec. 3. The pope was on a five-day visit to Cyprus and Greece.

Cyprus also has the European Union's highest per capita number of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Many of them travel across the sea from Turkey, landing in the north where there are no border controls, then try to sneak across the green line.

Tensions and frustration have increased because of the combination of increasing migration and suspicion that Turkey is promoting it, along with the

economic challenges COVID-19 has posed to an island reliant on tourism.

Reaffirming the Dec. 2 statement of Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades, the internal affairs ministry said Dec. 3 that Pope Francis had arranged for 50 asylum-seekers to be transferred to Italy.

Included in the group who will be moving, the ministry said, are Enjei Grace and Daniel Ejube, both from Cameroon, whose

story has been told in newspapers around the world. Thinking they could enter Europe through northern Cyprus, they have been living in a tent on the green line since May — with neither side willing to take them in.

Later, the Vatican announced Pope Francis would help move a dozen migrants from Cyprus to Italy before Christmas. A spokes-

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she knew she needed to give of herself, too. Now she serves as sacristan and has reached out to others to find lectors, extraordinary ministers and people to fill other roles — all of which she said was “completely out of my comfort zone ... I'm not this person at all. But it's been so good; It has been humbling and wonderful, really. You never know where God is going to end up taking you.”

Sensory-friendly Masses were developed to help people with autism — like John — to feel they are still a part of the body of Christ, even if they cannot attend a typical Mass. To meet the needs of people with disabilities, a sensory-friendly Mass is much shorter at around half an hour, with no music, calm lighting and a short and simple homily. The overall atmosphere is meant to reduce the anxiety of those who attend, which allows families like the Olsons to concentrate on the eucharistic celebration.

At the beginning of each Mass, Father Horning reminds those present that the Mass is meant to be inclusive to people of all abilities and that any seemingly unusual movements, noises or behaviors on the part of worshippers are perfectly nor-

mal and acceptable. For those who cannot come up to the front of the church for communion, Father Horning asks that they notify him so communion can be brought to them.

The sensory-friendly Mass is not only meant for those with disorders like autism or Tourette's syndrome, but for anyone who has need of it. People in wheelchairs, older people with restricted driving hours and families with young children can find a home at the 1:30 p.m. Mass. Attendees are also encouraged to participate in whatever capacity they are able. Olson would love to see John serve at that Mass with the aid of his older brother.

The sensory-friendly Mass, Father Horning stated, “answers the need for people who otherwise might not feel welcome.” And between the numbers of children diagnosed with autism every year, rising cases of mental illness and other special needs, the Church has found ways of becoming more inclusive to people that might otherwise have felt neglected.

Since St. Vincent began hosting the sensory-friendly Masses, the number of worshippers has grown. Sturm reported around

60 people attended the first two Masses: then it grew to 80, then nearly 100 people, both parishioners of St. Vincent and members of other parishes nearby.

Olson would like to see the idea of offering a sensory-friendly Mass spread to other parishes in the diocese, and she hopes more people from the area will attend the St. Vincent Mass. Whatever happens in the future, she said that “hopefully we brought some families back into the Church, we allowed some other families to feel the love and warm embrace of ... just what the community of Christ is, and being surrounded by that love and support.”

Part of the blessing of the sensory-friendly Mass is that it promotes acceptance of those with disabilities within the community.

“In my mind, I'm excited if people show up who don't have anyone with special needs. If they see families or people at other Masses that they've seen at this Mass, maybe they'll be more accepting and welcoming” to them, Olson commented.

Pro-lifers hopeful about outcome of Dobbs case, urge prayers for court

BY JULIE ASHER

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The chairman of the U.S. bishops' pro-life committee Dec. 1 urged Catholics, people of other faiths and all people of goodwill to unite in prayer that the U.S. Supreme Court will overturn Roe v. Wade in its eventual ruling on Mississippi's ban on most abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy.

His statement was issued the same day the court heard oral arguments in Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization, an appeal from Mississippi. Its ban was struck down by a federal District Court in Mississippi in 2018 and upheld a year later by the New Orleans-based U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit.

The Mississippi law is being challenged by the state's only abortion facility, the Jackson Women's Health Organization. It's the first major abortion case the court has heard in decades.

"In the United States, abortion takes the lives of over 600,000 babies every year," said Baltimore Archbishop William E. Lori, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities. "Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health could change that."

"We pray that the court will do the right thing and allow states to once again limit or prohibit abortion, and in doing so protect millions of unborn children and their mothers from this painful, life-destroying act," he added. "We invite all people of goodwill to uphold the dignity of human life by joining us in prayer and fasting for this important case."

If the court's ruling, expected in July, upholds the ban, it possibly also could overturn Roe and send the abortion issue back to the states to decide laws on it.

Archbishop Lori directed people to www.prayfordobbs.com for Catholic and ecumenical prayers and resources for community engagement and action "as we await the court's decision in this case."

Pro-life advocates and supporters of keeping abortion legal gathered outside the Supreme Court rallying for their respective positions on the issue as the justices heard oral arguments in the case inside the court.

Beyond the court building's steps, statements about the Mississippi law and predictions about the outcome of the case came from all quarters.

U.S. Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, D-N.H., predicted there would be "a revolution" if Roe v. Wade is overturned.

Shaheen, who is on record as a supporter of widespread access to abortion, said that young



CNS photo/Tyler Orsburn

A group from Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va., prays outside the U.S. Capitol in Washington Dec. 1, the day Supreme Court justices heard oral arguments in a case about a Mississippi law that bans abortions after 15 weeks of gestation.

people in particular would find it unacceptable if the court strikes down the legal precedent set by Roe in 1973 legalizing abortion nationwide.

U.S. Rep. Rosa DeLauro, D-Conn., called on the Senate to pass the Women's Health Protection Act. The measure, passed by the House Sept. 24, codifies Roe and establishes the legal right to abortion on demand at any stage of pregnancy in all 50 states under federal law.

"The Mississippi case brought before the Supreme Court is a product of Republican attacks on reproductive rights spanning decades," said DeLauro, a Catholic. If Roe is overturned, the court will be "depriving individuals across the country of their right to choose to have an abortion," she said.

Many pro-lifers hoping Roe will be overturned emphasized how many scientific advances have been made in the nearly 50 years since that decision was handed down, advances they argued that have led to unprecedented information on the developmental stages of the unborn child from conception to birth.

At the rally outside the court, Gizzie Pozo Christie, a radiologist and a senior fellow with

The Catholic Association, similarly commented that "incredible advances in science and fetal medicine have rendered viability a totally incoherent legal standard."

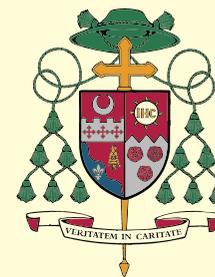
"Science and common sense tell us children in the womb are as undeniably human as the rest of us," remarked Brian Burch, president of CatholicVote, an independent political advocacy group. "We know for instance that by 15 weeks they already have beating hearts, can suck their thumbs, and even feel pain."

"It is time to overturn Roe and allow Americans to once again pass laws that reflect these basic values," he said in a statement.

He added that "millions of faithful Catholics across the nation are hopeful after today's oral arguments that the Supreme Court of the United States will restore sanity to its abortion jurisprudence which has enabled over 62 million American children to be aborted since 1973 when Roe v. Wade was decided."

"Protecting innocent life is the preeminent moral issue for Catholics but it is also the condition of any just society, and abortion robs our most vulner-

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Public schedule of Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades

Sunday, December 12: 9:30 a.m. — Mass, St. Mary of the Presentation Church, Geneva
 Tuesday, December 14: 3:30 p.m. — Meeting of the Bishops of Indiana, Indianapolis
 Wednesday, December 15: 10 a.m. — Meeting of the Indiana Catholic Conference, Indianapolis
 Thursday, December 16: 2 p.m. — Meeting of the Eucharistic Revival Blueprint Committee, Archbishop Noll Center
 Friday, December 17: 11 a.m. — Mass and Luncheon for Diocesan Employees, St. Martin de Porres Church, Syracuse
 Saturday, December 18: 11 a.m. — Mass and Luncheon for Seminarians and their Families, St. John the Baptist Church, New Haven

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man for the Vatican said that did not rule out more following later. News agencies were reporting that the others would follow in January and February.

While he did not mention taking the migrants, Pope Francis told the group in Holy Cross Church that the Cypriot government cannot be blamed for knowing that it cannot welcome, house and provide for all those arriving in the country; others must help.

Elizabeth V. Kassinis, executive manager of Caritas Cyprus, told the pope the Catholic charity is trying to respond to overwhelming needs. "We are working to fill the gaps in the social safety net as best we can."

"Thanks in large part to our partnership with Catholic Relief Services," the U.S. bishops' overseas aid agency, and other donors, "we kept our doors open throughout the pandemic and provided support to more than 10,000 individuals across the island."

Caritas staff and volunteers have a dream, too, she said. "We dream that more can be done, more people can be reached, more communities transformed, more of us involved in each other's lives."

Maccolins Ewoukap Nfongock, originally from Cameroon, told Pope Francis, "I am someone pained by the lack of love that makes me feel less than others, unwanted, a burden; by the subtle hate that robs me of a kind word, a much-needed smile on a cold day; by the barriers of the community in which I find myself."

Rozh Najeeb, from Iraq, told the pope he has been on a journey, forced to run from "violence, bombs, knives, hunger and pain."

But he also said he dreams it will be a journey toward "a place of safety and health, a place that affords liberties and choices, a place where I can give

and receive love, a place where I can practice my faith and my customs, proudly sharing them with others, a place where I can dare to hope."

Mariamie Besala Welo, from Congo, described herself as a person "full of dreams," big dreams. "I dream of a world where no one is forced to fight, to do battle, give up, flee or cry — except maybe for joy," she said.

But she said she has "small dreams," too. "I close my eyes and dream of the smell of my grandmother's cooking, the fields after a good rain that will nurture the seeds, the sea breeze."

"I dream of smiles," she said, instead of people being suspicious of her or surprised that she can speak Greek.

Making it clear that he had received the text of their speeches weeks ago, Pope Francis said they reflected "the beauty of the truth" and the powerful way God reveals "his kingdom of love, justice and peace" to those without clout in the world.

"In the faces of our marginalized and discarded brothers and sisters," including migrants seeking a new home, Christians must see the face of Christ, he said.

The stories of the migrants in Cyprus, the pope said, make him think of the thousands of others in many parts of the world who feel forced to flee their homes, sell all they have and yet cannot be sure they won't drown at sea or die in a desert.

Apologizing for speaking so long, Pope Francis told the group, "It is my responsibility to help open people's eyes."

Especially in a country "marked by a painful division," Pope Francis said, people longing for unity must begin by accepting others as kin, recognizing the human dignity of each person.

That, he said, is God's dream. "We're the ones that don't want it."



CNS photo/Tyler Orsburn

People in Washington gather outside the U.S. Supreme Court Dec. 1, the day justices heard oral arguments in a case about a Mississippi law that bans abortions after 15 weeks of gestation.



CNS photo/Al Drago, Reuters

U.S. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., presides over the House floor on Capitol Hill in Washington Nov. 19 as the Build Back Better Act passes and moves on to the Senate.

Faith leaders urge changes in bill's provisions for funding child care

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The Build Back Better Act's plan to expand affordable child care and ensure that quality prekindergarten is available to all families "is a worthy goal," but as written these provisions "will suppress, if not exclude" many faith-based providers from participating, according to Catholic and other religious leaders.

"We are writing to express our urgent concerns regarding the child care and universal pre-kindergarten provisions in the House-passed Build Back Better Act," said a Dec. 1 letter the faith leaders sent to U.S. Sens. Patty Murray, D-Wash., and Richard Burr, R-N.C., the chairwoman and ranking member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions.

The signers represent religious denominations, schools and charities "that comprise and serve millions of Americans," the letter said.

Among the signers were the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee for Religious

Liberty, chaired by Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York, and the USCCB's Committee on Catholic Education, chaired by Bishop Thomas A. Daly of Spokane, Washington.

Catholic Charities USA and the National Catholic Educational Association also signed the letter, along with Jewish, Muslim and other Christian associations.

The Build Back Better Act "does not preclude parents from selecting faith-based providers," the letter said, but its current provisions "make it virtually impossible for many faith based providers to participate in the program."

The bill does so, it continued, by departing from current federal child care policy and attaching "new compliance obligations that would interfere with providers' protected rights under Title VII and Title IX regarding curricula or teaching, sex-specific programs — such as separate boys or girls schools or classes — and preferences for employing indi-

viduals who share the providers' religious beliefs."

The Build Back Better bill changes how providers receive public monies by defining "all providers as recipients of federal financial assistance, whether the funds come via certificates, in the child care program, — or direct grants, in the pre-kindergarten program," the letter explained.

"Making faith-based providers of child care and prekindergarten into recipients of federal financial assistance triggers federal compliance obligations and non-discrimination provisions," it said.

Currently, these child care providers are exempt from some nondiscrimination provisions.

Low-income families have traditionally received funds from the Child Care and Development Block Grant program that they may use at a variety of child care centers, including those run

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able citizens of that most basic human right," Burch said.

Not all eyes on the court were in the nation's capital.

In Illinois, Tom Brejcha, president and chief counsel of the Thomas More Society, said the country has "the first real legal opportunity in over a decade to topple" Roe, which "has left a tragic trail of human carnage: more than 62 million dead children and countless broken families and wounded souls."

He said the Thomas More Society, a public interest law firm, has assisted thousands of clients, including some of the nation's leading pro-life figures, "all of whom have either spoken to the opportunity now facing the Supreme Court or are actively engaged in the cry to 'Overturn Roe.'"

Louisiana Right to Life associate director Angie Thomas said that while no one can predict the outcome of a Supreme Court case on the basis of oral arguments, she was heartened that at least six of the nine justices asked questions that seemed to support Mississippi's ban.

In a news conference outside the pro-life organization's New Orleans headquarters, Thomas noted that Justice Brett Kavanaugh stressed the court should remain "scrupulously neutral" on issues "that are just this complicated and thus divisive," allowing those issues to be decided by individual states and their elected representatives.

In addition, Thomas said, Justice Samuel Alito interjected during the nearly two hours of oral arguments that the rights of the unborn child had to be considered along with the rights of

the mother.

"Alito mentioned that the fetus has an interest in life, too, when the other side was talking about the women's interest," she said. "He mentioned how there are two interests there that actually are difficult to hold together."

"These justices are really digging into the difficult issues of where there is an objective line of protection (for the unborn child) and how do you truly balance these interests, and should the court even be doing that?" Thomas said after the news conference. "It's more important that the Supreme Court just remain neutral and allow the states to work this out."

"New York is going to be very different than Louisiana, but it is the power of the people to make that decision," she told the Clarion Herald, newspaper of the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

Thomas said advances in science have proven beyond a shadow of a doubt about the humanity of the unborn child from its earliest stages.

"At 15 weeks, the child is moving, the child has a beating heart and the child's organs are formed," she said.

"We have the chance to protect that child. ... We could have a significant change in abortion law in America today," Thomas added. "And, if that change happened, in Louisiana we are ready to be a post-Roe, abortion-free community where women are truly helped and babies are protected."

Contributing to this story was Peter Finney Jr., executive editor/general manager of the Clarion Herald, newspaper of the Archdiocese of New York.



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Catholic social teaching illuminates ICC public policy efforts

In this season of prayerful preparation, the Indiana Catholic Conference is making plans to more powerfully and effectively bring the light of Catholic social teaching to bear on society's most important issues.

As the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Indiana for the past 55 years, the ICC hopes to build on its many successes while employing new approaches and technologies to amplify its messages and its reach. The start of the 2022 Indiana General Assembly is only weeks away, and the ICC will once again be spotlighting and weighing in on key legislation — while engaging as many Catholics as possible in the process.

"The ICC is looking forward to continuing its work on behalf of the Church," said Angela Espada, the sixth and current executive director of the ICC. "We are encouraged by the participation and interest shown in the podcasts and webinars we presented this past year, and we plan to expand on those.



ANGELA ESPADA

In 2022, we hope to continue to educate ourselves, legislators and the faithful on Catholic social teaching as the foundation for our participation in the public forum on issues ranging from the environment to the respect for the dignity of human life."

Indiana was a pioneer in formalizing a way for the Catholic Church to speak on both state and national issues. When the ICC was founded in late 1966 by a small group of dedicated Catholics in Indiana, it was one of the first entities of its kind in the nation.

Since that time, the ICC has served as the coordinating body and public policy voice of the five Roman Catholic dioceses in the state — the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, the Diocese of Evansville, the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, the Diocese of Gary and the Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana. Through the efforts of dedicated staff members, diocesan and parish liaisons, and board and advisory council members, the ICC provides the five Catholic bishops of Indiana with a means to work together in the common interest of the Church and of citizens throughout the state; officially represents the Church in public policy issues, particularly legislation under consideration at the

INDIANA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE



BY VICTORIA ARTHUR

Indiana General Assembly; and informs Catholics around the state about the Church's position on important issues through its easily accessible I-CAN network and engages them in taking action.

In all its efforts, the ICC is guided by the rich history of Catholic social teaching, which is 2,000 years strong but whose first touchstone in the modern era is considered the groundbreaking papal encyclical "Rerum Novarum" in 1891. In this pivotal teaching document, Pope Leo XIII addressed the turmoil of the late 19th century, when the Industrial Revolution and the beginnings of communism were leading to social upheaval and sweeping changes in economies and societies.

Since that time, popes have used encyclicals at crucial moments in history to reflect on current issues through the lens of Church doctrine and the Gospels.

"That body of Catholic social teaching grounds and animates everything that we do," said Alexander Mingus, associate director of the ICC. "It motivates our actions entirely. Whenever we advocate for or against a bill at the Statehouse, it's because there is a certain moral analysis and important questions we must answer: How does this affect society? How does this affect the common good? How does this affect the human person?"

"This rich history of the Church's social teaching is a gift — a treasury," Mingus continued. "We have to make sure that we are well formed and that we continue to learn about what the Church teaches us."

Mingus recently spent a week in Washington, D.C., doing exactly that. Along with a small group of lay and religious leaders from across the country, Mingus immersed himself in Catholic social teaching at a master's-level course at the Catholic University of America. The program was sponsored by CAPP-USA, the U.S. affiliate of the Vatican-based organization established by Pope St. John Paul II to promote the knowledge and practice of Catholic social teaching.

CAPP — or Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice — is named for the encyclical that Pope John Paul II wrote in 1991, "Centesimus Annus," on the 100th anniversary of Pope Leo XIII's influential encyclical.

"All of the principles of Catholic social teaching flow through each of the documents

that the popes have written since the late 1800s, and they build off of one another in a really beautiful way," Mingus said. "This tradition continues with Pope Francis, and it will continue with the next pope."

Earlier this year, Mingus and Espada hosted a series of educational webinars about "Laudato Si', On Care for Our Common Home," the groundbreaking encyclical by Pope Francis concerning stewardship of the environment.

Mingus said that this effort may lead to a "once-a-year dive" by the ICC into other key areas of Catholic social teaching, including the dignity and sanctity of human life, which he calls "transcendent."

"I returned from Washington with many new ideas for how to communicate these central teachings and apply them to everything we do," Mingus said. "I look forward to working with Angela on bringing these ideas to fruition in the new year and beyond."

For more information about the ICC, visit www.indianacc.org. This website includes access to I-CAN, the Indiana Catholic Action Network, which offers the Church's position on key issues. Those who sign up for I-CAN receive alerts on important legislation and ways to contact their elected representatives.

To learn more about Catholic social teaching, visit www.capp-usa.org.

CHILD CARE, from page 4

by churches and other religious organizations. These various programs are not considered direct recipients of federal funds.

The block grant program receives federal funding but is administered by the states to provide child care subsidies to families who qualify for them.

"The faith community has always affirmed that parents should choose the best environment for care and education of their children," the faith leaders' letter said.

"The current Build Back Better Act provisions would severely limit the options for parents, suf-

ocate the mixed delivery system for child care and pre-kindergarten, and greatly restrict the number of providers available for a successful national program," it said.

The U.S. House of Representatives narrowly passed the Build Back Better Act Nov. 19, and it is now under consideration in the Senate.

The faith leaders asked Murray and Burr to give "urgent attention to address" their concerns about the measure "to ensure that faith-based providers are able to participate" in the bill's child care and universal prekindergarten programs.



MASSES INTERPRETED FOR THE DEAF

South Bend | St. Matthew Cathedral
11:00 a.m. | 2nd & 4th Sundays of the Month

Fort Wayne | Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
11:30 a.m. | 2nd Sunday of the Month



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Catholic church burned as Myanmar military continues assault

YANGON, Myanmar (CNS) — Myanmar's military continues to target churches in predominantly Christian regions in the Buddhist-majority country, ignoring appeals by the Catholic Church and world leaders, reported ucanews.com. The latest military assault on Christians in Myanmar's ethnic regions is not the first time the minority has been attacked and targeted. Ucanews.com reported Christians have borne the brunt of the decades-old civil war and faced persecution at the hands of the military, which ruled for more than five decades. The latest attacks have accelerated since the February military coup. St. Nicholas Catholic Church in the deserted town of Thantlang in Myanmar's Chin state was burned by the military Nov. 27, local media reports said. Ucanews.com reported the Chin Human Rights Organization said the junta set fire to houses in Thantlang Nov. 26, with fires burning for three straight days as soldiers continued arson attacks. St. Nicholas was reportedly among dozens of structures to be destroyed by the fire, according to the rights group. The latest attack came within a couple of days of at least 49 buildings, including Thantlang Centenary Baptist Church, being burned to the ground. More than 300 houses, including four churches, have been destroyed by military arson attacks in the town since September. In the predominantly Christian states of Kayah and Chin, more than 130,000 civilians have been forced to seek refuge in churches, convents and makeshift camps even while the military is targeting priests and pastors, bombing and vandalizing churches, ucanews.com reported.

Racial reconciliation 'is a matter of the heart,' Texas bishop says

HOUSTON (CNS) — "Racial reconciliation — reconciliation in general — is a matter of the heart," retired Bishop Curtis J. Guillory of Beaumont, Texas, said during a recent night of prayer and discussion about race relations in the U.S. The discussion was moderated by Father Reginald Samuels, vicar for the Catholics of African descent and pastor of St. Hyacinth Catholic Church in Deer Park, Texas. Speaking about the U.S. bishops' 2018 pastoral letter on racism, "Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love," Father Samuels said, "We are here to explore what it means to have God's love in our society." The event, hosted by the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, brought together Church leaders and members of the legal profession. It followed the Oct. 19 Red Mass celebrated at the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in downtown Houston. The

First Nations tell of hopes for upcoming meeting with pope



CNS photo/Tom Hanson, Reuters

Former Assembly of First Nations Chief Phil Fontaine speaks in the House of Commons on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, Ontario, June 11, 2008. Fontaine, a survivor of Canada's residential schools, will represent the Manitoba chiefs when Indigenous leaders, accompanied by several bishops, meet with Pope Francis before Christmas. In the one-hour meeting, 13 Assembly of First Nations delegates plan to share experiences of how their people have been treated by Catholics in Canada, with special attention to the impact on the Indigenous communities of Canada's residential schools.

heart of the pastoral "is conversion," said Bishop Guillory, one of 10 African American Catholic bishops and the first African American bishop to head a diocese in Texas. He was appointed to Beaumont in 2000 and retired in 2020. Joining Bishop Guillory as a speaker was Bishop Brendan J. Cahill of Victoria, Texas, who holds a Master of Theology degree with a specialization in African American Catholic studies from Xavier University in New Orleans. Xavier is the nation's only Catholic historically Black university.

God can act in unexpected ways, calling for brave acceptance, pope says

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — St. Joseph teaches people to learn to take life as it comes and to accept what God has in mind, Pope Francis said. Speaking about how Joseph reacted to Mary being pregnant while they were still engaged, the pope explained why St. Joseph

"gives us an important lesson: He chooses Mary with 'his eyes open,'" and "with all the risks" that came with it. "They had probably cultivated dreams and expectations regarding their life and their future," he said during his weekly general audience Dec. 1. But then, "out of the blue, God seems to have inserted Himself into their lives and, even if at first it was difficult for them, both of them opened their hearts wide to the reality that was placed before them." During his audience in the Vatican's Paul VI hall, Pope Francis continued a series of talks on St. Joseph, reflecting on his role as a just man and husband of Mary, and what he can teach all engaged couples and newlyweds. "How holy Joseph was," Pope Francis said. In contrast, "we, as soon as we have a bit of gossip, something scandalous about someone else, we go around talking about it right away!" An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, telling him not to fear taking Mary as his wife and explaining the divine origin of and plan for her Son.

Teacher fired by Catholic school wins appeal to continue lawsuit

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The Indiana Court of Appeals ruled Nov. 23 that an Indiana trial court "committed reversible error" when it dismissed a former teacher's lawsuit against the Archdiocese of Indianapolis earlier this year. The unanimous decision by the appellate court's panel allows the initial lawsuit filed by the teacher, who was fired from a Catholic school, to move forward. The case involves Joshua Payne-Elliott, a former world language and social studies teacher at Cathedral High School in Indianapolis who was fired in June 2019. Payne-Elliott claimed the Indianapolis archdiocese illegally interfered with his contract with the school where he had been teaching for 13 years by mandating that all Catholic schools in the archdiocese enforce a morality clause that did not permit employees to be in same-sex marriages. Payne-Elliott married Layton

Payne-Elliott, a teacher at Brebeuf Jesuit Preparatory School, also in Indianapolis, in 2017. Indiana's Marion County Superior Court dismissed Payne-Elliott's lawsuit against the Indianapolis archdiocese in May, which the former teacher appealed. The Indianapolis archdiocese had asked a lower court to dismiss the suit when it was initially filed, saying it went against the First Amendment's guarantee of religious freedom.

Michigan community picks up pieces after 'everyone's worst nightmare'

OXFORD, Mich. (CNS) — A day after a tragic shooting claimed the lives of four Oxford High School students and forever changed the lives of countless others, community members were picking up the pieces. On a chilly afternoon Dec. 1, the scene at Oxford High remained somber, with patrol cars and news vans dotting the streets and parking lots throughout the town. A few paces from the south entrance to the school, adjacent to the inverted-bowl football stadium, students arrived in small groups, many with tears on their faces, to place teddy bears, flowers, crosses and candles at the foot of the school's main sign. Downtown, a small army of volunteers tied blue-and-gold ribbons — Oxford's school colors — to every lamppost and street sign, as businesses displayed messages of support. Inside the school, authorities continued to comb through mountains of crime scene evidence. It was just the beginning of an investigation Oakland County Sheriff Mike Bouchard said could last weeks, if not months, as deputies and federal agents interview hundreds of witnesses and search for clues about the alleged shooter's motive. Authorities identified 15-year-old Ethan Crumbley, a sophomore at the school, as the suspect. Arraigned Dec. 1, Crumbley will be tried as an adult on 24 criminal charges, including terrorism and four counts of first-degree murder.

Kenyan diocese mourns deaths after bus plunges into river

NAIROBI, Kenya (CNS) — Bishop Joseph Mwangela of Kitui urged hope as his diocese continued to mourn the death of at least 32 people, killed when a bus carrying a Catholic choir plunged into the Enziu River. The choir from Good Shepherd Parish in Mwingi had hired a church seminary bus to carry members and relatives to a renewal of vows for an elderly couple. One family lost 11 members. At least 30 people were rescued. "It is very sad. The people are devastated, but we are journeying with them. We want them to have hope. This has happened, but Advent is a season of hope," Bishop Mwangela told Catholic News Service in a telephone interview.

Institute for Catholic Innovation invests in podcast blocks

HUNTINGTON — OSV Institute for Catholic Innovation recently announced a capacity-building grant of \$111,000 to Redeemer Radio to offer flexible-use podcast blocks to other radio stations seeking fresh, authentic Catholic content.

As the predominant Catholic radio station serving northern Indiana, Redeemer Radio began its own podcast network in 2019 called Spoke Street Media. This podcast network aired on weekends and during a six-hour weekday morning programming block to reach a younger demographic seeking faithful Catholic content. Spoke Street Media offers Redeemer Radio listeners a new array of voices and spiritual content designed to form, inspire and nourish those at all stages of their faith journey.

"Redeemer Radio has found a way to merge together the best of Catholic radio and Catholic podcasts," affirmed OSV Institute President Jason Shanks. "When new listeners tune into their local Catholic radio station, the content will meet them where they are and still affirm all that is good, true and beautiful, thus drawing them deeper into the mystery of Jesus Christ, the answer to every human longing. We are proud to support this innovative and fresh approach to Catholic programming."

Redeemer Radio's flexible-use podcast blocks offer radio stations anywhere from one to 24

AROUND THE DIOCESE

Crafting Nativities in ceramic



Provided by Kristen Billingsley

Ceramic Nativity scenes created by art students at Bishop Luers High School, Fort Wayne, this semester are available to view in the front display case by the main office at the school. The Nativity scenes, like this one by Jose Solis, will remain on display during the Lessons and Carols concert performed by the Bishop Luers Choir Dec. 12 at 3 p.m., along with ceramic crucifixes created by the school's Intro to 3D students.

hours of Catholic content per day, including repeated segments for longer blocks, to refresh existing programming of varying lengths. All content is sourced from the Spoke Street Media podcast network, including links and show descriptions of each episode for easy reference and easy sharing.

"OSV Institute empowers so many fruitful initiatives within the Church," said Cindy Black, executive director of Redeemer Radio. "Not only are we deeply grateful for their investment of resources, but we are encouraged by the confidence they have placed in our work for the kingdom."

University of Notre Dame students received into Catholic faith



Peter Ringenberg/University of Notre Dame

A Mass with the sacrament of confirmation and rite of Reception into Full Communion was celebrated by Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades Sunday, Dec. 5, at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart, University of Notre Dame. Thirty students were received into the Catholic faith at the Mass, which was concelebrated by rector Father Brian C. Ching, CSC, right.

Artist building a legacy of faith

BY JENNIFER BARTON

A dream of living his best life and encouraging others to pursue their dreams brought Troy Ganser to a 25.29 acre piece of land in New Haven, where his imagination runs wild and his creative energy is spent building a child's wonderland. "We came from an eighth of an acre lot on the southeast side of Fort Wayne ... and we're starting a business, fumbling along the way," he reflected.

T.A.G. Art Company, specializing in services like caricatures, face painting and party entertainment, has been running strong for 22 years, though Ganser himself knows that this has only been through the grace of God.

"Our blessing – and they are all blessings, miracles, loaves-and-fishes miracles, I make that very clear to everyone, I don't care if they're Catholic or not – we live in a huge blessing and our goal, I guess, through all this pain and suffering is just hang in there," he stated.

Walking in faith

Survival became the name of the game for T.A.G. Art Company last year during the height of the pandemic, when all entertainment was canceled for months at a time. He points out how many small, family-owned businesses were forced to shut their doors last year. Fortunately for him and his family, T.A.G. Art was able to weather the storm. "It's funny, I've always been faith-filled, but I think this was just the last straw against any fear," Ganser reflected.

The business has taken hits before. In 2011, he got the idea to host a "Merry not Scary" outdoor Halloween event to give children an alternative to the "blood and guts" that the holiday has become. It turned out that 2011 was the worst year for October outdoor events, raining more days than usual. His business ended up in the red that month. "And I just remember singing, defiantly singing in praise, just praying," he said. Ganser's prayers were answered, and instead of losing everything, the next year became the company's most profitable year to date, more than making up for the losses of 2011.

God's plans

By rights, Ganser should not have the blessings that he enjoys. Twenty years ago, when the company had maxed out all available space in attics, basement, and garage spaces in their Fort Wayne home, he sought a new one. A planner for the city of New Haven showed him an aerial photo of a piece of property with a fish-shaped 3-acre pond. His wife, April, was



Photos by Jennifer Barton

Troy Ganser, owner of T.A.G. Art Company, and one of his adopted feline friends surveys the village he and his sons built on their property, called the Fun Farm. Ganser uses his talents to bring joy and encourage other artists in the pursuit of their dreams.

amazed – and wondered how they could afford it. Ganser gives all glory to God in "navigating this and walking hand in hand, fiercely walking in faith; defiantly walking in faith."

Before settling on the property, Ganser asked Msgr. Robert Schulte, former rector of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Ganser's home parish, to bless the land and hopefully banish its ghosts. Prior to T.A.G.'s ownership of it, the property had always been in the hands of one family and came complete with a house and several outbuildings, all of which date back to the mid-1800s. "There's a rich history there and a rich stewardship there, and that affected us," Ganser said.

He sees himself as caretaker of the peaceful property. To date, the Ganser family has planted 6,000 additional trees on the land, particularly native species. They have numerous rescue animals, mostly cats, but also chickens, two pigs and a goat. "I have my own personal Eden. We even have apple trees," he joked. Some of those apple trees are even certified Johnny Appleseed

trees.

Rising out of the natural landscape is something most impressive – a miniature village. Part Harry Potter, part Alice in Wonderland, and inspired by the movie "Big Fish," Ganser worked with his sons to hand-build a castle, UFO, pirate ship and more with virtually no prior experience. He calls his creation the Ganser Fun Farm. It is not a playground; rather, he describes it as a movie set.

His hope is to make it a seasonal attraction for Christmas, Easter, Fourth of July and Halloween. It is wheelchair accessible and he would eventually like to host a Fourth of July light show instead of fireworks that meets the unique needs of veterans and people with special needs. He also plans to add a labyrinth on adjoining wildland.

He wants people to know about the Ganser Fun Farm, to come and see his creation and even to enhance it with their own creative talents. "It's meant to be discovered."

Grandiose goals

When Ganser dreams, he dreams big. Some of his grandiose plans include putting on what he calls a "Catholic cirque de soleil;" a visual experience based around the seven sacra-

ments. The script for "Catholic" is already written, and now he is simply looking to partner with others who can help bring this grand dream to reality.

His vision is to take the tools of secularism and use them to present Catholic themes. "You can seek deeper meaning and you can find it if you want, or it can be entertaining," Ganser remarked.

Another dream of his is a television show called "The Fun Farm." In a similar vein to "Mister Rogers Neighborhood," Ganser would like to use the show to teach young children simple lessons with a real person that they can relate to. He wants to encourage their enthusiasm and inspire their young hearts and minds.

All these goals may seem too big, but no goal is too high with God's help and Ganser wants to see how far he can go. "We were created to be great, to do great things."

Ganser uses his property as a statement of his faith. In line with the "Jesus fish" pond, he built an 80-foot cross-shaped pavilion, with the village sandwiched in between. "So beginning to end, alpha omega, all things point to Christ." In the

GANSER, page 11



One service that T.A.G. Art provides is a blast from the past with lifelike dinosaur creations that can make an event positively prehistoric.



O Antiphons

*A time of active waiting and eager anticipation
for Christ's coming*

Advent: the O Antiphons

BY JEANNIE EWING

Many Catholics find familiarity in singing “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” to herald the new liturgical year, Advent. This is one of the seven “O Antiphons,” which are traditionally sung or chanted as part of sacred prayer as we near Christmas.

The O Antiphons, also known as the ‘Great Antiphons’ or the ‘Great Os’, are Magnificat antiphons used at vespers on the last seven days of Advent. Their origins date back to sixth-century Italy, when Boethius referred to them in written form. His spiritual classic, “The Consolation of Philosophy,” includes an excerpt referring to Lady Philosophy, a reference to Wisdom 8:1, which reads: “He is the highest good, she said, that rules all things mightily and delightfully arranges them.”

The O Antiphons have been around from the earliest days of the Roman breviary — known today as the Liturgy of the Hours. The Liturgy of the Hours is the arrangement of all 150 Psalms in particular order so that they can be prayed throughout the day, which St. Benedict organized. It includes other Scripture readings and writings from Church fathers.

“These are different pieces of the mystery throughout salvation history referencing the Lord Himself and known as typological antiphons,” explained Father Daniel Koehl, parochial vicar at St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Fort Wayne. “When we read Scriptures, we can see how the Lord is foreshadowed in covenants preceding His birth. The O Antiphons are direct typological references from the Old Testament.”

The sequence is sung or spoken in Latin with the “vocative O” beginning it. Each antiphon is a reference to Jesus and contains one of his attributes noted in Scripture. The O Antiphons are, in consecutive order:

**Dec. 17: O Sapientia
(O Wisdom)**

**Dec. 18: O Adonai
(O Lord)**

**Dec. 19: O Radix Jesse
(O Root of Jesse)**

**Dec. 20: O Clavis David
(O Key of David)**

**Dec. 21: O Oriens
(O Dayspring)**

**Dec. 22: O Rex Gentium
(O King of the Nations)**

**Dec. 23: O Emmanuel
(O With Us is God)**

The first letter of each title following the “O,” (Emmanuel, Rex, Oriens, Clavis, Radix, Adonai, Sapientia) when unscrambled, forms the phrase “Ero cras,” which means, “Tomorrow, I will come.”

The significance of the O Antiphons is 1. Honoring Jesus under a specific title for Him as the Messiah; and 2. Meditating on one of the prophecies of Isaiah of the coming of the Messiah. They link the Jewish history with the Catholic faith and provide a sacrosanct basis for building anticipation and hope as Christmas approaches.

The intention of the O Antiphons, which are sung in some parishes near the end of Advent, is to act as hopeful prayers, which allow a person to peer into the mystery of the Scriptures leading up to the coming of the newborn King. Father Koehl said this is the final “push of contemplation” that comes at the end of the liturgical season. Devotees can participate in praying the O Antiphons by find-

ing them in the Liturgy of the Hours, which is the prayer of the Church. That way, they can participate in prayer with the entire Church. In this way, the prayer becomes more than just private devotion.

Father Koehl said, “I have always found it very beautiful that, at the end of the liturgical year, there are many verses read about the last things — heaven, hell, purgatory. If you’re not paying attention, you might just think it’s about the end of the year. But it’s more about the connection of the end of things into the flow of the beginning of the next. It’s all about the contemplation of Christ’s coming, one way or another.”

There are many and numerous ways the Lord comes to His people in everyday life, Father Koehl believes — by way of the sacraments, at the altar, by listening to the priest and in confession. The coming of Christ by way of the word of God itself isn’t just about hearing nice words about Jesus, it’s about Jesus being communicated in a sacramental and palpable way.

With the changing of the liturgical seasons, there is something intrinsically connected between the second coming of Christ with the birth of Jesus. He’s the same God-Man who comes in power to judge the earth in justice and mercy, both at the Incarnation and His second coming. “This power is found in different levels of meekness. We know that His power is a controlled power, present in Him even as He lays cooing as a tiny baby,” Father Koehl shared.

A specific O Antiphon spurred the writing of “Hic” by Father Koehl, a poem attributed to O Dayspring (“O Oriens,” in Latin), which is a reference to the east, to the rising of the sun. This is a direct reference to Easter, the Resurrection. Christmas necessarily leads His children to Easter. Christmas must, in context, include the Paschal Mystery of who Christ is. It’s a reference also to the star of Bethlehem and Jesus as the morning star.

“I had a very important

moment of realizing all of these mysteries were connected, about God being present amongst us,” Father Koehl explained about his poem. “If one were to go to the basilica in Nazareth, she or he would find in the lower church what is believed to have been the original home of Mary, which is also the location of the Annunciation.”

There is an altar in that area that says, “And the word was made flesh here — ‘hic’ — and dwelt among us,” Father Koehl said. “Extrapolate from that the spiritual truth — that Emmanuel, God with us, really happened. It was immediate. It was in this location. It was personal. He came for us. He came to be one of us.”

Father Koehl believes there

are myriad beautiful images that people need to discover for themselves by entering into a deeper appreciation of praying the O Antiphons. “They are about God revealing Himself to us, in pieces, over time,” he said.

The O Antiphons can help Catholics come to a greater understanding that Jesus came for them in an intimate relationship. They can ask themselves how many times God has appeared to them for the sake of their salvation. Every feast is connected intrinsically to all the others. They string together the beautiful story of salvation. “Jesus came to us, for us. The O Antiphons can be the lead-in to that contemplation of God coming for us, here and now,” Father Koehl concluded.

Hic

Inspired by the O Antiphon, O Dayspring (“O Oriens”)

In the beginning was the Word.
The chaos and the darkness heard
and though in their battle array
could not, in spite, waylay
the glimmer, glint, gospel day.
A manger of straw, the far future saw
waiting, waiting, waiting in awe.

Persisting, but awhile, creation strange
fathered forth by whose beauty is past change,
through a Son, though face in veil,
of light and love and gusty gale.
The winds, of time did tell His tale.

When longer not the world could wait,
the star appeared to us, of late,
restoring Earth’s blind to sight,
revealing gentiles in the night,
answering nation’s and nations’ plight.

This is the One who IS
sacrifice, sacerdos magnus,
Aaron, altare, agnus.
Oh Behold! Panis vitae!
Ecce Tempus Epiphaniae!
Three magi travelling for to seek.
Verbum caro factum est,

hic.

— Father Daniel Koehl



Catholic Charities' impact during Covid

BY JEANNIE EWING

Families around the world have experienced unexpected and rapid changes during the past two years. During that time, in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Catholic Charities has managed to not only maintain its community outreach but expand it — all with an uncommonly joyful outlook.

“On top of helping people impacted by the pandemic, we’ve recently added assistance to the Afghani refugees, as well,” Nicole Kurut, mission advancement manager at Catholic Charities Fort Wayne, said. Kurut believes COVID-19, while stressful for all, has given Catholic Charities employees the opportunity to be creative in the ways they can reach those who are isolated or sheltering in place.

They collaborated with the Fort Wayne Rescue Mission and the Center for the Homeless in South Bend to help the unemployed find health insurance and a stable job, and for those who have been evicted to find housing and a pathway forward that will provide self-sufficiency so they will not have to return to the shelters in the future. “Catholic Charities case managers work with those in the community to help them overcome their unique barriers,” Kurut added.

When the pandemic first hit, there was a moratorium on evictions. Now, Catholic Charities is seeing more people on the street, including those they haven’t seen before. This social issue has created an increased need for well-stocked food pantries. “These are traditionally stable, career-oriented people,” Kurut said.

Because nonemergent medical procedures halted at the beginning of the pandemic, Kurut also noticed an increase in people who needed medical assistance, which Catholic Charities also provides help in acquiring.

“Unless we are acting in the place of Jesus and serve all those in need, we cannot be true Christians. It’s hard to admit when you have fallen on rough times, but we do not look at people with judgment.”

— Nicole Kurut, mission advancement coordinator

Of the 20 different programs at Catholic Charities in the diocese, the ones with the greatest impact during the past two years have been the Financial Assistance Program, which helps people pay utilities and mortgages for past due expenses, and the Emergency Rental Assistance program, which helps those pay past due rent or utilities. Case managers help people fill out the necessary paperwork and get it promptly turned in to the city before their electricity is shut off. “Our goal is to prevent families from further descent into poverty,” Kurut said.

“We want to help people stay in their homes. The pandemic has affected the middle class immensely, but we’ve seen it spread over every socioeconomic class.”

The stressors related to COVID-19 have taken a toll on people’s mental health, too. Counselors at Catholic Charities see kids at school and clients in office and virtually, most of whom exhibited anxiety over disrupted schedules and the constant news about the pandemic.

A lot of people who sheltered in place didn’t initially seek out mental health services because they were afraid and didn’t know where to begin, she said. “Now that things are slowly moving forward, people are starting to emerge from their fear and seek the help they have needed.”

The generosity of those who have donated to the agency has been overwhelming to Kurut and other staff members. Many donations of items and money during the past two years have been unsolicited.

“We did a couple of radio ads on Redeemer Radio, but after that, a lot of people in the community sent donations without our request,” Kurut said. The implication was that most people realized they could donate their tax stimulus checks. “They knew that Catholic Charities is the agency that serves everyone in need, despite their background — as Christ would have them



Jodi Marlin

The children of Catholic Charities clients — before the pandemic and now — receive free gifts at Christmastime that have been donated by parishes, individuals and the community. Community Service Employment Manager Aaron Roberts, Mission Advancement Manager Nicole Kurut and Mission Advancement Assistant Isabella Wituski sort this year’s donations and prepare them for delivery.



Provided by Nicole Kurut

Aaron Roberts updates Catholic Charities employees on the Senior Community Service Employment Program in December. Roberts began working at Catholic Charities during the thick of the pandemic. During the public health crisis, the agency has managed to not only maintain its community outreach but expand it — all with an uncommonly joyful outlook.

do," she added.

Because of the Resource and Referral program, more than 3,300 individuals were able to receive support and stay in their homes and keep their lights on because of Catholic Charities' services — people who would otherwise be out on the street. And at its food pantries in Auburn and South Bend, Catholic Charities served more than 4,000 people.

"More than ever, it's easy to call ourselves Christians," Kurut shared. "Unless we are acting in the place of Jesus and serve all those in need, we cannot be true Christians. It's hard to admit when you have fallen on rough times, but we do not look at people with judgment."

Many people have lost all hope by the time they arrive at Catholic Charities, she said. It's not necessarily financial poverty, just the poverty of losing hope that they will never graduate high school, that they

will always be depressed, or that they will never hold a job or learn English. The first person to tell them that they can overcome these obstacles is often a Catholic Charities case manager. "Not only do we tell them that they can do this, but we sit down with them and map out a plan that works long term. We walk with clients for several years," Kurut said.

Aaron Roberts began his job as senior community service employment program manager at Catholic Charities in Fort Wayne in the thick of the public health crisis. Because senior citizens are at high risk for contracting COVID-19, the program had shifted from solely providing in-person training for clerical, janitorial, and kitchen cook professions, to virtual training, he explained.

"I believed a lot of the seniors would be afraid to go out into the community, but I found the

opposite to be true — I saw their desire and enthusiasm to reenter their communities, be social, gain employment."

Roberts shared that a woman in the program who was training for clerical work ended up being incarcerated: But the program was able to provide remote training so that afterward, she could work from home and maintain the focus on job readiness skills. Because of her incarceration, she was able to remain in the program, save money and eventually purchase a vehicle, then gain a position working at a local bakery in Fort Wayne.

"This success showed me the benefits of being compassionate in meeting a person where they are and walking with them every step of the way. Meeting with her weekly, either on the phone or virtually, helped her maintain that focus to reach her goals. I saw so many people helped by what we do," Roberts said.

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near future, he hopes to commission an interactive St. Michael statue to be placed near the property entrance with suspended wings, sword and shield so that people can step inside and "become" the warrior archangel.

Even the T.A.G Art logo reflects his faith. Based on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome, Ganser drew the logo using his own index finger as a model for the finger of God, with whirls of color coming off it.

Customer service is the perfect career field for Ganser. He loves people and needs little encouragement to speak with anyone, his mind jumping from one sub-

ject to another with the speed of a runaway rabbit. He lives with tremendous joie de vivre, and enjoys enhancing others' lives through art and beauty. Work brings him happiness, and he wants more than anything to support others in their aspirations. In a world that is filled with negative role models, Ganser wants to show people by his life what all can be accomplished when living intentionally and walking hand in hand with God.

"I am comfortable in my own skin," Ganser said. "It was a really long, hard process to be myself. In a world where you can be anything, be yourself. If you're being someone else, who's being you?"



Jennifer Barton

A giant shoe from the nursery rhyme about the old woman and her children brightens the landscape on the Ganser Fun Farm on the outskirts of New Haven.



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New cures from embryonic stem cells?

A recent article in the New York Times by Gina Kolata chronicles the remarkable story of a patient who for many years suffered from Type 1 diabetes. After receiving a newly developed form of embryonic stem cell infusion, he became able to live insulin-free, apparently cured of his blood sugar imbalances.

It was largely a matter of time, funding and elbow grease before cures of this kind would start to appear. That makes it urgent for us, as a society, to confront and address the ethical questions arising in the wake of these up-and-coming therapies.

We can formulate the ethical question this way: Is it wrong to develop treatments that rely on the direct destruction of fellow human beings who are in their embryonic stages?

It should go without saying that it is always wrong to take the life of one human being to harvest body parts, even to save the life of another human being. Such medicine is fundamentally exploitative and immoral, and ought to be summarily rejected.

Many people are beginning to ask, however, whether receiving a treatment for diabetes developed from embryonic stem cells is really that different from getting vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine developed using abortion-derived cell lines?

The two cases are, in fact, quite different.

When it comes to abortion-derived cell lines and their use in developing some of the COVID-19 vaccines, the wrong that was committed involved taking

somatic cells (not stem cells), such as kidney cells or retinal cells, from an aborted fetus and working them up in order to prepare a special "cell line" for use in research or vaccine development. The abortion, it should be noted, as wrong as it was in itself, was not performed in order to obtain research material, and the evil of this "corpse raiding" was compounded by not having obtained valid informed consent.

What makes embryonic stem cell-based therapies ethically worse is that a very young human being, still in his or her embryonic stage of existence, is being targeted and intentionally killed in order to obtain the desired stem cells that stand at the center of that medical treatment.

Why, then, would it be morally allowable to receive a vaccine prepared using abortion-derived cell lines, but morally unacceptable to receive a diabetes treatment developed from embryonic stem cells?

Because the type of moral offense and its gravity are different in kind and degree. Directly killing someone to obtain their cells for treatment is different in kind and worse than the wrongdoing involved in taking cells from a corpse, even from a young human whose life was unjustly ended for an unrelated reason. It is always wrong to steal, even from a cadaver. But it's much worse to kill in order to take.

In one case the researcher himself becomes the executioner who procures cells and tissues from the individual he has just



MAKING SENSE OF BIOETHICS

FATHER TAD PACHOLCZYK

directly and purposefully killed; in the other case, the researcher shows up at the morgue or the abortion clinic following the death and procures cells or tissues from the individual's body, with the death having occurred at the hands of others and the researcher afterwards profiting from the resultant cadaver. This latter case would not raise ethical concerns at all if researchers were to derive the needed cells from a miscarriage instead of a direct abortion. If an unborn baby girl, for example, were to die of natural causes, her parents could validly grant informed consent for the use of tissues and cells from her body, in effect donating her body to science.

These kinds of distinctions are important, because receiving a diabetes treatment produced with embryonic stem cells signals a willingness on our part to tolerate the killing of younger human beings in order to benefit others who are older. Meanwhile, receiving a COVID-19 vaccine produced using abortion-derived cell lines does not indicate a willingness on our part to tolerate killing for research since the

PACHOLCZYK, page 13

An Advent plea for immigration reform

How long? Until when? These questions are common during Advent as Christians reflect on the meaning of the final coming of our Lord, Jesus Christ. From the depths of our hearts we proclaim, "Maranatha," come, Lord Jesus.

As we wait with vigilant hope, our lives unfold in the here and now of history. We must raise families, study, work, pay bills and make sure that we all live well. This also entails a concern for the good of others.

Hearing the questions "How long? Until when?" on the lips of millions of immigrants in our nation who long to be affirmed, seek to regularize their migratory status, and hope to reunite with their loved ones or remove obstacles to thrive as part of the American dream, calls for some pause.

This is what Advent invites us to do: Take pause. We pause from the hastiness of our lives to reflect and listen. We pause to ponder how we live in relationship with God and others.

As I take pause this Advent, I reflect particularly on the lives of the nearly 45 million immigrants living in our country, about 13.7% of the entire U.S. population: women and men, moms and dads, sisters and brothers, neighbors who live among us and worship with us in our faith communities.

To speak of immigrants also implies speaking of their spouses, children, relatives, friends and coworkers. Their lives are



JOURNEYING TOGETHER

HOFFMAN OSPINO

profoundly intertwined with ours.

I commend the Center for Migration Studies in New York, established by the Scalabrinians and run with a profound Catholic spirit, for their advocacy and commitment to providing data that can help us understand the reality of all migrants in the United States and throughout the world.

Looking at one of the center's data tools, we learn that as of 2019, there were about 11 million undocumented immigrants living with us. Nearly 75% come from Latin America and the Caribbean, thus we can safely assume that most are Roman Catholic.

About 58% have lived in this country more than 10 years; 23.3% more than 20 years. About 26% arrived prior to the age of 16. Nearly 60% completed high school, 33% have some college education and 18.3% completed a bachelor's degree or higher. About 78.3% are older than 25.

Attention to this particular sector of the immigrant popula-

OSPINO, page 14

The Lord will rejoice over us, so should we rejoice with others



THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

MSGR. OWEN F. CAMPION

Third Sunday of Advent Luke 3:10-18

For centuries this Sunday was called "Gaudete" Sunday, the name coming from the first word of the Entrance Antiphon, "Rejoice," or in Latin, "Gaudete." Rejoice, because the Lord's arrival into human experience will be soon.

While violet is the color prescribed for liturgical vestments in Advent, on this weekend, priests may choose to wear rose vestments. Rose represents the darkness of night broken by the mellow rays of the impending dawn of Christ's birth.

The first reading is from the Book of Zephaniah. This book traces from the seventh cen-

tury before Christ. It is a rather short work, just three chapters in length, but its language and message are powerful. Its theme is similar to that of the other prophets.

Human sin has brought great hardship and heartbreak into the world. Sin is the worst calamity, and people have no one to blame but themselves for their sins. God is always faithful, forgiving and good. He rescues people by showing them the way out of their sin and by renewing the call to righteousness. Thus, this reading exclaims in anticipation and joy that all is forgiven. A savior is on the way. All will be right.

Even so, God imposes nothing on people. He does not coerce them into reluctant obedience. He overwhelms no one as a conqueror overwhelms. Rather, the people turn to God and reform their lives, although certainly impelled and strengthened by God.

For its second reading, the Church presents a reading from the Letter to the Philippians. As in the first reading, the theme

is joy. Christ is the long-awaited Redeemer. He reunites humankind with God. In Jesus is life and hope.

St. Luke's Gospel is the source of the Gospel reading.

The principal figure is John the Baptist, one of the more striking figures of the early Church. A cousin of Jesus, he was a widely known prophet who called people to God.

Quite realistic in his understanding of Jesus, John knew that he himself was only the precursor of the promised Savior. Indeed, John said that he was not even worthy to untie the Savior's sandal strap. It was a testimony to John — but also to the Redeemer.

John was regarded as a holy man. If John could not even perform such a menial task on behalf of the Savior as to untie a sandal strap, then the Savior most certainly was of God.

This reading would have been especially meaningful in the first century to anyone familiar with Jewish tradition and with the environment surrounding Jesus. All the Gospels appeared against

the backdrop of God's relationship with the Jews. Supreme in this relationship was God's constant mercy, a mercy perfected when a Savior would appear.

Reflection

No New Testament writing more splendidly presents the great majesty of Jesus, the Christ, the Savior, the Son of God, and the true Christian faith, than does the Letter to the Philippians. This weekend's second reading so well captures this quality of Philippians.

The message is majestically proclaimed. Jesus is Lord! He is everything.

Opposite this wondrous figure of perfect love and resurrected life, Jesus the Lord, is human sin and the destruction sin creates. Zephaniah alludes to this sin and its consequences, as does John the Baptist in the Gospel.

Christians can rejoice, however, because they are not doomed to the eternal consequences of their sin. They are redeemed. God, through and in Jesus, will forgive their sins if

they renounce their sin and ask for forgiveness. Then, assured of forgiveness, they can live forever in Christ.

Christmas is near. Jesus is near. Reject sin. Be forgiven. Then, the Lord soon will be with us personally and forever. Security will be found. Life is fulfilled.

Thus, the Church calls us to rejoice, "gaudete"!

READINGS

Sunday: Zep 3:14-18a (Ps) Is 12:2-6 Phil 4:4-7 Lk 3:10-18

Monday: Nm 24:2-7, 15-17a Ps 25:4-5b, 6, 7bc, 8-9 Mt 21:23-27

Tuesday: Zep 3:1-2, 9-13 Ps 34:2-3, 6-7, 17-19, 23 Mt 21:28-32

Wednesday: Is 45:6b-8, 18, 21b-25 Ps 85:9ab, 10-14 Lk 7:18b-23

Thursday: Is 54:1-10 Ps 30:2, 4-6, 11-12a, 13b Lk 7:24-30

Friday: Gn 49:2, 8-10 Ps 72:1-4b, 7-8, 17 Mt 1-1-17

Saturday: Jer 23:3-8 Ps 72:1-2, 12-13, 18-19 Mt 1:18-25

Three comings of Christ

Many years ago, in the context of a high school religion class, a very wise Benedictine nun gave me a template for understanding Advent that I've never forgotten. It is simply that Advent calls to mind three "comings" of Christ: the first in history, the second now, and the third at the end of time. Meditating upon each of these is a helpful preparation for the holy season upon which we are embarking.

Let us first look back. Fulton Sheen said that Jesus is the only religious founder whose coming was clearly predicted. And indeed, we can find throughout the Old Testament indications and anticipations of the arrival of the Messiah.

How often the New Testament authors use the language of fulfillment and insist that the events around Jesus occurred "kata tas graphas," or "according to the Scriptures." They appreciated Jesus, this particular figure from 2,000 years ago, as the one who brought to full expression all of the institutions of Israel. His rising from the dead demonstrated that He is the new temple, the new covenant, the definitive prophet, the law or Torah in person. Furthermore, they understood that Jesus had brought all of history, in a very real sense, to its climax. The turning point of the human story is not, therefore, the emergence of modernity, not the revolutions of the 18th century, but rather the dying and rising of Jesus, the Messiah of Israel.

If we turn Jesus into a mythic or legendary figure or we construe Him simply as an inspiring religious teacher, we miss this crucially important truth. Every single New Testament author witnesses to the fact that something happened in connection with Jesus, indeed something so dramatic that all of time should be understood as falling either before Him or after Him. And so, during Advent, we look back with deep interest and spiritual attention to that first coming.

Christ came in time, long ago, but we must attend to the second dimension of Advent — namely, His coming to us in the here and now. We might think of that famous painting of Jesus knocking at the door. This is the Christ who presents Himself every day,

seeking entry into our hearts and minds. In his first coming, He appeared in the context of Israel. In this present-day Adventus, He appears through the sacraments of the Church, through good preaching, through the witness of the saints, through the Eucharist especially, and through the poor who cry out to be cared for. We recall His words, "Whatever you do to the least of my people, you do to me."

Now, just as many rejected Him when He came in history long ago, so, sadly enough, many reject Him today. Can we see that the most important decision we will ever make — more important than decisions regarding job, family, livelihood, etc. — is whether we allow Christ to become the Lord of our lives?

During the season of Advent, we are meant to stop and pay close attention. How is Jesus coming to us and how, precisely, are we dealing with His arrival?

And finally, Advent calls to mind Christ's definitive coming at the end of time. One of the peculiar marks of Christianity is the belief that time is going somewhere. It is not just "one damn thing after another," as the cynical adage famously has it, nor simply an endless cycle, nor the "eternal return of the same." Rather, time has a direction, moving toward its consummation, when God will be all in all. The Church identifies this final culmination as the "second coming" of Jesus, and the Gospels speak of it often. Here is just one example from the Gospel of Luke: "Jesus said to his disciples: 'There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on earth nations will be in dismay ... People will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming upon the world ... And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.'"

What this remarkable language conveys is the conviction that, at the close of the age, the old order will give way and God will renew the great structuring patterns of reality. At this second coming of Christ, all of the seeds that had been planted throughout nature and history will bear fruit, all of the latent potentialities of the cosmos will be actualized and God's justice will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.



WORD ON FIRE

BISHOP ROBERT BARRON

The Church's belief — and it governs the whole of its life — is that we are living in the in-between times; that is to say, in between the culmination of history in the cross and Resurrection and the definitive fulfillment of history in the second coming of Jesus. In a sense, the war against sin and death has been won, and yet mop-up operations continue.

The Church lives in that middle zone where the final stage of the battle is still being fought. Pay attention, especially during the Advent season, to our daily Gospels at Mass. I think you'll be surprised how often they reference the second Advent of Jesus at the end of time. I might offer just two well-known examples: "We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection, until you come again," and "As we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ." This is the how the Church speaks during the in-between times. Though we are beset on all sides by failure, pain, sin, sickness and the fear of death, we live in joyful hope, for we know that history is going somewhere, that God has won the decisive battle and will win the war.

Therefore, this Advent, look back; look around; and look forward. With each glance, you will see the Christ who comes.

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

PACHOLCZYK, from page 12

killing was not done for research, but for some other unrelated motive. It instead indicates a willingness to tolerate cells and tissues that were unethically taken from a corpse.

Should we always avoid using therapies that are produced using embryonic stem cells taken from young humans who were killed in order to obtain the cells? Yes, such therapies are unethical because killing one human

being for the purpose of healing another crosses a fundamental moral line.

But the fact that the question is being raised reminds us of the slippery ethical slope that arises whenever we try to use parts of human beings derived from abortions: legally permitting abortion only makes the confusion worse. Hence, there is an urgent need to encourage the use of alternative, non-embryo-derived cell sources by researchers, including cells derived from miscarriages, adult

stem cells, or embryonic-type alternatives such as induced pluripotent stem cells, which can be obtained by genetically manipulating adult human skin cells. These approaches open a path forward in the direction of ethical research and medical therapies.

Father Tadeusz Pacholczyk, Ph.D., serves as the director of education at The National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia. See www.ncbcenter.org.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH®

Gospel for December 12, 2021

Luke 3: 10-18

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

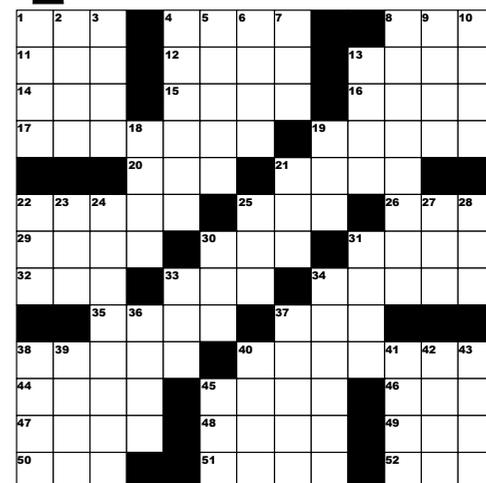
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GOOD NEWS

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

The Cross Word

December 5 and 12, 2021



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Readings: Phil 1:4-6,8-11; Lk 3:1-6 and Zep 3:14-18a; Phil 4:4-7; Lk 3:10-18

ACROSS

- 1 Limited (abbr.)
- 4 **The Golden** _____
- 8 Middle
- 11 "**Blessed** ___ you"
- 12 Lotion ingredient
- 13 Nil
- 14 Yes
- 15 **Central church part**
- 16 **False god like 4A**
- 17 Perceived by senses
- 19 Where limb connects
- 20 Before (prefix)
- 21 ___ **Saint-Michel**
- 22 Went gently
- 25 Congressional vote
- 26 Grow old
- 29 Emit light
- 30 Aspire
- 31 Parent teacher groups
- 32 Harden
- 33 Viper
- 34 Visitor
- 35 Not a Morse code dot
- 37 In support of
- 38 Kind of fabric
- 40 Unopened flower
- 44 Excuse me!
- 45 Speech problem
- 46 **Easter month**
- 47 Italian money
- 48 **Domed part of church**
- 49 Fish eggs

- 50 Hertz
- 51 **Church bells do**
- 52 North northwest

DOWN

- 1 Hen does with egg
- 2 **of Life**
- 3 College head
- 4 An old rumor
- 5 Having wings
- 6 Affection
- 7 Fixed charge
- 8 **Prayerful contemplation**
- 9 "**He shall rule with a rod of** _____"
- 10 Birdbrain
- 13 "**Rejoice, Daughter** _____"
- 18 Gush out
- 19 "**We are filled with** _____"
- 21 British "Mom"
- 22 **Easter symbol**
- 23 **Monk brew**
- 24 **They asked John the Baptist what to do**
- 25 Cut off in the bud
- 27 Petrol
- 28 Eastern Standard Time
- 30 **Wednesday**
- 31 **Holy & unblemished**
- 33 American sign language
- 34 **The Good News**
- 36 **mat**
- 37 Moat
- 38 Baby powder
- 39 **Scourge**
- 40 Ready to harvest
- 41 **Where the wheat is gathered**
- 42 "**___ this rock**"
- 43 Outlined
- 45 Once around track



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OSPINO, from page 12

tion is crucial since they are among the most vulnerable in our midst. Their poverty rates are high; about half do not have health insurance.

How long and until when must our immigrant sisters and brothers, especially those in irregular migratory status, live under the shadows of our legal and socioeconomic systems?

Before anyone retorts saying that "they can go back home," please read the statistics above: The U.S. is their home! They are part of who we are.

We need immigration reforms that lead to legal migratory status regularization, pathways to citizenship for young immigrants currently protected by the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), a more efficient system to reunite families and to stop incarcerating immigrants seeking a better life, among others.

A new election cycle approaches and our polarized leaders seem to be getting ready to play political football with the lives of immigrants and refugees -- again. Catholics should hold our ground and denounce that

practice. We must refuse to participate in such games. Catholics should be at the forefront of a movement calling for serious immigration reform. Let us heed the voice of Pope Francis who incessantly calls us to welcome Christ in the immigrant and refugee. Take a pause this Advent and think about what you can do.

Hosffman Ospino is a professor of theology and religious education at Boston College.

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St. Vincent Knights of Columbus parish breakfast
FORT WAYNE — St. Vincent Knights of Columbus are hosting a breakfast buffet Sunday, Dec. 12 from 8-11 a.m. in the parish hall, 1502 E. Wallen Rd. A freewill offering with all proceeds from the breakfast supporting A Women's Care Center in Fort Wayne will be taken.

Sensory-friendly Mass celebrated each week at St. Vincent de Paul
FORT WAYNE — A sensory-friendly Mass is celebrated every Sunday at 1:30 p.m. at St. Vincent de Paul Church, 1502 E. Wallen Rd. A sensory-friendly Mass provides a safe, comfortable and stigma-free setting for children and adults with sensory challenges, mental illness or any kind of disability to feel engaged and experience Mass in a meaningful way. Parishioners and nonparishioners are welcome. Questions about offering a sensory-friendly Mass at your parish? Contact Allison Sturm at asturm@diocesefwsb.org or 260-399-1452.

Knights host breakfast at Most Precious Blood Parish
FORT WAYNE — St. Gaspar del Bufalo Council No. 11043 will be serving breakfast Sunday, Dec. 12, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. in the gymnasium at Most Precious Blood, 1515 Barthold St. Carryout packs will be available. Freewill offerings will be accepted. Proceeds this month will help support the parish school.

Breakfast with St. Nick
SOUTH BEND — Enjoy breakfast with St. Nick at St. Patrick Parish Center, 311 S. Scott St., Sunday, Dec. 12, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. with an extensive menu for adults and children. Visit with St. Nick and photos will be available. Santa Quest raffle for children and adults. Tickets are \$12

for adults, \$6 for children and \$30 for families of four or more. Tickets available at the door. Contact Phil Niswonger 574-287-2270 or niswongerpg1963@yahoo.com.

Holy Hour in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe
FORT WAYNE — On Dec. 12, Gaudete Sunday (Sunday of Rejoicing), we still rejoice in being able to honor Our Lady of Guadalupe with a holy hour to her Son in the monstrance beginning at 2 p.m. in the church, 7215 Saint Joe Rd. Come and spend some time with Jesus. This is the greatest honor that can be given to Our Lady. During the hour flowers may be brought and placed in front of the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. After

Benediction, all are invited to have Mexican hot chocolate and Mexican desserts. Contact Father Daniel Whelan at 260-438-4546 or frdaniel@olghfw.com for information.

Festival of Lessons and Carols
MISHAWAKA — St. Bavo Church, 511 W. 7th St., will hold a Festival of Lessons and Carols Sunday, Dec. 12, at 4 p.m. Nine Scripture readings, outlining a brief journey through salvation history, will be followed by choral anthems, solos and carols with congregational participation. There is no admission charge. Contact Joe Higginbotham at 574-255-1437 or joehigg@sbcglobal.net for information.

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Sylvia G. Valentine, 86, St. Anthony of Padua

Bristol
 Edward J. Bollero, Jr., 63, St. Mary of the Annunciation

Lillian Braun, 84, St. Mary of the Annunciation

Fort Wayne
 Lucy A. Cucinelli, 88, Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception

Mary C. D'Angelo, 96, St. Charles Borromeo

Janet L. Enrietto, 84, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

Maureen Galligan, 59, St. Vincent de Paul

John Hennessey, 87, St. Vincent de Paul

Mishawaka
 Ian Simper, 44, Queen of Peace

South Bend
 Leona Bogunia, 92, Holy Cross

Joseph Fleck, 84, Christ the King

Virginia Jurek, 91, Holy Family

Dolores Lowe, 91, Christ the King

Betty A. Lubelski, 90, Holy Family

Carol Mayer, 75, Holy Cross

Marilyn Rzeszewski, 80, St. Casimir

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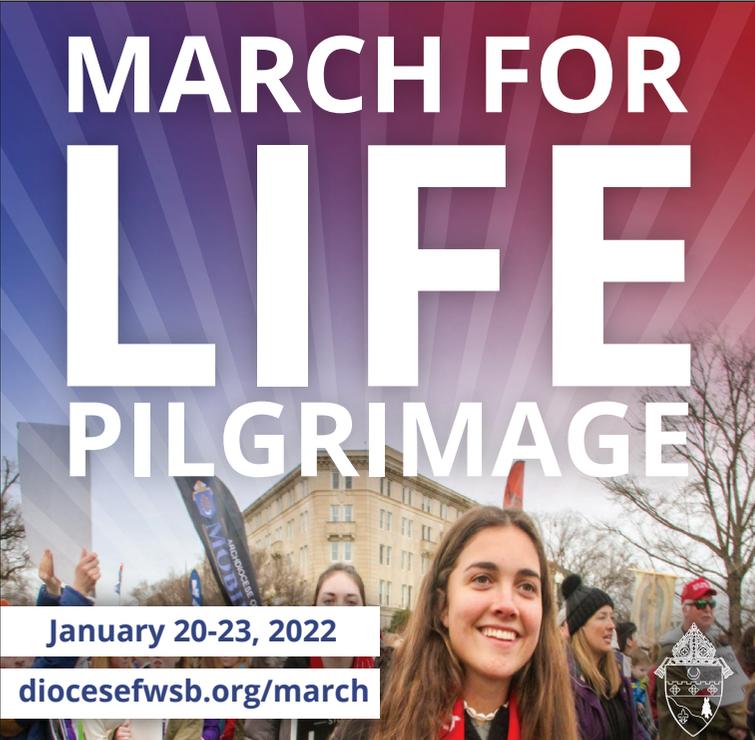
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The CrossWord
 December 5 and 12, 2021

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