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 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.

BY JENNIFER BARTON

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

Photos by Jennifer Barton
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 ‘tomas,’ ‘foreigner.’”

“But what I want to scream is ‘person,’ ‘sister,’ ‘friend, believ- er,’ ‘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 Christ- ian southern two-thirds of the island from the predominantly Turkish Cypriot northern third.

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 migra- tion 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 andDaniel Ejube, both from Cameroon, whose story has been told in newspa- pers 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- person said was “completely out of my ordinary.”

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 help and 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 for 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 terri- bly nervous to do something from her priest but felt called to do so. And since she was asking something of her pastor, she knew she needed to give of herself, too. Now she serves as sacristan and has reached out to others to find lectors, extrao- rdinary 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 won- dersful, 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 other- wise might not feel welcome.”

And between the numbers of children diagnosed with autism every year, rising cases of men- tal 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 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.

“ar 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.

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.
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.

“It is 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 innocent children and their mothers from this painful, life-destrorying 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.

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 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, Grazie 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 CatholicVibe, 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 vulnerable of the right to choose to have a life where people can practice their faith and their customs, proudly sharing them with others, a place where I can dare to hope.”

Marimie 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. “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 her speech 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 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.

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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, and, according to Catholic and other religious leaders:

“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.”

Concluding this story was Peter Finney Jr., executive editor/general manager of the Clarion Herald, newspaper of the Archdiocese of New York.
Catholic social teaching illuminates ICC public policy efforts

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 representing the Church in public policy issues, particularly legislation under consideration at the Indiana General Assembly; and informing 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 economic 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 near future 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.

Save on your energy bills now and let your windows pay for themselves later.

With the high cost of today’s cooling and heating bills, our high-efficiency vinyl windows pay for themselves in practically no time at all! And right now, we’re offering Zero Percent Down and 0% Interest For One Full Year.

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First Nations tell of hopes for upcoming meeting with pope

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

HOUSTON (CNS) — “Racial reconciliation — on that 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 Catholic 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 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 Brennan 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.

“Who 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 and plan for her Son.

Teacher fired by
Catholic school wins
appeal to continue lawsuit

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The Indian Court of Appeals ruled Nov. 25 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 teacher at Cathedral High School in Indianapolis who was fired in June 2019. Payne-Elliott alleged 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.

Miching 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 parked 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 converted-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 interviewed hundreds of witnesses and searched for clues about the alleged shooter’s motive. Authorities identified a 15-year-old Ethan Crumbley, a sophomore at the school, as the shooter. Also 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 Mwongela 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, the diocese said in a statement. At least 30 people were rescued. “It is very sad,” the bishop said. “We are journeying with the people. 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 Mwongela told Catholic News Service in a telephone interview.

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, burning and vandalizing churches, ucanews.com reported.

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.

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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, burning and vandalizing churches, ucanews.com reported.

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.
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.

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 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 attic, 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 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."

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 hope fully 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.

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.

Grandiose goals

When Ganser dreams, he dreams big. Some of his grandiose plans include putting on an event called a “Catholic cirque de soleil;” a visual experience based around the seven sacraments. 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
Advent: the O Antiphons

BY JEANNIE EWING

Many Catholics find familiarly in singing “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” to herald the new liturgical year, Advent. This is one of the seven “O Antiphons,” which are traditional liturgical chants 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 Magnificent antiphons used at vespers on the last seven days of Advent. Their origins date back to the seventh century in 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 the O Antiphons. They string together logical 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 Sapiens (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, Sapiens) 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 sacramental 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 helpful 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 finding 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, around the conclusion of the liturgical year, there are many verses read about the last things – heaven, hell, purgatory. If you’re not praying the O Antiphons, 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 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 down 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, see 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, altus operans. Oh Behold! Panis vitae! Ecce Tempus Epiphaniae! Three magi travelling for to seek. Verbum caro factum est, hic.

— Father Daniel Koehl
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 not only to 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 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.

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..."
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.

"I believed a lot of the seniors would be afraid to go out into 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 who was training 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.

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.

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“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.”

Ganser, from page 8

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 subject 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?”
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 “corpsed raising” was compounded by not having obtained valid informed consent.

When 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 directly and purposefully killed; in the other case, the researcher shows up at the morgue or the abortion clinic following the death of a patient or tissue 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 reasonably request 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 vaccine produced using abortion-derived cell lines does not indicate a willingness on our part to tolerate killing for research since the

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

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, just as Jesus was not even worthy to untie the Savior’s sandal strap, it was a testimony to John — but also to the Redemptor.

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 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 Christ, without 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. Zechariah’s allusions to life and its consequences, as does John the Baptist in the Gospel.

Christians can rejoice, however, because meaning 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.
Three comings of Christ

Many years ago, in the context of a high school religion class, a wise Benedictine nun gave me a template for understanding Advent: I’ve never forgotten. It is simply that Advent calls us 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 teacher whose coming was clearly predicted. And indeed, we can find in 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. Everysingle New Testament author and witness 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 urgent 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 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, "Whosoever 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 is more 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 us 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 reveal 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.

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 ethically 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.
Prepare your heart for the celebration of our Savior’s birth!

For more information, contact Jessica Schuster, Director: jessica.schuster.155@gmail.com

FRIDAY, December 10 @ 7:00 PM
St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Parish
1502 E Wallen Road, Fort Wayne, IN 46825

Join a choir of young adults from Toledo, OH and Fort Wayne, IN, as they reflect on the wonder and beauty of the Incarnation through an evening of sacred music, Scripture, and prayer.

This event is free and open to the public!

NOW HIRING: CONTROLLER

The Congregation of Holy Cross, US Province, seeks a key individual to join its team. Office located in Notre Dame, IN. For more information and to apply, submit your resume to kclauss@holycrossusa.org.

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.
**What’s Happening?**

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

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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 Church**

**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, 1518 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 at 260-438-2270 or niswongerpg1965@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 fdaniel@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 johigg@sbcglobal.net for information.

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**March for Life Pilgrimage**

January 20-23, 2022
diocesefwsb.org/march

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**Most Precious Blood Parish seeks Director of Music and Liturgy**

The primary role of the Director of Music and Liturgy is to provide and coordinate music for three weekend Masses and special liturgies as needed.

**Qualifications and Requirements:**
- • A faithful individual committed to growth personally and professionally, with love for the Catholic liturgy
- • Experience working with and developing a choir and leading congregational singing
- • Excellent professional, verbal, and written communication skills
- • Knowledge of Catholic musical selections including Catholic modern and traditional hymns and praise and worship hymns
- • Ability to work with volunteers – musicians and cantors
- • Dependable, organized and has attention to detail
- • Proficient at piano/organ and singing

Salary is commensurate with experience and agreed upon schedule.

Apply at https://diocesefwsb.org/careers

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December 5 and 12, 2021

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