

TODAY'S CATHOLIC

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Bearing the Christ Child: Mary's Role as the Immaculate Conception

BY MSGR. MICHAEL HEINTZ

Devotion to the person of Mary, the mother of Jesus, is quite ancient. In addition to the words recorded by the evangelist St. Luke, which form the core of the prayer we know as the "Hail, Mary," there is other ancient evidence of Christians invoking her in prayer. Perhaps the earliest prayer for her intercession we possess was discovered in the desert of Egypt on a Greek papyrus dated to the third century. The prayer addresses her as Theotokos, "Mother of God," and asks her protection, help, and prayers. In the Latin tradition, it is known as the Sub tuum praesidium, and may be used as the final antiphon in the celebration of Compline (Night Prayer).

By the second century A.D., Fathers of the Church such as Justin and Irenaeus – seemingly independently of each other – cast Mary as the "New Eve" just as Paul had seen Christ as the "New Adam": Eve's mistrust of the Lord at the insinuation of the serpent was undone by Mary's trusting fiat in response to her angelic visitor. As Eve was the "mother of all the living," so



Jennifer Barton

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Joy Abounds at Saint Anne Communities Visit

BY JENNIFER BARTON

"As we begin a new liturgical year today, we have come rejoicing to this chapel to begin our celebration of the holy season of Advent. And I have come with joy here to Saint Anne's to begin my personal Advent journey with you," so spoke Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades in his homily to residents of Saint Anne Communities, Fort Wayne, on Sunday, Nov. 27. He made his first visit to the retirement home since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Joy fit the theme of the day, as residents, many conveyed to the chapel via wheelchair by



Jennifer Barton

Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades begins his Advent journey by celebrating Mass with residents of Saint Anne Communities in Fort Wayne on Nov. 27.

family members, caregivers, or their faithful chaplain Father Jack Overmyer, came together to celebrate the first Sunday of Advent. Father Overmyer and retired priest and Saint Anne resident Father Adam Schmitt — one of the oldest priests in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend — concelebrated Mass. Bishop Rhoades greeted those present, wishing them a happy new year, as the Church began the new liturgical year on the day. He also promised his continued prayers for the residents throughout the Advent season.

In his homily for the day, he

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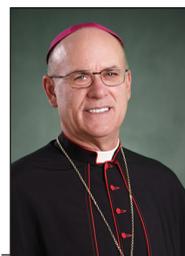
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Called to Be Fishers of Men

Bishop Rhoades Visits Notre Dame Priests and Brothers on Feast of St. Andrew

IN TRUTH
AND
CHARITY

BISHOP KEVIN C. RHOADES

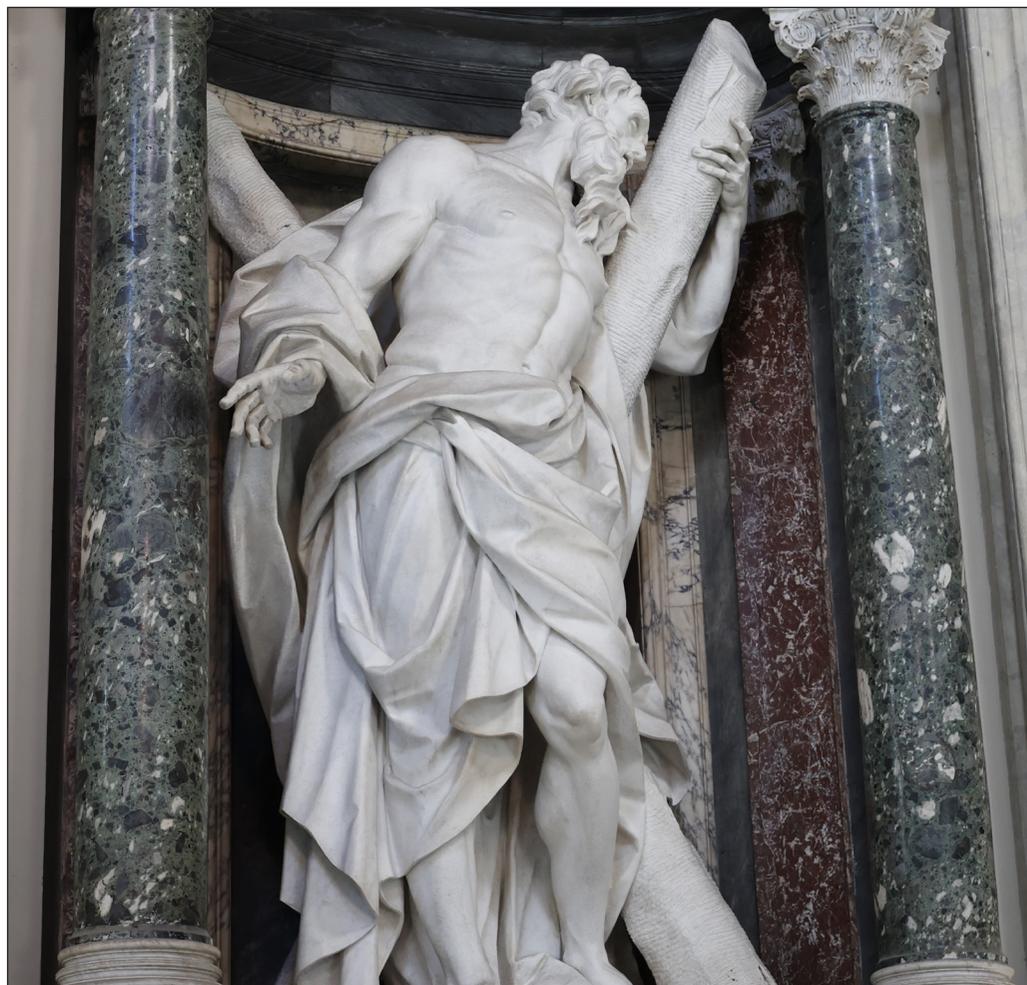
The following homily was delivered by Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades during Mass on the Feast of St. Andrew, Nov. 30, in the chapel of Corby Hall at the University of Notre Dame:

The Church honors and commemorates the Twelve Apostles individually or in pairs on particular days throughout the year with the liturgical rank of feasts, and not just as memorials. This highlights the importance of the original band of Jesus' disciples whom He chose and sent as apostles. They became shepherds to watch over and protect His people, to lead the Church in His name. The Lord built His Church on this apostolic foundation in order for it to stand firm in the truth of the Gospel and to be strengthened in holiness through the sacraments.

Today we celebrate the feast of one of the Twelve Apostles, St. Andrew, the brother of St. Peter. We heard in the Gospel today of the call of these two brothers, along with two other brothers, James and John, while they were doing their work as fishermen on the Sea of Galilee. Jesus said to them: "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." Immediately, they left their nets and followed Him. This is a simple yet profound event. These were hard-working men, dedicated to their humble profession. Jesus saw something in these four fishermen that attracted His attention as He was beginning His public ministry and inaugurating God's Kingdom. Jesus saw their simple fidelity to their work and to their families for whom they provided.

Jesus wasn't looking for the most educated or well-to-do to be His first disciples. Jesus didn't call them to any particular teaching or ideology, to any school of philosophy or political party, to any specific project or undertaking. He called them to His own person. "Come after me," Jesus said to them. *Come, join me; follow me.* And they did so at once, immediately. This is something for us to ponder. What was it that inspired these fishermen to leave everything to follow after Jesus? Perhaps it was Jesus' voice and the way He spoke with authority. Or maybe it was His gaze or His manner of presence. Certainly, they saw His authenticity. Maybe they had earlier heard Him preaching; we don't know. It was surely a movement of grace that they responded to when they left their nets behind to join Jesus as His first disciples. They must have had a spirit of adventure to leave everything behind to follow Jesus.

Andrew, Peter, James, and John didn't follow Jesus because their lives were miserable – they probably had a good, though simple, life. But when they saw and heard Jesus call them, they believed there could be something more, something greater, more challenging, and more daring if they followed this itinerant rabbi. They must have seen in Him real truth and authentic love. Why else would they leave behind



Jennifer Barton

The statue of St. Andrew, with his X-shaped cross, towers over visitors to the Basilica of St. John Lateran in Rome.

their good life than that they felt within them a strong attraction to something great, the mystery of the Person of Jesus? We can think back to what moved us, you and me, to leave everything to follow Jesus as priests and religious. It was something deep and personal – our own personal encounter with the Lord and His truth and love.

Notice that Jesus promised to make these four fishermen into fishers of men. Our Lord would recreate them on a wholly different plane of existence if they would come after Him. They would receive a new identity. They were two sets of blood brothers, but now they would be transformed by being given a new identity as brothers of the Incarnate Son of God. Like Him, they would become fishers of men, bringing men and women into the Kingdom of God. But first they would need to be with Jesus, to listen to His teachings, to witness His signs and miracles, and even to witness His suffering and death. They would be eyewitnesses of Jesus' appearances after His resurrection and of His ascension into heaven, and then receive from Him the power and strength of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost in order to continue Jesus' mission of preaching the Gospel and making disciples. They received the grace to live the vocation they received from Jesus by the Sea of Galilee to be fishers of men.

St. Andrew, whom we remember today, most likely preached the Gospel in Greece and possibly also in Scythia, north of the Black Sea. There is also a tradition that Andrew was crucified on a diagonal of an X-shaped cross in the coastal Greek city of Patras. When Andrew left his nets at the Sea of Galilee, he had no idea how his

life would unfold and end in martyrdom. When Holy Cross Father Edward Sorin and the seven Holy Cross brothers answered the call to the priesthood and religious life as young men in France, they had no idea that they would end up in the wilderness of Indiana to start a school that became the great University of Notre Dame. Like Andrew and the other apostles, they didn't plan out their lives when they decided to heed Jesus' call. And neither did we. When I heard the Lord's call to the priesthood at the age of 19, I discerned that He was calling me to be a priest in my home diocese of Harrisburg. I expected to spend the rest of my life serving the Lord as a priest in south-central Pennsylvania. Little did I know that I would be called to serve elsewhere. Only 15 of my 39 years as a priest have been in the Diocese of Harrisburg. With the freedom of obedience, we go where we are sent, where the Church needs us, to serve as fishers of men.

Let us ask St. Andrew for his intercession: that we will be faithful unto death to our calling and our mission to follow in the footsteps of the apostles. Wherever we are sent, we are called to stand in faithful continuity with the apostles and with the truths of the faith they preached. May we imitate their courageous spirit! The apostles handed on to their successors, including myself, and to you, co-workers of the bishops, the mandate received from the Lord to be fishers of men. We are called to be custodians of the apostolic faith and instruments of Christ's love and grace in the world today, so that His light, the light of truth and love, may continue to shine and never be extinguished in the Church or in the world.

SAINT ANNE COMMUNITIES, from page 1

focused on joy and its connection to the season of Advent; "a season of joyful expectation of the coming of the Lord," he stated.

That joy, he continued, differs from that of Christmas as it is "a quiet joy because it is a time of waiting, a time of preparation for the great joy of Christmas."

"Joy arises in our hearts because a Savior has been given to us, who, as the angel said to the shepherds, is Christ and Lord. Because God in person has come to save us, we have hope. We live in hope. Advent is a great season of hope; hope in salvation because God so loved the world that He sent His only Son to save us. We have hope even in the midst of sadness, pain, and suffering, because we know that God is always with us. He will never abandon us. He is always by our side with His love and grace, giving us peace. He consoles us in our sorrows. So, we can always live in hope!"

He then spoke about Advent anticipating not the first coming of Christ, but rather looking toward the second coming at the end of time. Even the end of the world, Bishop Rhoades explained, "is a reason for hope – hope of the new heavens and a new earth." He reminded his listeners to prepare their hearts for that day, saying that the sacraments, the Eucharist in particular, help the faithful to do this.

"Let us all try to focus this Advent on our interior preparation for the coming of the Lord, striving to grow in holiness, so that when the Lord comes, we will be ready." Living at Saint Anne Communities offers opportunities for daily Mass, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, and recitation of the rosary for the residents to grow in their faith life in their golden years.

During Communion, Bishop Rhoades and Father Overmyer graciously brought the Eucharist to the residents and family members in attendance. Bishop Rhoades then greeted each of the residents after Mass with a handshake and a cheerful smile, chatting with them and sharing memories of those he had met on previous visits.

With Saint Anne's chief operating officer on maternity leave, temporary administrator Bill Langschier currently oversees the home. He has been working at Saint Anne Communities off and on for four years, though he served as a nursing home administrator for roughly 40 years. Of Saint Anne's, he said, "I love it. I truly love it. And for me, it's a closer connection to God, because where I'm working is in the Catholic Church and amongst a lot of residents who are spending their last days here. So, what a blessing for me."



Photos by Jennifer Barton

Father Adam Schmitt, left, and Father Jack Overmyer, at ambo, concelebrate Mass at Saint Anne Communities' chapel on Nov. 27. Father Schmitt is one of the oldest priests in the diocese and a resident of the home, while Father Overmyer is its chaplain.

Langschier believed that the residents were "so appreciative and they feel so good inside that here is the bishop, taking time out of the whole diocese to spend Advent with them, the first Sunday of Advent."

Resident Joanie Watson, originally from Phillipsburg, New Jersey, has lived at Saint Anne for only a short time. She shared how her father had converted to Catholicism many years ago in order to marry



Public schedule of Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades

Monday, Dec. 5: 10 a.m. – Meeting of Bishop's Cabinet, Archbishop Noll Center, Fort Wayne
 Tuesday, Dec. 6: 3:30 p.m. – Indiana Bishops Provincial Meeting, Indianapolis
 Wednesday, Dec. 7: 10 a.m. – Meeting of Indiana Catholic Conference, Indianapolis
 Thursday, Dec. 8: 12:05 p.m. – Mass, Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Fort Wayne
 Saturday, Dec. 10: 9 a.m. – Mass and Breakfast with Fort Wayne District of St. Vincent de Paul Society, St. Patrick Church, Fort Wayne
 Sunday, Dec. 11: 10:30 a.m. – Mass, St. Mary Church, Huntington



Vicars Forane Appointments

The Most Rev. Kevin C. Rhoades, Bishop of Fort Wayne-South Bend, has made the following appointment of Vicars Forane (Deans) for the six vicariates of the diocese, effective on Dec. 1, 2022, for a three-year term.

- Vicariate A — Rev. Monsignor William C. Schooler**
- Vicariate B — Rev. Jason Freiburger**
- Vicariate C — Rev. Jonathan Norton**
- Vicariate D — Rev. Thomas Shoemaker**
- Vicariate E — Rev. William J. Kummer**
- Vicariate F — Rev. David Ruppert**

her mother, a devout Catholic. Watson recalled her happy upbringing, with "wonderful parents, a beautiful mother," and an older brother who was very popular in high school.

When asked how she felt about the bishop's visit to the home, she commented, "I feel very honored."

Ninety-five-year-old Rita

Walters enjoys her life at Saint Anne Communities. She likes it so well, in fact, that she informed Bishop Rhoades that she wanted to have her funeral there. Walters appreciated his visit to the retirement home, saying, "That's great that he comes. That's where they all belong, to each parish, so we can see the bishop."



Photos by Jennifer Barton

After the Mass, Bishop Rhoades greets residents of the retirement community, who were pleased at his presence among them.

Poor Sisters of Saint Clare Moving to Kokomo Monastery

BY CHRIS LUSHIS

Before Jesus parted from the disciples to enter His divine mission of redemption, He implored them, "Let not your hearts be troubled" (John 14:1). Intending to encourage His friends for the trials ahead, He also reminded them of the many proofs of the Father's love they had experienced along the way.

With some similarity, the Poor Sisters of Saint Clare will soon be departing from the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend to continue their own divinely appointed vocational mission. These cloistered sisters, who have lived adjacent to the former St. Andrew Church on New Haven Avenue in Fort Wayne since their founding in 2012, have been given new direction to enter into the spirit of their Franciscan charism more fully.

A recent Vatican instruction on women's contemplative communities entitled "Cor Orans" stipulates that unattached communities which desire to continue living the Rule of Saint Clare, which the sisters each previously professed to follow, need to belong to a community of Poor Clares with greater existing foundations and facilities.

The Order of Saint Clare, founded by St. Francis of Assisi and St. Clare in the year 1212, allows for women to live a contemplative expression of the Franciscan spirit, specifically by following the "Rule of St. Clare", approved by Pope Innocent IV in 1253. Today, there are various expressions of living the Rule, which include the Order of Poor Clares, the Capuchin Poor Clares, and the Colettine Poor Clares (named for the influence of St. Colette of Corbie in living the Rule).

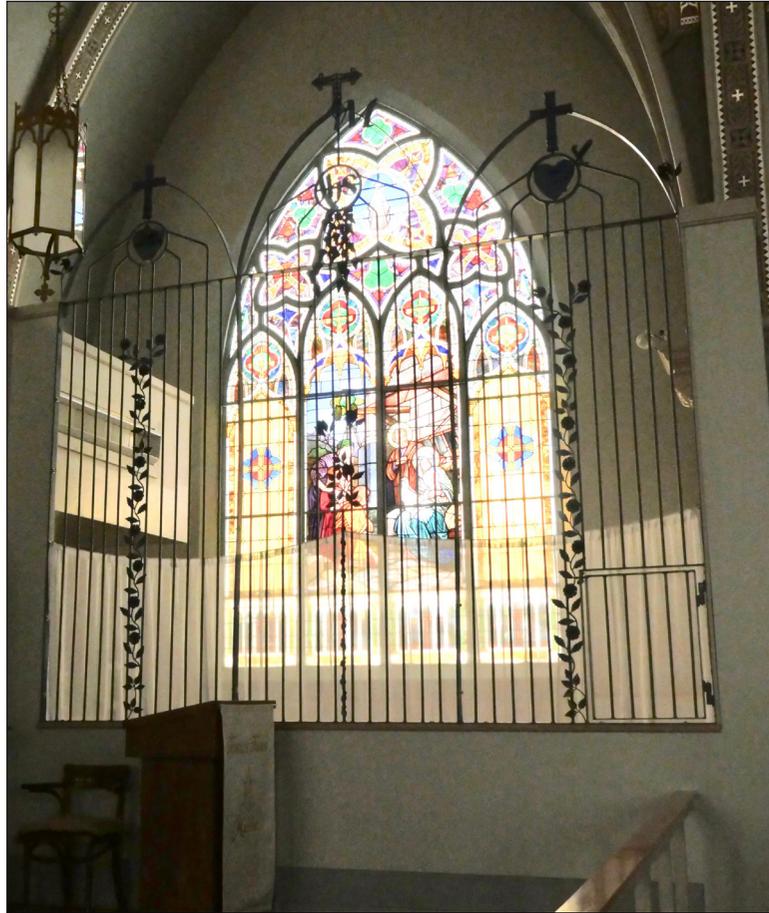
Since the Poor Sisters of Saint Clare in Fort Wayne remained only at the status of "Public Association of the Faithful", had not received many new vocations in recent years, and had lived in a physical structure which did not fully meet the requirements of a monastery, they had little choice but to look elsewhere to continue their vocational journey.

The Poor Sisters of Saint Clare have steadfastly prayed and offered sacrifices on behalf of the diocese for more than a decade. Mother Celeste Marie (of St. Joseph) Carey exclaimed, "Our hearts are here in Fort Wayne. We love this place."

Each of the sisters continues to feel deeply convicted about their calling to remain a Poor Clare, even if it means having to go elsewhere to live out the Rule. Sister Marie Veronica (of Jesus) Goins exclaimed, "Poor Clares are who we are, it is the heart of our very identity. To pursue any other course of action would be like losing my vocational identity and so clearly not the will of God."

Providentially, God came to reveal a way for them to remain rooted in their spiritual identity while bringing them into larger religious families. Upon learning the news, the Poor Clare Nuns of Kokomo, Indiana (a Colettine Community), graciously and generously invited all the Fort Wayne sisters to join their community. This is an unusual occurrence, as many cloistered communities have an age limit for new members and could find it difficult to take on several additional sisters at one time. Mother Celeste expressed her own gratitude for the Kokomo sisters' charity and humility to open their doors to welcome them in with hospitality and love.

While each cloistered convent lives uniquely, there are



Jennifer Barton

This is the window screen at St. Andrew in Fort Wayne where the Poor Clares attend daily Mass.

many similarities between the Kokomo and Fort Wayne sisters in their ways of life and spirituality – including praying the Divine Office seven times a day and spending significant time in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. After a few months of discernment, six of the seven Poor Sisters of Saint Clare have decided to enter the Kokomo convent as the next phase of their Franciscan religious life.

Sister Marie Veronica, however, shared that while her sisters have chosen to join the Poor Clares in Kokomo, she has discerned that the Lord is calling her to enter the Capuchin Poor Clares in

Denver, Colorado. While she steadfastly asserted, "this is the path to my holiness", the anticipation of her adjustment has not been easy. She revealed, "it is like losing my own sisters and everything that is familiar. Thinking about the loss that we will experience in a couple months threw me into great grief. But through prayer, in remembering how God has led me and is leading me – how He is faithful – lifted my spirit again. At the end of our lives, everything will be taken away. We are continuing to grow in total detachment. Thanks be to God that we get to follow so closely to Jesus and Mary. There have been tears and

grief, but I also have joy!"

"This new community is comprised of entirely Mexican sisters, so it is a huge culture change, but God has led me," she added. "The discernment has been so clear, and I can completely see His hand in all this. It is a great grace to be under the blessing of the Church and to have this heritage that goes back to the beginning, back to Clare. There is such a family history. You can see that the Holy See is taking care of her women's religious communities, they are being buoyed up by this to live their vocation."

While the sisters will not have any public formal events to commemorate their departure, Mother Celeste Marie, on behalf of all the sisters, expressed heartfelt gratitude for the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades, the many priests who have served them sacramentally during their 10 years here, and the countless lay faithful who have supported and prayed with them.

She exclaimed, "In the cloister, we have heaven on earth, not simply because we are blessed to pray and live with Jesus, but because we live with people who only want to do God's will. That is what we have in each other. That is the treasure within, but our vocation is to support those out in the world trying to be holy. By this move to Kokomo, we will be going deeper in prayer to support the ones out in the battlefield of the world who don't have the same 'heaven on earth' experience we are so blessed to have in each other. We don't want to leave Fort Wayne, but we want everyone here to trust that we are praying for them, and we are utterly grateful for every temporal and spiritual benefit we received from the faithful of Fort Wayne. It was not wasted – love is never wasted – it has all prepared us for what God is asking!"

In a private ceremony, Bishop Rhoades led a ritual for closing the Our Lady of the Angels Monastery, thanking God for the gift of the Poor Sisters of Saint Clare and asking blessings upon them in their vocational journey. He concluded, "May God our Father, who has placed in your hearts a desire to consecrate your lives to Him in a special way, guide you as you end this experience of monastic life in Fort Wayne and transition to a new future. May He bless your efforts to let the seed of your life fall into the ground of God's goodness and mercy. As this seed dies, may it flourish in new life and bear fruit for the Church and the world. We ask this and all things in the name of Jesus."



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Parishioners of St. Vincent de Paul

Fort Wayne-Born Priest Carries on Archbishop Noll's Legacy

BY JENNIFER BARTON

Dominicans are a proud order, according to Father Patrick Briscoe, OP – proud of their history that dates back to 1216, proud of their unity as an order, proud to be an intellectual order. Their work, he said, lies in “preaching for the salvation of souls.” For Father Briscoe, the media – newspapers, websites, and podcasting – has become the platform he now uses for preaching. Growing up in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, where Archbishop John F. Noll's legacy permeates much of the Catholic culture, it seems natural that Father Briscoe became the editor for Our Sunday Visitor's weekly newspaper on Aug. 1 of this year.

His formation for the Order of Preachers began right here in the diocese. A product of St. Charles Borromeo Grade School in Fort Wayne, he stated that

his experience “of the Church and the parish was so life-giving ... it was just fantastic; it was an amazing childhood, and the teachers in our school that helped us to learn the Faith, to take it seriously; that made a huge impact on me.”

While a student at Bishop Dwenger High School, he began taking a potential vocation to the priesthood seriously by going to adoration with his family at his home parish and becoming one of the primary servers for special events such as Holy Week and Masses at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception at Bishop John M. D'Arcy's request. “And that all made a huge impact on me. For me, it was really altar serving that was very important and a kind of growing love for the liturgy.”

He considered seminary after high school, but claimed he “got cold feet” and instead went to Hanover College in southern Indiana. “I spent the year talk-



FATHER PATRICK BRISCOE, OP

ing to everyone about politics and religion, and I realized that one of those things was more important to me than the other.”

He spent another year and a half in seminary for the diocese at Immaculate Heart of Mary in Winona, Minnesota. It was here that he was introduced to

the Dominican Order through a professor named Father Fabian and realized he wanted a more religious life than that of a diocesan priest. Visiting the Dominican seminary in Washington, D.C., he “felt like I was arriving home for the very first time.”

The Dominican Order, which produced such great Church figures as St. Thomas Aquinas, values “informed preaching; a densely, richly, theological preaching, so it's always been closely allied with a life of study,” Father Briscoe said. This love of study led him to his first assignment in Providence, Rhode Island as a theology instructor at Providence College, eventually becoming chaplain there during the height of the pandemic.

It was a difficult year, but in spite of strict regulations, “we got a lot done. I was able to be very close to the students. There's a lot that I'm proud of from that year,” including raising the morale of students in quarantine by driving a golf cart loaded with Dominicans with guitars and driving it up and down the streets, serenading the students, some of whom came out onto their balconies to express their gratitude in cheers and song.

The media world pulled him away from university life, however. After spending a few years as a columnist and theological editor for Aleteia, the largest Catholic website in the world, he was offered an Editor-in-Chief position there, which he held for a year before OSV leaders asked him to become editor of their paper. With a deep love for Archbishop Noll, how could he refuse to be a part of continuing his legacy?

“Archbishop Noll stands out as such a heroic figure because he was an innovator and I think that that spirit of innovation, of change, while it's an apostolic

spirit, really, I'd say, the drive to go out and really engage and reach people, I think that's what the Church needs most today. I think that honoring his legacy means for us to look at these projects that have been fabulous and then to dare to re-envision them,” he said. He will stay based with his order in Washington, D.C., while working remotely with his Huntington-based OSV team to bring quality content to readers.

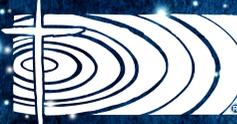
Father Briscoe connects the upcoming launch of OSV News on Jan. 1, 2023, a national news service provided to dioceses across the country, to what Archbishop Noll began 110 years ago. “It's an opportunity to reflect on where we want to go and the future things we can do for the Church ... Catholic media, our responsibility is to hand on the light of Faith, and to do that by communicating the goings-on of the Church.”

The challenges to reaching Catholic audiences are immense in this age of social media and supposed Catholic websites that are not faithfully Catholic in nature, but Father Briscoe hopes to see OSV “rise above the fray” by bringing harmony and unity.

He also aspires to engage current readers and gain new ones through increasing content focused on faith stories and issues relevant in today's culture. “We know that the Catholic reader is interested in things that really nourish their faith. Things that are not just historical, but that inform how he or she lives their faith.”

In addition to his new position, he also hosts “a very fun podcast” called “Godsplaining” with some of his fellow Dominicans, which can be found at godsplaining.org or Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and other platforms.

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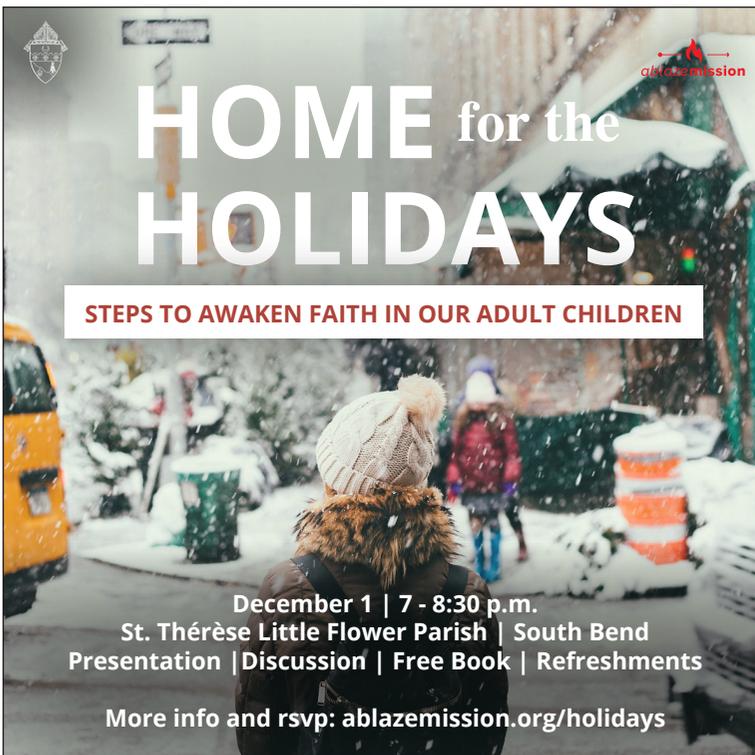
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NEWS BRIEFS

State Supreme Court Reinstates Georgia's Six-Week Ban on Abortions

ATLANTA (CNS) – On Nov. 23, the Supreme Court of Georgia reinstated a law that bans abortions once a fetal heartbeat is detected, which is about six weeks into a pregnancy. The law makes exceptions to save the life of the mother and in cases of rape or incest, if a police report is filed. It also made exceptions to allow abortions when a fetus has serious medical issues. The high court issued a one-page order putting a lower court ruling overturning the ban on hold while it considers an appeal. On Nov. 15, Fulton County Superior Court Judge Robert McBurney overturned the ban. He ruled it was unconstitutional and violated Supreme Court precedent when signed into law in 2019. His ruling, based on a lawsuit filed by the American Civil Liberties Union of Georgia, was effective immediately. The State Attorney General's office filed an appeal with the state Supreme Court. When McBurney handed down his ruling striking down Georgia's ban on abortion, Atlanta Archbishop Gregory J. Hartmayer stated: "As I have said before, no matter what law is on the books, we must be dedicated to upholding the dignity of life for all people. That includes mothers, fathers, and their children."

Catholic Leaders Respond to Shooting at Colorado Nightclub

WASHINGTON, D.C. (CNS) – Catholic leaders have condemned the Nov. 19 attack on an LGBTQ nightclub in Colorado Springs, Colorado, that killed at least five people and injured at least 25. Seven of those wounded were in critical condition. The Church leaders – the archbishop of Denver, leaders of religious orders and congregations, and a Catholic outreach group to members of the LGBTQ community – also prayed for those impacted by the attack and urged for an end to hate crimes and use of language that condemns those in the LGBTQ community. The suspected gunman, 22-year-old Anderson Lee Aldrich, faced murder and hate crime charges on Nov. 21, a law enforcement official told The Associated Press, adding that the suspect used an AR-15-style semiautomatic weapon in the attack at Club Q before he was subdued by people at the club. On its Facebook page, the club thanked the "quick reactions of heroic customers that subdued the gunman and ended this hate attack" within minutes of the alleged gunman opening fire after entering the club shortly before midnight

Groups Draw Attention to Violence Against Women



CNS photo courtesy of the British Embassy to the Holy See

Christopher Trott, the British Ambassador to the Holy See, right, and Chiara Porro, Australian Ambassador to the Holy See, and others hold a banner calling for the prevention of sexual violence as a weapon of war as they pose for a photo in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican on Nov. 27, 2022.

on Nov. 19. It also noted that a drop-in center was set up at a nearby hotel with counseling services available all week. Police have identified the deceased victims as Daniel Aston, Raymond Green Vance, Kelly Loving, Ashley Paugh, and Derrick Rump. Denver Archbishop Samuel J. Aquila said he was "saddened by this tragic and senseless act."

U.S. Catholic Leaders Speak Out Against Three November Executions

WASHINGTON, D.C. (CNS) – In the third week of November, three executions by lethal injection took place in the U.S. in just two days and a fourth execution was called off after failed attempts happened close to the expiration of the prisoner's death warrant. Catholic leaders spoke out against the Nov. 16 executions in Texas and Arizona as well as the next day's execution in Oklahoma and the halted one in Alabama. In a 24-hour period, all four death

penalty cases had last-minute appeals to the Supreme Court that were denied. Without mincing words, Sister Helen Prejean, a Sister of St. Joseph and longtime death penalty opponent, tweeted: "The U.S. Supreme Court is now functionally a rubber stamp for executions. Stays and injunctions issued by lower courts are routinely lifted without full briefing and without explanation from the justices, no matter how egregious the underlying legal issues." The court's fourth rejected plea, in an unsigned order on Nov. 17, failed to block the execution of Oklahoma inmate Richard Fairchild, who had asked the justices to put his execution on hold to give him time to appeal a state court's ruling on his mental competency. Shortly after the court's morning ruling, Fairchild, who turned 63 that day, was put to death for the 1993 murder of his girlfriend's 3-year-old son, Adam Broomhall. Fairchild's attorneys said their client, who had been abused as a child, was psychotic but also remorseful for his actions. The state argued that Fairchild's request was a delay tactic.

Bishop Decries Second Spate of Gun Fatalities in Virginia

CHESAPEAKE, Va. (CNS) – Just ahead of Thanksgiving Day, "a time where we celebrate what we are most grateful for in our lives," the nation awoke on Nov. 23 "to the somber and agonizing news of more souls lost because of a senseless act of violence" at a Walmart in Chesapeake, said Bishop Barry C. Knestout of Richmond, Virginia. "This is the second time within two weeks we grieve for multiple lives tragically taken far too early by violence," said the bishop, whose diocese includes Chesapeake, the state's second-largest city after Virginia Beach. Late on Nov. 22, the shooter, who police later said was a Walmart manager overseeing the night shift, opened fire on fellow employees with a pistol in the breakroom of the store, killing at least six people and injuring at least four others. He later killed himself. AP reported that the gunman, identified as Andre Bing, 31, and two others

were found dead in the breakroom, another of the dead was found near the front of the store and three others were taken to a hospital where they died of their wounds.

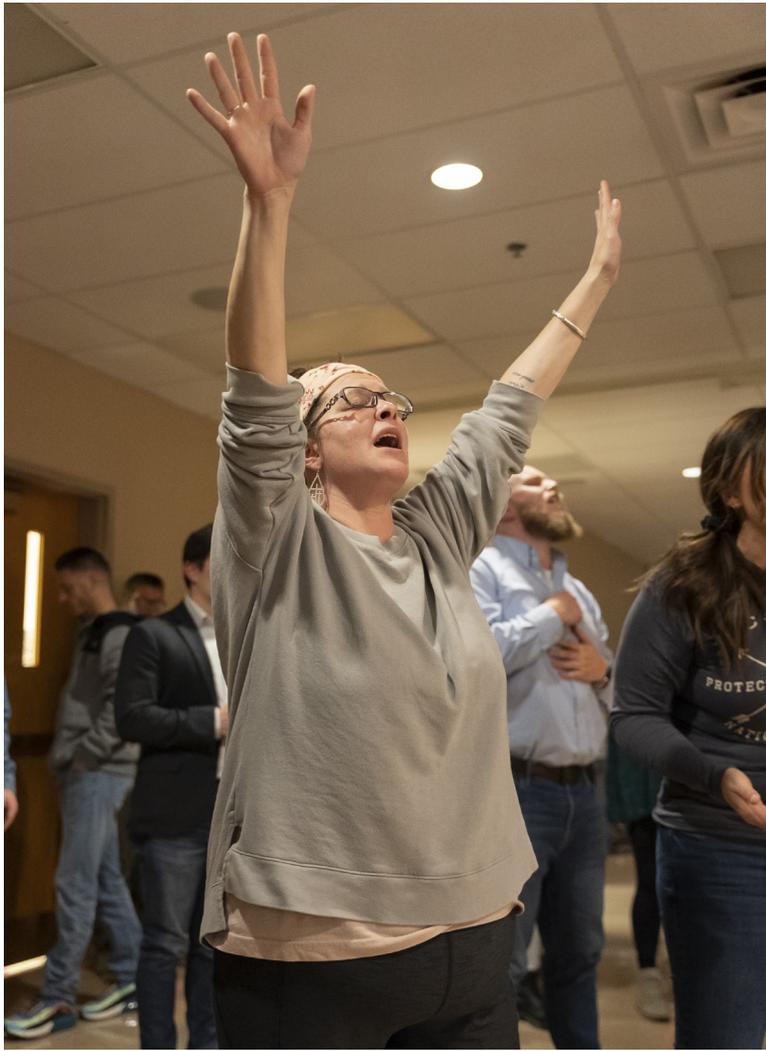
People with Disabilities Want to Belong to Church, Conference Stresses

SPRING, Tx. (CNS) – Disability ministry leaders, advocates, family members, and others gathered recently at St. Ignatius of Loyola Catholic Church in Spring, Texas for the annual conference of the National Catholic Partnership on Disability. Charleen Katra, the organization's director, said the goal of the conference was to raise awareness about disability issues in the Church, but more importantly, it was to train church communities on how to "create a welcoming and hospitable" campus, parish, school, and diocese. "You want to do more than just include someone," she said. "You want to help create a home for the person with a disability in the Church, to where they move from just being included. We want to move people from inclusion to belonging in the Church." Katra said the recent synod discussions in the Galveston-Houston Archdiocese have helped bring new issues to light that the Church community and its leaders have overlooked in the past. The main message, she said, is that people with disabilities and their families "want to feel a sense of belonging in the Church, and they do not feel like they have been on many occasions."

Idaho Parish Mourns Deaths of Students, Prays for Families, Community

WASHINGTON, D.C. (CNS) – In the days since four University of Idaho students were found brutally slain on Nov. 14, the Catholic parish that serves the university and the community of Moscow, Idaho, is mourning with and praying for the victims, their families and friends, and the wider community, said the pastor. "Our close-knit campus has had our peace and joy attacked, and everyone has been affected," said Father Chase Hasenoehrl, Pastor of St. Augustine's Catholic Center, which serves the university campus. "Our ministry will continue to serve our students, faculty, and families with opportunities for prayer, consolation, and support in this time of loss and fear," Father Hasenoehrl told Catholic News Service in a Nov. 21 statement.

Unity Through Worship



Joshua Schipper

FORT WAYNE – St. Charles Borromeo Parish, Fort Wayne, hosted a Christian unity night with non-denominational church Kingdom Collective in mid-November. Shema Culture, a new praise and worship ministry in the diocese comprised of Caleb and Natali Perkins and Gloria Kohrman, provided music for this cross-denominational worship night which drew around 100 people to the parish that evening.

Nativity Mosaic at Catholic Cemetery



Provided by Casey Miller

FORT WAYNE – Divine Mercy Funeral Home in Fort Wayne recently received delivery of a new outdoor Nativity scene. The mosaic was created by the same artist who created the Divine Mercy mosaic inside the funeral home and arrived in time for the Advent and Christmas seasons, resting in its new place outside the entrance to the funeral home.

AROUND THE DIOCESE

Students Collect Food to Feed the Hungry



Photos provided by Greg Witte

FORT WAYNE – Bishop Dwenger Student Council had their 2nd Annual Stuff-the-Bus Food Drive to benefit Miss Virginia's Food Pantry. They collected 1,920 pounds of canned goods and assorted non-perishable food items. They delivered the donations on their school bus and a group of the student council members unloaded and stacked items into crates and onto pallets.

Scholarship Essay Winners Announced



Photos provided by Lois Widner

FORT WAYNE – St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic School officials congratulated middle school students for participating in the Knights of Columbus Essay Contest. The students were given the opportunity to write an essay on the topic “How Can I Show My Love for Jesus in My Community?” Essay winners were ranked first, second, and third place as well as given tuition scholarships for the current school year. The Knights of Columbus at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton are planning on repeating this scholarship contest again in the spring. Pictured from left to right are: Mike DiScala, Grand Knight of the Knights of Columbus at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Viktor Glowacki, Amelia Lehman, Pete Allen, Natalia Kleinrichert, Elizabeth Smuts, Alex Lee, Zavier Mejia, and Michael Northup. Not pictured is Grace Speith.



Photos by Eric Peat

Kids stand in line to assemble their shoeboxes for families in need this Christmas.

Christmas Shoebox Project Spreads Joy of Giving This Advent Season

BY ERIC PEAT

As Catholics around the world plan to spend the season of Advent preparing for the coming of Christ, one group of children is already working to bring the love of Jesus to those in need in the Fort Wayne community.

Northeastern Indiana Catholic Home Educators (NICHE) held its 4th annual Christmas Shoebox Project on Nov. 18 at St. Vincent de Paul's Kuzmich Life Center in Fort Wayne. Roughly 100 kids from the local Catholic homeschooling community gathered together to pack shoeboxes with both essential items and Christmas gifts for other children. These shoeboxes are then delivered to Catholic Charities for distribution to families in need this Christmas season. NICHE Lead Coordinator Laura Kaufman, who organizes the Christmas Shoebox Project each year, said it has always been a popular and well-received event among NICHE families.

"I think the shoebox project is so special because it gives kids of all ages a chance to give a gift to someone they have never met, but who is a kid just like them," said Kaufman. "The shoeboxes enable us to help with the material needs of kids in our community, but more importantly, it enables us to reflect the love of Christ for them. What an awesome opportunity we have been so blessed to have given!"

To help make the event a success, a total of 25 families

"It feels nice that we're helping other people, and it's fun to pack the boxes with our friends."

— Julia Hudecek



Father Dan Scheidt visits with NICHE families after completing the Christmas Shoebox Project.

pitched in to donate items for the shoeboxes. All of the boxes included essentials such as hats, gloves, socks, toothbrushes, toothpaste, and facial tissues. They also included toys and games that corresponded

with each of the six age and gender categories – toddler girl and boy, kid girl and boy, and teenage girl and boy. The toddler girl boxes featured necklaces, dolls, and toy unicorns, while the toddler boy boxes

featured cars, dinosaurs, and balls. Next, the kid girl boxes held bracelet kits, nail polish, and hair accessories, while the kid boy boxes held building blocks, wooden engineering kits, and games. Finally, the teenage girl boxes included gel pens, lotions, and cosmetic bags, while the teenage boy boxes included decks of cards, wallets, and multitools. In all, these items make up only a few of the many that each of these boxes contained.

As the kids came through the line to assemble their boxes, they got to choose which age and gender category they wanted to put together. They would then walk around the room, taking one of each type of item from every table labeled for their category. Volunteers checked each box to ensure that assembly had been completed properly. By the end of the project, each child had the opportunity to repeat the process and assemble two or three shoeboxes.

In addition to stuffing their shoeboxes with the collected items, participants would also color Christmas cards to add to their boxes with a small note to their future recipients. According to Kaufman, one of the goals of the project is to help the recipients know that someone cares about them and is praying for them.

"I always try really hard to make this as personal as possible for the kids," said Kaufman. "We decorate the lids and include cards with messages signed, 'Your Friend.' I ask the kids who make the boxes to pray for their new friends this Advent. I know we will never know who receives our boxes, but I love to picture just one child receiving just one box and to think of the smile it will bring them as they go through their new treasures."

After all the packing was finished and the group's goal of assembling 160 shoeboxes had been met, everyone celebrated with a pizza party. Father Dan Scheidt, Pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Parish, also stopped by to offer a prayer, bless the shoeboxes, and visit with the families. The Hudecek family had four children participate in the project, and they all experienced the joy of giving that marks this Advent season.

"It feels nice that we're helping other people, and it's fun to pack the boxes with our friends," said Julia, age 9. "It's important because some people don't get presents at Christmas."

"I like to help God's children," agreed Claire, also age 9. "I think God would want us to do the shoeboxes."

Those interested in learning more information about NICHE and its upcoming events in the Catholic homeschooling community can visit the organization's website at catholichomeschoolers.org.



CATHERINE OF SIENA INSTITUTE

EQUIPPING PARISHES TO FORM LAY APOSTLES

Called & Gifted Process Aids Catholics in Discerning and Using Charisms to Serve Diocese

BY ANDREW JACOBS

Scripture assures us that each Christian is given spiritual gifts. Two great Apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul, both write of the Holy Spirit granting spiritual gifts to be used to serve one another for the common good and to glorify God. St. Peter tells us, "As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace." (1 Peter 4:10) St. Paul tells us, "There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual, the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit." (1 Corinthians 12: 4-7)

However, it is often challenging to discern these gifts and how to best use them. The Called & Gifted process is aimed at helping people do this, and it is bearing good fruits throughout the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend.

The Called & Gifted Discernment Process was created by the St. Catherine of Siena Institute and launched in 1993. Since then, more than 100,000 Catholics around the world have used the process to help discover their charisms, or the gifts they've been given through the Holy Spirit, and how they can use their charisms to help serve others and build the Church and their own communities.

Part One of the process is the Called & Gifted Workshop. In the workshop, participants begin to discern their charisms by taking the Catholic Spiritual Gifts Inventory. This lays the foundation for the process. Part Two is a one-hour gifts interview to review the inventory results, recognize patterns that may indicate charisms, and choose one charism to further discern. Part Three aids in discerning the work of service in the world by using charism

experiments, evaluating the results, and identifying ways in which childhood behaviors may prevent using charisms as an adult.

An increasing number of parishes around the diocese are holding Called & Gifted Workshops. Participants who complete the workshops are being guided to discover their charisms and give these gifts back to God by serving others, both in their parishes and in the wider world.

Jacklyn Sommers recently attended a Called & Gifted Workshop at St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Fort Wayne. Having completed the RCIA process in 2021 and recently relocated to the Fort Wayne area, Sommers "felt somewhat lost and disconnected," and a friend suggested that she attend a workshop. Sommers said, "I knew nothing about charisms, and I didn't know anyone who would be attending, so I was a bit apprehensive at first, but the workshop was great. It covered a lot of information, but at a comfortable pace.

"First, they explain what charisms are by looking at Scripture and some of the ancient writings of the early Church. Then you complete the inventory, and several teachers, all of whom have completed the process previously, are there to encourage and guide you, and they give lots of examples."

Questions in the inventory ask things like whether others have noticed a talent or whether certain things bring a person joy.

"For example, organizing things is easy for me and feels natural, but I don't think it necessarily brings joy to me or to others. Or it might bring me some joy, but am I using it for God, and if not, could I be?" she continued.

"My favorite part was when they explained the charisms. It was exciting to hear that a talent or trait you have might also be a charism. It helps you know more about yourself

and how you can best use your charisms for God and for others. This was a real page-turner for me ... It was like an 'epiphany' feeling."

Sommers is now in the second step of the process, "and the wheels are turning in my head, a growing awareness, which is key. I picked two of my higher-rated charisms to experiment with: craftsmanship and mercy. As a new Catholic in a new parish, it's giving me confidence that I really do have these charisms inside me, and I can use them to serve others around me in the way God intended."

SS. Peter and Paul Parish in Huntington will hold a Called & Gifted workshop on Dec. 3. Drew Stuart, Director of Family Formation at the parish, said, "Charisms are gifts that are meant to be given away. And it's these gifts that St. Paul talks about that are given to the Church to build it up. In St. Paul's epistle to the

Corinthians, you've heard of St. Paul's image of the Body of Christ for the Church: We are many parts, but we're all one body. Every person has at least one charism and a role they are called to play in the Church. The workshop is intended to take the first steps toward discerning what those gifts are so that we can begin living out that mission."

Stuart further explained: "I've spoken with people who say that many of the people who stopped coming to church during the COVID pandemic have not come back, or that they feel that their

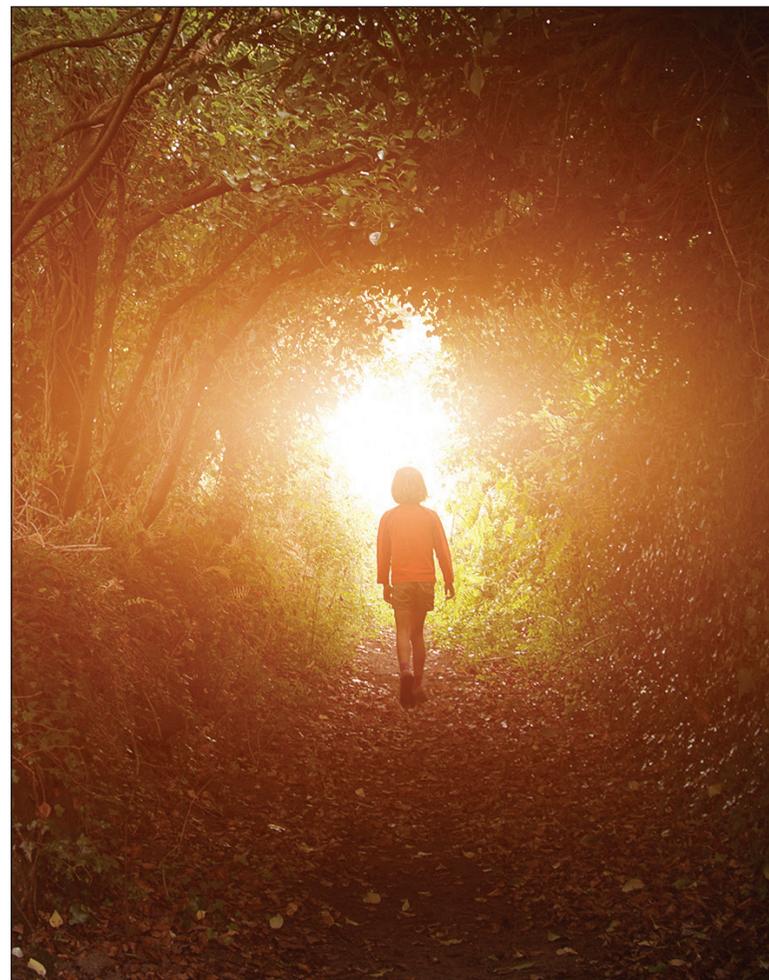
spiritual life isn't as good as it was before COVID. I personally feel that now is the time to do something like this. The Church is ripe for what Pope St. John Paul II called "the New Evangelization," and I believe that discerning and fully using our charisms are a way we can do that. We need these charisms now more than ever to help rebuild the Church."

"I've already recommended the workshop to other people," said Sommers. "I have a sister who is now in the RCIA process and another sister considering it, and I've recommended the workshop to them. I think the Called & Gifted process would be a natural next step after RCIA to help guide new Catholics in how to move to the next stage in their faith journey. And it's for people of all ages." Participants in the workshop she attended ranged from teenagers to retirees and ages in between.

"In the workshop, they say you are learning this for the rest of your life. You also start to see charisms in other people, and this helps you encourage them."

Stuart agreed. "The workshop is an enriching experience for most people. I've seen it change the outlook of several of our parishioners who said, 'Wow, I didn't know I have this gift!' And while not all of them are actively involved in ministry here at the parish, they've learned how to use these gifts to help others. And that's very important for all of us."

Anyone interested in learning more about the Called & Gifted Discernment Process or would like to attend a workshop can visit the St. Catherine of Siena Institute at siena.org.



Photos siena.org



Catholic High School Students Help Tell Buffalo Soldiers' Story in Memorial

BY JEAN GONZALEZ

LAKELAND, Fla. (CNS) – Under the shade of oaks near the shores of Lake Beulah in Lakeland stands a bronze obelisk that tells an important story that many Americans and local Floridians might never have heard.

The Friends of Freedom statue, dedicated on Nov. 12, memorializes soldiers of the 9th and 10th Cavalry, known as “Buffalo Soldiers,” who fought alongside Cubans fighting for freedom from Spain during the Spanish-American War.

Buffalo Soldiers were Black men who served in the military to secure their own freedoms in the post-emancipation United States.

Two art teachers at a Catholic high school in the Orlando Diocese and their students played a part in making sure these soldiers' story was not lost to history.

About a year and a half ago, a nonprofit cultural arts organization called Platform Art invited local high schools to participate in a project it was working on with the Florida Veterans Council to produce a monument to recognize Lakeland's distinctive role in the Spanish-American War.

They also used the project as an educational tool to teach youths.

Lula Peoples and Lucile Pfund, both art teachers at Santa Fe Catholic High School in Lakeland, embraced the opportunity. They showed their students a video produced by Platform Art called “Those Men that Came Before,” which detailed why the 9th and 10th U.S. Cavalry of Buffalo Soldiers came to Lakeland and why it was so important.

Richard Wilder, President of Buffalo Soldiers Florida and a Vietnam veteran, participated in the educational video.

“The presence of the 10th Cavalry (of Buffalo Soldiers) in Lakeland was a positive influence on the Black residents here in Lakeland,” Wilder said in the video. “They saw these men hold their heads up. They saw these men with a sense of pride and dignity, and they saw them carry that with them everywhere they went in Lakeland, even in the face of racism.”

Those words inspired Taylor Tidwell, Blaine Keller, Emily Dang, and Jacob Valez, students in Peoples' and Pfund's art classes. They created art that was later chosen to be fired into the bronze sculpture.

“Then they came up with their own ideas, made drawings, and worked on them for



The top of the Friends of Freedom Memorial in Lakeland, Florida, dedicated on Nov. 12, 2022, shows Black soldiers from the 9th and 10th Cavalries of the U.S. Army. Known as Buffalo Soldiers, they were stationed in Lakeland during the Spanish-American War prior to being deployed to Cuba.

several weeks,” Peoples told Florida Catholic, Orlando's diocesan newspaper. “When we got the call that four were chosen for their art, we were so immensely proud.”

The statue is the newest to grace Veteran's Memorial Park in Lakeland, which includes memorials honoring veterans who served in the Civil War, World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, and the Global War on Terrorism.

The sides of the obelisk include narrative scenes and verbiage that speak to the role of history of the Spanish-American War and the Buffalo Soldiers who were based in Lakeland and fought in Cuba.

At its top are members of the cavalry on horseback and at the base are the students' drawings memorialized in bronze.

According to historians, Native Americans gave Black soldiers the moniker “Buffalo Soldiers” because to them their dark, curly hair resembled a buffalo's coat but also because of their fierce nature of fighting. The nickname soon became synonymous with all African American regiments formed in 1866, such as the 9th and 10th Cavalry.

Santa Fe is one of only two schools with work by students incorporated in the statue; the other is Lake Region High School in Eagle Lake.

“They transformed their drawings into a relief sculpture that you see on the monument

now,” Pfund said. “(The artwork) was fired in our kiln at school and then transferred to (Platform Arts) so they could incorporate them in the statue.”

“We are so proud of them,” Peoples added. “Each of them were very careful with their attention to detail and were very detailed about why they drew what they drew. They worked hard and did their best and we are over the moon to be a part of this legacy.”

All four Santa Fe students were present for the dedication. Tidwell and Keller are now seniors and Dang is a junior. Valez is now a senior at George Jenkins High School in Lakeland, but he produced his work while a student at Santa Fe.

Tidwell's artwork displays symbols of the 9th and 10th Cavalry, which included Buffalo Soldiers. It includes the cavalry's flag, the American flag, a buffalo, and the hat worn by the Black soldiers during the Spanish-American War.

Dang's artwork displays Buffalo Soldiers placing a Cuban flag on a hill in the Caribbean nation. Keller's artwork displays the explosion of the USS Maine, which prompted U.S. involvement in the Spanish-American War. Valez's artwork depicts Teddy Roosevelt, then the leader of the Rough Riders.

Wilder, who also attended the dedication, said he hopes the video and monument share a part of the past, a part of his heritage that has been “omitted from the history books.”

Artist Becky Ault of Art Research Enterprises Inc. designed and completed the statue in cooperation with Platform Arts. The statue traveled from Pennsylvania to Florida and Buffalo Soldier Motorcycle clubs from across the nation escorted the monument to its final destination.

Members of the clubs from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; Orlando; Tampa, and other Florida cities were on hand for the Nov. 12 dedication, and Buffalo Soldier reenactors in uniform and on horseback participated in a procession.

Gonzalez is on the staff of the Florida Catholic, newspaper of the Diocese of Orlando and three other Florida dioceses.



Richard Wilder, right, President of the Buffalo Soldiers organization in Lakeland, Florida and a Vietnam veteran, and a fellow member of the Buffalo Soldiers dress in 10th Cavalry regalia during the Nov. 12, 2022, dedication ceremonies for the Friends of Freedom Spanish-American War memorial in Lakeland.

Nigerian Sisters Raise Awareness on Rape, Violence Against Women

BY VALENTINE IWENWANNE

ENUGU, Nigeria (CNS) – Nigerian sisters and their communities are raising awareness about violence against women and child abuse and spreading their prevention mechanisms among young people in Nigeria.

Through the Africa Faith and Justice Network, a Washington, D.C.-based advocacy organization, they work with traditional leaders and government departments for stronger legislation against domestic violence targeted at women.

Since it was established in 1983, AFJN has been working with 86 sisters from 28 congregations to promote peace, advocate for human rights and dignity, and advance social justice. It also offers moral and legal support for victims of abuse.

Sister Eucharua Madueke of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur and Coordinator of the Women Empowerment Project at the AFJN, said the awareness campaign is designed to tackle Nigeria's high rate of gender-based violence, especially against women. She cited as examples rape, defilement, denial of inheritance, and harmful widowhood practices.

UNICEF says 31 percent of Nigerian women ages 15-49 have experienced physical violence, with 6 percent of violence occurring during pregnancy.

Sister Madueke said violence thrives when one's partner or spouse feels he or she has power over the weaker partner. "A lot of women have been killed by their husbands, and this is often traced to how society perceives women as being weak."

In 2019, the sisters held a four-day workshop on advocacy and social justice where they engaged more than 100 staff of human rights groups in Enugu, challenging them to step up to their duties and responsibilities.

The training and workshops have been yielding results. Sister Madueke said the groups have been mobilizing themselves, raising awareness about the dignity of women in local communities, schools, churches, and among groups, helping these groups to recognize violence around them, especially in rural villages across Nigeria.

The Africa Faith and Justice Network is not working in isolation. Notre Dame de Namur Sister Teresa Anyabuikie, AFJN's Communications Officer, said the network collaborates with others, including government agencies such as



Sister Teresa Anyabuikie, bottom middle, poses for photo with students after a seminar about child abuse and human trafficking in Abuja, Nigeria. She and other members of the Africa Faith and Justice Network have been traveling across Nigeria to raise awareness on rape and violence against girls and women.



CNS photos/courtesy Sister Eucharua Madueke

the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons.

"We are holding advocacy visits to both civil and traditional leaders, demanding change of policies and cultural beliefs that lead to discrimination against women, and pushing for strong protective laws, as well as implementation of national laws that protect the rights and promote the dignity of every human."

"It's our common goal as sisters to deal with issues of injustice in the society. We go into communities to speak to people about what they need to know, how to speak up, avoid

Sister Eucharua Madueke, Coordinator of the Women Empowerment Project of the Africa Faith and Justice Network, poses for a photo in Lira, Uganda, after a four-day workshop on forced marriage and teenage pregnancy.

being caught up in the web of injustice, and how to seek redress when their rights are trampled or infringed on."

Sister Anyabuikie told Catholic News Service that they do all this to assure the victims that there are still spaces for them to speak up or air their grievances.

Nneamaka Ildigwe, a lawyer and Founding Director of the Women and Child Justice Initiative, is one of the many beneficiaries of the training. The NGO she was working with was invited to the training. But after encountering the sisters of AFJN, she acquired advocacy skills with in-depth knowledge of human rights and social justice that tie directly into Catholic social teaching.

Her first case as a member of AFJN was that of a 26-year-old woman who got married and gave birth to an autistic child. The woman's husband wanted to take the child to an Indigenous doctor for divination and healing, but the woman insisted on taking the child to the church or a hospital.

It soon became a problem that made the mother seek the help of AFJN through Ildigwe.

To ensure the woman and her child's safety "after her husband had abandoned them for choosing not to patronize a native doctor, we took over their welfare and raised 600,000 naira (US \$1,355) for hospital bills and their upkeep, and we are making efforts for her to get justice," Ildigwe told CNS.

The sisters are planning to organize another workshop on violence in the home in Enugu this December, and they are involving people from various rural deaneries.

"We have written to the bishop of Enugu Diocese about the workshop and got approval. It is important to note that homes and families are like the domestic Church, so we wrote and told him about it, because the domestic Church is under attack by violence," Sister Madueke said.

She said they also wrote the priest who headed the diocesan justice and peace commission as well as Catholic women and men's organizations "asking them to send people from their local deaneries so they can go back into their local communities and replicate what they learned from the workshop."

Happy New Year!

I know what you may be thinking: they're running this column a month too early. But it's true: we've actually already begun the new year, liturgically speaking. The Church's year runs from the first Sunday in Advent until the feast of Christ the King. It's one of the small ways in which our lives as believers in Christ don't always entirely correspond with the rest of the world, and this difference between our faith life and our daily life can be a very good thing. After all, as St. Peter wrote, we should be "strangers and pilgrims" in this world (1 Peter 2:11). Our actual homeland is in heaven, where Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us, as he promised (cf. John 14:3).

In the meantime, God gives us little signs and hints of the glory that He has prepared for us. The season of Advent that we observe at the beginning of the new liturgical year is one of these times of hope and expectation. You've no doubt noticed some of the signs of the season in the decoration (or seeming lack thereof) of your parish church. Unlike the stores and shopping malls, our churches are not yet bedecked with Christmas cheer, but rather they are modestly decorated in the color purple: in the altar cloths, the vestments that the priest wears, and even in the candles on the Advent wreath (well, 3 of the 4 candles, at least – more on that in a moment). Purple is a color that we traditionally associate with royalty, which is entirely

appropriate as we await the coming of Jesus, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Purple is also a color that we associate with penance, as it's the color of both the penitential season of Lent and the color of the stole (the stylized long neck scarf) that the priest wears when celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

But this season of purple will be interrupted with a subtle sign of joy on the third Sunday of Advent, when we see the color pink make a surprising appearance. This particular Sunday has a special name, "Gaudete Sunday," after the first Latin word of the scriptural theme for the Mass of the day, from Paul's letter to the Philippians: "Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice!" (Phil. 4:4). The color pink that we see on the third candle on the Advent wreath and in the priest's vestments is a shade related to the Advent season's omnipresent purple, but the bright pink color shines forth against the deeper purple with the translucent suggestion of light. At this time of year (at least in the northern hemisphere), when darkness is at its depth, the days are at their shortest. Therefore, the lightness on display through the pink decorations of Gaudete Sunday is a reminder that, as John the Evangelist wrote at the beginning of his gospel, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (Jn 1: 4-5).

This is a very hopeful message for us to hear, one that is



HUMOR IN THE MIX

KEN HALLENIUS

especially welcome to the eyes and ears of children who may be beginning to despair that the stores in the shopping mall are more ready for Christmas than their parish churches. Gaudete Sunday is a subtle promise that soon we will see the Savior that we have been awaiting in the darkness.

In the week before Christmas, the liturgy offers us yet another sign that the days of Advent are drawing short. Beginning on Dec. 17 and continuing through Dec. 23, at Vespers (evening prayer), the Church sings the "O Antiphons," each recalling a prophetic Old Testament title associated with the coming Messiah: Wisdom of God, Lord of Israel, Root of Jesse, Key of David, Daystar, King of the Nations, Emmanuel. (Even if you've never prayed Vespers, you probably already know these "O Antiphons," as they are the basis of the popular Advent hymn, "O Come, O Come Emmanuel.") There is even a tiny bit of playful humor injected into the antiphons in the form of

HALLENIUS, page 13

In Times of Sorrow and Joy, the Truth Remains: We're Made for Community

Two and a half years after the pandemic began, the majority of us are just starting to regain the normalcy of what it means to be in community. Masks no longer cover faces, plastic barriers have been removed, gatherings are once again in person, conversations can be held face-to-face rather than square-to-square.

And how we missed it.

Is there anything better than sitting in the same room with friends, holding one another's babies? Or gathering together to celebrate the accomplishments of a co-worker? Or celebrating life's milestones or annual holidays in the company of those we love? We were created as the children of a loving Father, made to be in relationship with one another. We need our communities.

This was brought into sharp view in Charlottesville, Virginia, in the aftermath of the shooting tragedy that took the lives of three young football players on the campus of the University of Virginia the week before Thanksgiving. As in the case of so many other appalling shootings that have most unfortunately become the norm throughout American society, the community in Charlottesville rallied — along



GUEST COMMENTARY

GRETCHEN CROWE

with it, the community of Catholics on campus.

In an interview with Catholic News Service, Dominican Father Joseph-Anthony Kress, Chaplain of the Catholic Campus Ministry at UVA, spoke of the "tremendous amounts of grief," along with anger, that students were processing. And he shared how they found solace in the company of each other — in their community.

"You (see how) they have come together to support each other, to love each other, to grieve together as a community, to check in on each other," he told CNS. "And you can sense a tremendous amount of pride ... in being able to witness to their strength together in that."

But how they came together also mattered. Nearly 400

CROWE, page 13

Turn to God in Humility



THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

MSGR. OWEN F. CAMPION

Second Sunday of Advent Matthew 3:1-12

Once again, the Book of Isaiah provides the first reading.

This weekend's reading is in the same mood as that of last week. Isaiah was very unhappy with the turn of events of his time. As was so often the case with the ancient Hebrew prophets, Isaiah saw the misfortunes facing his people as the result of their own disloyalty to God.

While direct and uncompromising, however, his words were not menacing or hostile. Rather, they were reassuring. They declared the prophet's firm belief that despite the sins

of the people, God would not forsake them. Furthermore, in due time, God's holy will would be vindicated. Wrongs would be righted. Errors would be corrected. Justice and peace would prevail.

St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans supplies the second reading this weekend.

In this reading, the Apostle Paul repeats the basic message given earlier by Isaiah. It is a testimony to God's love. Throughout history, St. Paul maintains, God guided the chosen people to righteousness and ultimately to union with the divine. Paul describes God as the source of all patience and encouragement. Despite human failings, God is constant in love and care.

The Apostle also counsels the Christian Romans to accept each other in love and good will. After all, he insists, Christ accepted them. Indeed, Christ was a visible and effective instrument on earth of God's mercy and goodness.

For its third reading, the Church this weekend offers us

a reading from the Gospel of Matthew. The central figure is John the Baptist, mentioned in Luke as the child of Elizabeth and Zachary. Elizabeth of course was the "kinswoman", probably a cousin, of Mary. Therefore, John himself was related to Jesus.

From the earliest days of Christianity, John the Baptist has been a favorite figure. His absolute commitment to the most basic dedication to God has made him a model for the devout since the first century.

By journeying to the place where he encountered Pharisees and Sadducees, religious experts but surely not his admirers, John showed that he was on a mission — to prepare the way for Jesus. Travel in ancient Palestine was understandably rare. It was undertaken with a purpose in mind.

John never sugarcoated the failings of people or the stubbornness of some in his demands that the people reform. In this reading, he chastises his listeners, in effect, for their pride and self-interest. Their lack

of true devotion to God only strengthens and protracts the reign of sin in the land. Thus, their personal shortcomings add to the burdens weighing heavily upon the entire society.

He challenges the people to purge themselves of self-interest and humbly to turn to God.

Reflection

As we progress through Advent, the Church calls us to make ourselves worthy of receiving God. Advent's purpose is not just to plan for a memorial of Christ's birth. It is primarily to make our hearts fitting dwelling places for the Lord. To be fitting dwelling places we must rid ourselves of our sins.

This may not be easy. Advent calls us to firm resolve in confronting our own sins and turning from sin. As an example, John himself was determined and direct, honest and frank, completely committed to God.

To realize our personal sinfulness and the sinfulness of the world, we too must be reso-

lute, making no excuses. We must be frank with ourselves, hard as it is. Frankness comes only in humility.

Placing John the Baptist before us, the Church urges us to face facts and to put first things first. Our goal must be union with God. Following self-interests and self-deception leads away from God.

God will empower us. God will be our strength and guide. He loves us and forgives us.

READINGS

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

Monday: Is 35:1-10 Ps 85:9-14 Lk 5:17-26

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

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

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

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

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

The King of Thieves

Jesus Christ is King of Thieves, though He never stole. He is savior of sinners, though He never sinned.

In Luke's Passion narrative, Christ reins from the cross. Nothing could be more paradoxical. Let's look at it from four perspectives:

Vision – Luke presents a vision or image of the Church. We like to think of more pleasant images: the Church is the Bride of Christ or the Body of Christ. This image is more humbling to be sure: the Church is Christ, crucified between two thieves.

Yes, this is the Church too. In a way, we are all thieves. We are all sinners and have used the gifts and things that belong to God in a way contrary to His will. To misuse things that belong to others is a form of theft.

Consider some of the things we claim as our own and how easily we misuse them: our bodies, our time, our talents, our money, the gift of our speech, and the gift of our freedom. We call them ours but they really belong to God, and if we use them in ways contrary to His intention we are guilty of a form of theft.

Variance – Consider, also, that the two thieves were very different. In the Church we have saints and sinners, and in the world, there are those who will turn to Christ and be saved and others who will turn away and be lost.

One thief (the “bad thief”) derides Jesus and makes demands of Him. “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!” The text says that this thief “reviles” Jesus, treating him with contempt.

The other thief (the “good thief”) reverences Christ and rebukes the other, saying, “Have you no fear of God?” The good thief recognizes his guilt: “We have been condemned justly.” He asks, “Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom”, but he leaves the terms of it up to Christ. He acknowledges that he is a thief and

now places his life under the authority of Christ the King.

Christ came to call sinners — thieves, if you will. Yes, we are all thieves, but pray God that we are the good thief, the repentant thief, the thief who is now ready to submit himself to the authority of Christ, who is King of all creation.

Heaven is a real steal, something we don't deserve; it is only accessed through repentance and faith. The bad thief wants relief, but will not open the door of his heart so that Jesus can save him. Mercy is offered and available to him, but it is accessed only through repentance and faith. The good thief does open the door of his heart and thereby is saved.

Veracity – Is Christ really your king? A king has authority, so another way of posing this question is, “Does Christ have authority in your life?” Consider whether you acknowledge that everything you call your own really belongs to God and think about how well you use those gifts.

How do you use your time? Are you committed to prayer and to attending Mass every Sunday without fail?

Do you use enough of your time to serve God and others, or merely for selfish pursuits?

Do you use the gift of your speech to witness and evangelize, or merely for small talk and gossip?

Do you exhibit proper care for your body?

Are you chaste?

Do you observe proper safety or are you sometimes reckless?

Do you reverence life?

Are you faithful to the Lord's command to tithe?

Do you spend wisely?

Do you pay your debts in a timely way?

Are you generous enough to the poor and needy?

Do you love the poor and help them to sustain their lives?

It is one thing to call Christ our King, but it is another to be truly under His authority. The Lord is clear enough in



COMMUNITY IN MISSION

MSGR. CHARLES POPE

telling us that he expects our obedience: “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ but do not do what I tell you?” (Luke 6:46)

Is Christ your King? Which thief are you, really?

Victory – The thief who asked Jesus to remember him manifested repentance, faith, and a kind of baptism of desire. In so doing, he moved into the victor's column. Jesus's words, “Today you shall be with me in paradise”, indicate a dramatic shift in the thief's fortunes.

To be with Jesus — wherever He is — is paradise and victory. Soon enough, the heavens will be opened, but the victory is now and paradise begins now.

Thus, the good thief claims the victory through his choice for Jesus Christ. Will you have the victory? That depends on whether you choose the prince of this world or the King of the Universe, Jesus. Some think that they can tread some middle path, choosing neither Jesus nor Satan. But if you do that, you've actually chosen the prince of this world, who loves compromise. Jesus says, “Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.” (Matt 12:30)

As for me, I've decided to make Jesus my choice. I pray that He will truly be my King in all things and that my choice will be more than mere lip service. Come, Jesus, reign in my heart. Let me begin to experience victory and paradise, even now!

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

HALLENIUS, from page 12

an obscure word game. When written out, the first letter of the Latin-language Messianic titles in the antiphons spell out (in reverse) the words “ERO CRAS.” In English, that means, “I am coming tomorrow.” This hidden message from the anonymous composer of the antiphons is a source of joy and hope to those of us who await the Lord's arrival at Christmas.

In our homes, too, we prepare the way of the Lord in Advent, typically by decking the halls in anticipation and by dusting off the beloved family traditions that we associate

with the Christmas feast. Music, foods, movies, and parties all contribute to the joy of the season. And it may be that not every one of these favorite holiday traditions is directly related to the faith, but perhaps their primary purpose is to create joy, which is, after all, one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. In my family, for example, we like to have a ritual viewing of the film “Christmas Vacation”, drinking glasses of eggnog while competitively quoting the movie script. Other families may head out to the woods in the old front-wheel-drive sleigh to select that most important of holiday symbols, the Griswold family Christmas tree, while still

others look forward to enjoying favorite cookies and treats that come but once a year.

However you prepare, may this Advent season be for you and your family a season of joyful anticipation of the coming of the One for whom the world awaits, the One through whom and for whom everything in heaven and on earth was created, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Happy New Year! Joy to the world!

Ken Hallenius is a syndicated radio host and podcaster living in South Bend. For more, visit blog.hallenius.org.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH®

Gospel for December 4, 2022

Matthew 3:1-12

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

BAPTIST	JUDEA	AT HAND
PROPHET	A VOICE	PREPARE
THE WAY	PATHS	BREAD
TO FLEE	FRUIT	ABRAHAM
CHILDREN	TREES	CUT DOWN
FIRE	WATER	REPENTANCE
SANDALS	WHEAT	BURN

AT HAND

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E C N A T N E P E R E W
T E H P O R P O H C E H
A N A I J D E R I F R E
E A B A L W K O I L T A
E N U L N D V E L M N T
L P R E P A R E Y A W S
F B N D E E E E J H O I
O H C D E R T L N A D T
T I U R F B A C C R T P
K J K T H E W A Y B U A
B B U T D N A H T A C B
    
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CROWE, from page 12

people, most of whom were undergrads, attended a requiem Mass. In addition to time to worship together, they had time for conversation and private prayer, including adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Older students were investing in time with younger, and campus ministry staff were available to minister to the community.

“We had this huge outpouring of students coming together, allowing this church to be a place of healing and coming together as a community of prayer, and even an opportunity to grieve together,” Father Kress told CNS.

I couldn't help but think back to Sept. 11, 2001, when the community on my own college campus rallied on that awful night. A sophomore, I was at that point only tangentially involved in the campus ministry. Yet I was drawn, as were hundreds of my fellow students, to community — to being together in this time of fear, uncertainty, and deep, deep sorrow. We prayed together, wept together, and shared our own stories of how we had been affected by the terrible events. It was an opportunity to stand as one, holding each other up.

We all have these stories, don't we? We all have those times when we need one another — simply to be in the presence of others, to share in our suffering, and to grow together. We all need community.

In this time of Advent, as we approach the celebration of Christ's nativity, perhaps we could be mindful about those who might not have communities. Who are those that we haven't seen back at Mass since 2020? Who are those who live alone? Who are those who might be sick or suffering in their own ways? Who are those left to navigate tragedy on their own? It's easy to get caught up in ourselves — especially at this time of year. Let's look outward. Let's bring others to community.

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Our Lady of Guadalupe to Be Celebrated Across Diocese

The feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe, patroness of the Americas, will be observed in several parishes in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend between now and Dec. 12. All are invited to participate in the liturgies, Mañanitas (traditional song), and activities at the parishes listed below.

Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, Warsaw

3 de diciembre

5:30 p.m.: Misa seguido por rosario y despues convivio; Nivel de comunion y puebla

4 de diciembre

6 p.m.: Misa seguido por rosario y despues convivio; Nivel comunion y guajuato

5 de diciembre

5:30 p.m.: Misa seguido por rosario y despues convivio; Nivel confirmacion y aguascalientes

6 de diciembre

5:30 p.m.: Misa seguido por rosario y despues convivio; Nivel confirmacion, Distrito Federal y San Luis Potosi

7 de diciembre

5:30 p.m.: Misa seguido por rosario y despues convivio; Coros y de Jalisco

8 de diciembre

5:30 p.m.: Misa seguido por rosario y despues convivio; Ujieres y de cuahila

9 de diciembre

5:30 p.m.: Misa seguido por rosario y despues convivio; Proclamadores, de Guatemala y Centroamerica

10 de diciembre

5:30 p.m.: Misa seguido por rosario y despues convivio; Ministros, de Colima y los que faltaron

11 de diciembre

6 p.m.: Misa seguido por rosario y despues convivio; Grupo Guadalupeano

9 p.m.: Danza; 10 p.m.: Rosario; 11 p.m.: Misa; 12 a.m.: Mañanitas terminando con convivio

12 de diciembre

5:30 p.m.: Misa seguido por rosario y despues convivio; Comunitario

Santo Domingo, Bremen

12 de diciembre

4 a.m.: Oraciones y alabanzas por la madrugada
4 p.m.: Mañanitas y Alabanzas

5 p.m.: Misa

* una fiesta después de Misa en el salón

San Patricio, Fort Wayne

12 de diciembre

5 a.m.: Mañanitas y después chocolate y pan dulce

San José, Fort Wayne

3 al 11 de diciembre

6 p.m.: Novena en el templo

12 de diciembre

5:30 a.m.: Mañanitas en el templo seguido por champurrado y pan dulce en el Gathering Room

12 de diciembre

6 p.m.: Apariciones en el templo seguido por Misa y terminando una cena en el gimnasio

San Adalberto, South Bend

11 de diciembre

6 p.m.: Las 7 apariciones de la Virgen en la cafetería de la escuela

11 p.m.: El Santo Rosario presentado por La Sociedad Guadalupana

12 a.m.: Misa

12 de diciembre

5 p.m.: La Presentación de los Matachines

5:30 p.m.: Las Mañanitas con el mariachi Juvenil de Chicago

6 p.m.: Misa; Recepción Inmediatamente después de la misa en la cafetería de la escuela

San Antonio, Angola

12 de diciembre

5 a.m.: Mañanitas

4 p.m.: Procesión

5 p.m.: Misa Solemne y cena después

San José, LaGrange

12 de diciembre

5 a.m.: Mañanitas

5 p.m.: Misa Solemne

6:15 p.m.: las Apariciones y después chocolate y pan dulce.

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.

Lighting of the Lake and Living Nativity

FORT WAYNE — The blessing of luminaries will take place at 6 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 4, at Mirror Lake, 2701 Spring St. Following the blessing, members of the University of Saint Francis community will portray a Living Nativity. This special event honors the Christmas crèche tradition begun by St. Francis in 1223, which reenacts the birth of Christ. End the evening with complimentary cookies and hot cocoa at Achatz Hall of Science and John and Toni Murray Research Center. To place a luminary order, contact Willie Romero at jromero@sf.edu or 260-399-8033.

An Evening of Hope and Healing for Those in a Season of Infertility

NOTRE DAME — If you are in a season of infertility, An Evening of Hope and Healing will be held on Thursday, Dec. 8, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, at the Sacred Heart Parish Center at Notre Dame. Begin with Mass in the chapel at 7 p.m., followed by time to pray silently, to be prayed over by members of the prayer ministry team, or to speak with someone and

be prayed over in private. The evening will end with fellowship and refreshments in the parish center dining room. Sponsored by Marriage & Family Ministry. Contact Lisa Everett at leverett@diocese-fwsb.org for information.

Breakfast with St. Nick

SOUTH BEND — St. Patrick Parish, 312 S. Scott St., will host a breakfast of pancakes, sausage, and eggs with gifts for children and a visit with St. Nick on Sunday, Dec. 11, from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in the gym. Cost is \$6 for children, \$12 adults, and \$30 for large families. Visit www.stpatricksb.org or contact Paul Rumbak at 574-287-2270 or niswonger-pg1963@yahoo.com.

Cupertino Classic

SOUTH BEND — The annual Cupertino Classic priests vs seminarians basketball game will take place on Tuesday, Dec. 27, at Saint Joseph High School, 453 N. Notre Dame Ave. The game starts at 6:30 p.m. Join us for this great night of Catholic fellowship to encounter vocations and enjoy the game! All are invited to this free family-friendly event.

Please pray for continued vocations to the priesthood. For more information, visit diocese-fwsb.org/cupertino.

Polish Dinner

SOUTH BEND — A drive-thru Polish dinner will be held on Sunday, Dec. 4, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Hedwig Memorial Center, 331 S. Scott St. Meal includes 1/2 a chicken, sausage, green beans, mashed potatoes, cabbage, and noodles. Tickets can be purchased for \$18 at the parish office or after the 4 p.m. Saturday Mass at St. Hedwig. Deadline to purchase tickets is Monday, Nov. 28. Contact Bob Ullery at 574-298-8122 or robertoullery@yahoo.com for information.

Elkhart County Churches Present Advent Lessons and Carols

ELKHART — Gather Monday, Dec. 5, at 7 p.m. at St. Vincent de Paul Parish, 1108 S Main St., for seasonal music presented collaboratively by the music ministries of St. John the Evangelist, Goshen, St. Mary of the Annunciation, Bristol, and St. Vincent de Paul, Elkhart. Contact Brad Todorovich at music@svcelkhart.org for information. Admission is free!

REST IN PEACE

Granger

Rosemary Dunlap, 89, St. Pius X

Ron Erichsen, 85, St. Pius X

Dean Johnson, 86, St. Pius X

Larry Zilm, 86, St. Pius X

Fort Wayne

Richard Wade, 85, Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception

Rob VanCleave, 68, Cathedral of Immaculate Conception

Alicia Eaton, 39, St. Charles Borromeo

Billie Pierre, 76, St. Charles Borromeo

Huntington

Sister Elizabeth Anderson, OLVIM, 88, Victory Noll

South Bend

Jean Samolczyk, 62, St. Adalbert

Selma B. Staszewski, 96, St. John the Baptist

Warsaw

Jane F. Kubik-Haney, 82, Sacred Heart

SUBMIT EVENTS at TodaysCatholic.org/event

St. Michael's Altar Rosary Cookie Walk

PLYMOUTH — An assortment of homemade cookies will be for sale for \$4 per pound on Saturday, Dec. 10, from 8 am. to noon at St. Michael's School

Cafeteria, 612 N Center St. All proceeds support St. Michael's Altar Rosary Society. Contact Chris Morrow at 574-540-9686 or chris@morrowinsurance-agency.com.

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish seeks a Full-Time Facilities Manager

(Beginning in May of 2023)

The Facilities Manager at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish/school in Fort Wayne is responsible for maintaining the parish/school and school buildings and grounds. The Facilities Manager performs and supervises tasks related to HVAC, electrical, plumbing, security, environmental, safety, custodial, and event coordination. This position requires a team player attitude, excellent interpersonal and communication skills, attention to details, and project coordination.

The candidate: Must have good interpersonal skills and familiarity with the Church as an organization.

Must have knowledge of the Catholic Faith and be a participating Catholic in good standing with the Church.

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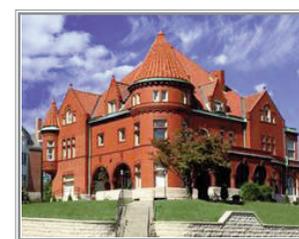
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IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, from page 1

now Mary is the “new Mother of all the living,” that is, of all who receive new, supernatural life from Jesus, her Son.

The ongoing reflection on the person of Mary, deeply shaped by devotion and piety, helped the Church to articulate four dogmas: her divine motherhood (her identity as “Theotokos”), her perpetual virginity, her bodily assumption at the end of her life, and her status as immaculately conceived and thus without sin.

Marian dogmas, while beautiful in themselves and worthy of wonder and meditation, always point us as well to the saving work of her Son, apart from whom they would have no meaning. The earliest dogmatic dispute involving claims about Mary was resolved at the Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D., and the debate was as much about the person of Christ as it was about his mother. Some, thinking themselves theologically more sophisticated, thought the language of Theotokos, “Mother of God,” an overreach and misleadingly dangerous, and instead suggested that more properly she should be called Christotokos, “Mother of the Christ.” While Nestorius claimed that: “Strictly speaking, Mary cannot be the ‘Mother of God,’” St. Cyril of Alexandria, champion of the more traditional title rooted in the devotional and liturgical life of the Church, replied with, “if Mary is not, strictly speaking, the ‘Mother of God,’ then the one to whom she gave birth is not, strictly speaking, God,” reducing to absurdity Nestorius’s claim.

The title Theotokos is itself a sign that the Son of God truly became man and that the human nature he assumed is taken from the very person of his mother, Mary. It is most moving to consider the likely possibility that as a small child Jesus heard more than once “you have your mother’s eyes,” or “you take after your mother.”

The dogma of the Assumption, for example, reveals to us the life of glory to which we are called, and this glory must always be associated with the glory of Mary’s Risen Son. Mary experiences now what we all hope to experience – an embodied and glorified union with God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This mystery also reveals that we are created not as souls imprisoned in bodies or with an aim to escape bodily existence, but rather that we are created and redeemed, both body and soul. Mary, now in glory, experiences this – and she is a pattern for each believer in our ultimate perfection just as much as she is a pattern or type of the Church in the fullness of its own perfection.

The dogma of Mary’s Assumption is itself rooted in her Immaculate Conception: That from the first moment of her conception in the womb of her mother, Anne, Mary was preserved from the stain of original sin. Mary was taken bodily to heaven at the end of her earthly existence

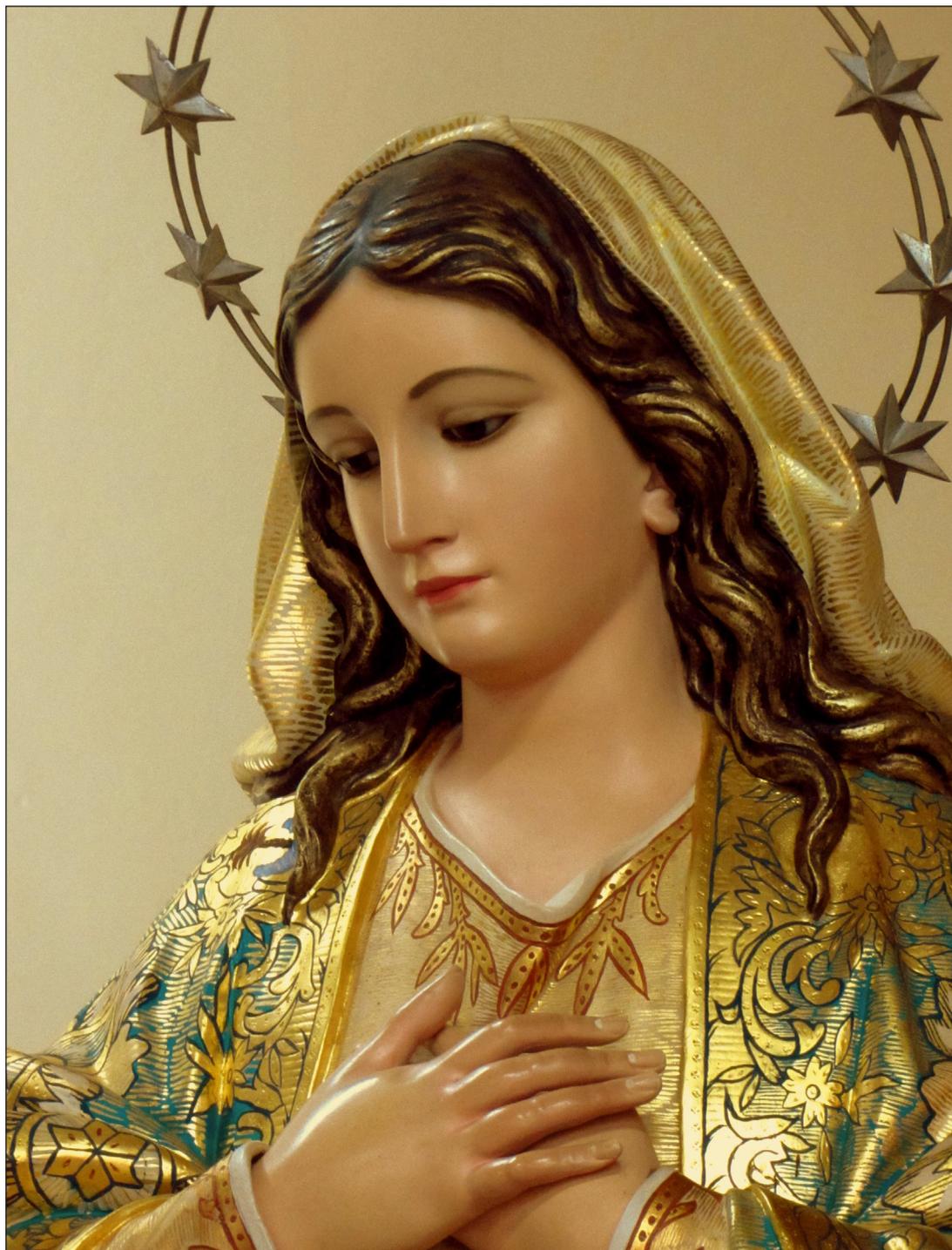
and shares fully in the redeeming work of her Son. Neither her Assumption nor her Immaculate Conception was something she achieved by any kind of personal effort or merit apart from Christ. Recall that Mary was greeted by Gabriel with the title, “full of grace” (kecharitōmenē in the Greek of the New Testament); pious reflection on this assisted the Church in “unpacking” its full significance.

The Church makes clear that her freedom from original and personal sin is the fruit of her benefitting from the saving work of the Son she was to bear. As the Collect (Opening Prayer) for the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception succinctly puts it: “you preserved her from every stain by virtue of the Death of your Son, which you foresaw...” Mary was redeemed by her own Son — God is not subject to time as we are, so the Son whom she was to bear is the cause of her freedom from sin. There is no other source of her immaculate status. What this mystery reveals to us is that there is no other Savior apart from Jesus, that Mary was saved by her own Son’s work, and, further, that Jesus wants to share His risen life with us. The dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption are thus integrally, organically related. It was because of Jesus and His saving death that His own mother was to remain sinless and so to share in that risen and glorified life.

The Fourth Gospel draws out Mary’s participation in the work of her Son, at the beginning of His earthly ministry to the final moments of His life, from the wedding at Cana to her presence at the foot of the cross, where the Beloved Disciple (a type or figure of every disciple) is entrusted to her care and she to his; Mary here is clearly also a type or figure of the Church, which gazes upon her Lord in the glory of His sacrifice. And it is from this sacrifice on the cross that the Church draws its very life and identity. It is in fact on the Cross that “the wedding feast of the Lamb has begun and his bride has made herself ready” (Revelation 19.7).

We are blessed as a nation to have Mary, the Immaculate Conception, as our patroness, and doubly blessed as a diocese to pray, live, and work under her protection as patroness. Our own Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Fort Wayne was consecrated under the patronage of Mary the Immaculate Conception on Dec. 18, 1860, just six years after the formal definition of the dogma by Pius IX, and two years after a young woman named Bernadette recorded visions of a woman who, when asked her identity, replied “I am the Immaculate Conception.”

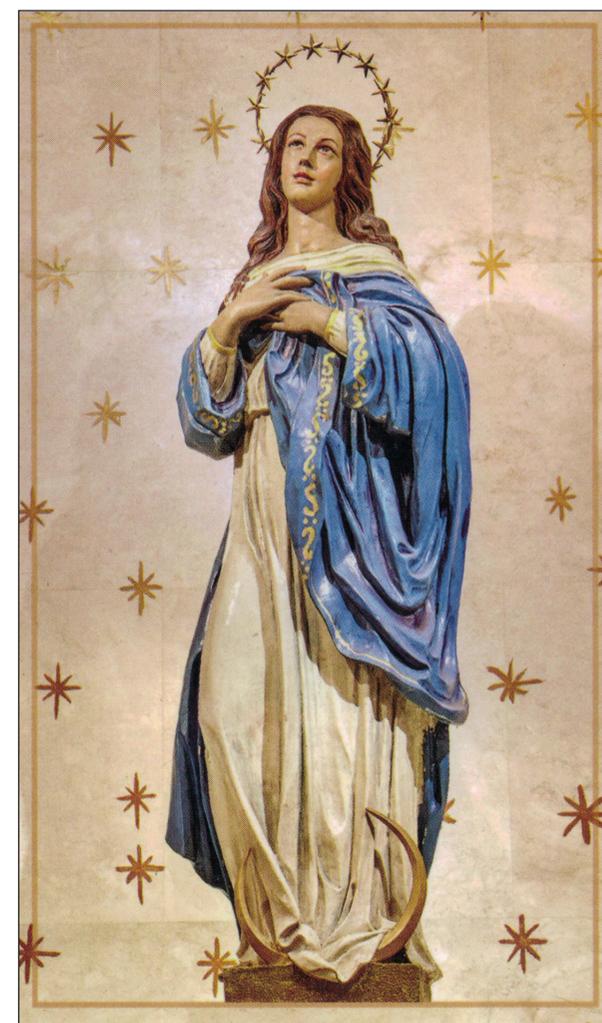
Perhaps this coming year of grace, 2023, will be an opportune time for individuals and parishes in our diocese to organize visits to the cathedral, to pray in our mother church under the patronage of the Mother of the Church.



Catholic



Today's Catholic file photo



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