

# TODAY'S CATHOLIC

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## Father Robert Dowd Named New President of Notre Dame

BY GINA CHRISTIAN

(OSV News) – The University of Notre Dame has selected a new president who said he hopes to position the school as an “ever-greater engine of insight, innovation, and impact.”

Members of the Catholic university’s Board of Trustees announced on Monday, December 4, that Holy Cross Father Robert A. Dowd has been named Notre Dame’s 18th president, effective July 1.

Father Dowd – an alumnus of Notre Dame and an Indiana native himself – has since 2021 served as the school’s Vice President and Associate Provost for Interdisciplinary Initiatives. He also is an associate professor of political science, a university fellow and trustee, and religious superior of the Holy Cross community at Notre Dame.

Father Dowd will succeed fellow Holy Cross priest Father John I. Jenkins, who said in October that he had decided to step down at the end of the 2023-24 academic year after serving as president for 19 years – a tenure that was marked by both significant advances in the school’s development and occasional controversy.

Father Jenkins described his successor as “an accomplished scholar, a dedicated teacher, and



Holy Cross Father Robert Dowd, pictured in a December 3 photo, has been named the 18th president of the University of Notre Dame, effective July 1, 2024.

an experienced administrator,” as well as “a faithful and generous priest.”

“He will lead the university to being even more powerfully a force for good in the world,” said Father Jenkins in the announcement.

Jack Brennan, Chair of Notre Dame’s Board of Trustees, said in the December 4 statement that Father Dowd was “an ideal

person to lead the university into the future” given “his character and intellect ... broad academic and administrative experience,” and “deep commitment” to Notre Dame.

Father Dowd said in the statement that he was “deeply humbled and honored by the board’s decision,” as well as “grateful for Father Jenkins’ selfless and courageous leader-

ship for almost two decades,” which “positioned the university extremely well in every way.”

“We will build on those efforts,” said Father Dowd in the statement. “Informed by our Catholic mission, we will work together so that Notre Dame is an ever-greater engine of insight,

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**PRESIDENT, from page 1**

innovation, and impact, addressing society's greatest challenges and helping young people to realize their potential for good."

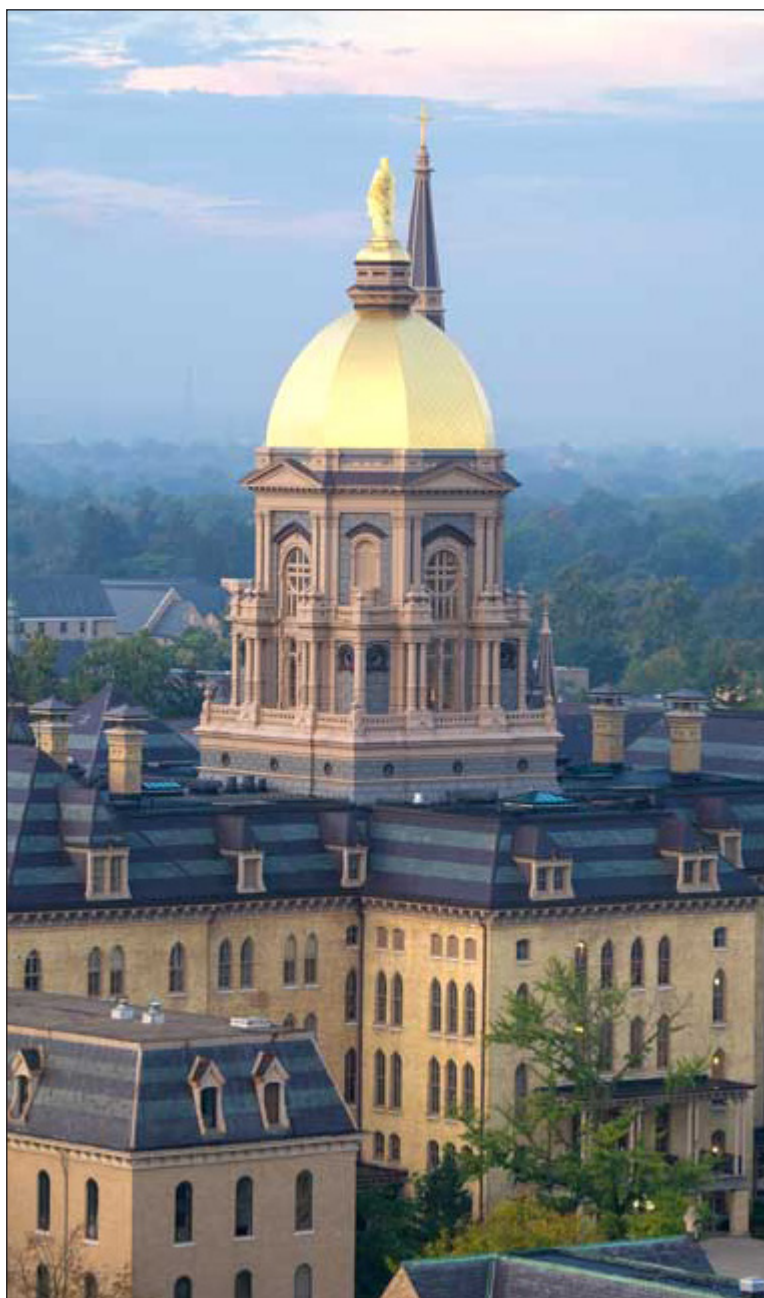
Father Dowd graduated from Notre Dame in 1987 with a bachelor's degree in psychology and economics, and entered Moreau Seminary – the major seminary for the Congregation of the Holy Cross – shortly thereafter. Following his 1994 ordination, he worked in campus ministry at Notre Dame, serving as Associate Rector of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart and as an assistant rector in one of the university's residence halls.

Having served in east Africa for 18 months while in seminary, Father Dowd earned a master's degree in African studies in 1998 and a doctorate in political science in 2003 from the University of California, Los Angeles.

He joined Notre Dame's political science faculty in 2004, with his research focusing on how Christian and Islamic religious communities impact support for democratic institutions, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.

In his 2015 book "Christianity, Islam, and Liberal Democracy: Lessons from Sub-Saharan Africa," published by Oxford University Press, Father Dowd stated his research found that "religious diversity has prompted religiously inspired support for a liberal democratic political culture," one "characterized by social tolerance and civic engagement" – a conclusion that countered other analysts' claims that religious diversity was an obstacle to liberal democracy in developing nations.

Along with his research and current roles in Notre Dame's executive administration, Father Dowd oversees several entities at the school, including the Center for Social Concerns, DeBartolo Performing Arts



The golden dome of the Administration Building contains the offices of the University of Notre Dame.

Center, the Fitzgerald Institute for Real Estate, iNdustry Labs, the Institute for Educational Initiatives, the Lucy Family Institute for Data and Society, the McGrath Institute for Church Life, the Notre Dame Technology Ethics Center, the school's Office of Military and Veterans Affairs and ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps) programs, and the

Raclin Murphy Museum of Art.

Notre Dame's presidents are chosen by trustees from among the priests of the Congregation of the Holy Cross, which founded the school in 1842. The school's governance was transferred in 1967 from the congregation to a two-tiered board of lay and religious trustees and fellows.

Under Father Jenkins' lead-

ership, Notre Dame saw significant growth and expansion, particularly in its research initiatives, global engagement, student diversity, and financial resources. The school was admitted this year to the Association of American Universities, which represents the nation's leading research universities. In addition, Notre Dame enjoys partnerships with a number of schools throughout the nation and the world.

At the same time, Father Jenkins faced criticism at points during his tenure. Following a lawsuit filed by the university, he applauded a 2017 Trump administration expansion of the religious freedom exemption from a 2012 U.S. Health and Human Services mandate requiring most employers to include contraceptives, abortifacients, and sterilizations in their employee health plans. However, Father Jenkins opted to allow third-party administrators to provide such coverage, saying the "university's interest has never been in preventing access to those who make conscientious decisions to use contraceptives," but was rather "to avoid being compelled by the federal government to be the agent in their provision."

In 2016, Father Jenkins decided to honor then-Vice President Joe Biden, a Catholic who supports legal abortion, with the Laetare Medal – the oldest and most prestigious award for American Catholics. The decision was rebuked by Bishop Rhoades, who said in a lengthy statement that it was "wrong for Notre Dame to honor any 'pro-choice' public official with the Laetare Medal."

Similarly, a 2009 commencement address by President Barack Obama, part of the university's custom of having U.S. presidents speak while in office at the school graduation, sparked backlash.

*Gina Christian is a National Reporter for OSV News.*

## Pope: Humanity Must Build Alliances Supporting Peace, Creation

BY CAROL GLATZ

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – The world needs people to build alliances that are not against others but are in favor of everyone, Pope Francis told faith leaders at the U.N. Climate Change Conference being held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

"It is important that religions, without falling into the trap of syncretism, set a good example by working together: not for their own interests or those of one party, but for the interests of our world. Among these, the most important nowadays are peace and the climate," he said in a video message.

"As religious representatives, let us set an example to show that change is possible and bear witness to respectful and sustainable lifestyles," he said, speaking in Spanish at the Vatican.

The pope's message was broadcast on Sunday, December 3, during the inauguration of the first Faith Pavilion at a U.N. climate conference. The pope was scheduled to attend the COP28 conference, held December 1-3, but canceled his trip on Tuesday, November 28, because of severe bronchitis.

"I offer you cordial greetings, and I am very sorry that I cannot be with you," he said in the video message.

He thanked the organizers for establishing a religious pavilion as part of the conference, "because this testifies to the willingness to work together."

"At the present time the world needs alliances that are not against someone, but in favor of everyone," he said.

"With a loud voice, let us implore leaders of nations that our common home be preserved," he said. "Let us safeguard creation and protect our common home; let us live in peace and promote peace!"

The pope also had a longer speech prepared for the inauguration and that was read in Dubai by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican Secretary of

State and president of the Vatican's delegation at the climate conference.

The pope wrote in his talk, "the problem of climate change is also a religious problem: Its roots lie in the creature's presumption of self-sufficiency."

"That insatiable desire for power wells up whenever we consider ourselves lords of the world, whenever we live as though God did not exist and, as a result, end up prey to passing things," he wrote.

Religions are "voices of conscience for humanity," he wrote, and remind people that "we are finite creatures" with a need for the infinite and the duty to care for creation.



# From Addiction to Conversion, St. Charles Borromeo Parishioner Shares His Faith Journey

BY SCOTT WARDEN

For many in the crowd at St. Charles Borromeo Church in Fort Wayne, Caleb Perkins didn't need an introduction – it's his home parish, after all – but Father Tom Shoemaker gave him a rousing one anyway.

"He came to St. Charles roughly three years ago and said, 'I think I want to be a Catholic.' As I started talking to him, he knew all about St. Justin Martyr, he knew all about St. Ignatius of Antioch, he'd been reading the great works of the Church," Father Shoemaker said of Perkins. "It wasn't your typical, 'I want to be a Catholic' kind of a story."

Those in attendance on Thursday, November 16, quickly came to learn that nothing about Perkins' story is typical – from his upbringing in various Christian churches to his challenging relationship with his father, his drug addiction and eventual recovery, and how his search to find the truth about Christianity led him not only to St. Charles and Father Shoemaker but, eventually, across the globe to share his testimony with 800,000 pilgrims at World Youth Day in Portugal and a face-to-face meeting with Pope Francis.

Perkins began the evening by telling a story from this past summer at World Youth Day, for which he was chosen to give the only English-language testimony at the Stations of the Cross event. Perkins, his wife, Natali, and others were walking back to their hotel after an evening of Eucharistic adoration led by Bishop Robert Barron of Winona-Rochester, Minnesota, who is the founder of the digital media apostolate Word on Fire. Perkins said he walked past a stranger sitting on a park bench, "and I felt like the Lord was telling me, 'You need to go talk to him.'" Perkins asked the man if he could pray for him – pray with him. "His name was Henry," Perkins said, "and I asked him, 'Do you know Jesus?'" Henry told Perkins that he was baptized and raised Catholic but had abandoned the faith. Perkins urged Henry to pray with him and make God "the Lord of your life." Perkins said, "He sits there for a second, and he's like, 'You know, if I would pray that prayer, I would be very dishonest.'"

The conversation with Henry inspired Perkins to a moment of self-reflection on the night before he would meet Pope Francis and nearly a mil-



Photos by Scott Warden

Caleb Perkins shares his conversion story at St. Charles Borromeo Church in Fort Wayne on Thursday, November 16.



lion people would hear his testimony. "I'm sitting here, and as I'm thinking about what he just said, it made me think back to my life. Henry wasn't compelled enough yet to surrender his life, but it made me think of my life – how long it took me to be so compelled to give my life over to Jesus."

Perkins told the crowd that he grew up with a father who "really did not know his identity or his worth as a beloved son of God. ... Most of what I remember with him was a lot of yelling and screaming, a lot of bitterness, a lot of hatred, a lot of anger, rage." It all boiled over one day during his senior year of high school. "I remember the day like it was yesterday," he said. "It was January of 2012. ... I wake up one morning and my dad and I were going at it, and it ended poorly. I drove to school, and I got called to the office later

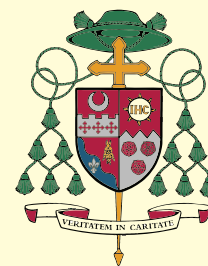
that day, and my mom was on the phone, and she said, 'Get your brothers, we're leaving.' And for about two weeks, we were on the run from my dad. We had to hide, because we weren't sure what was going to happen."

Wanting to make her marriage work, his mom moved herself and her other sons back in with her husband, but Perkins chose to live with his grandparents instead – a decision he called "very healing." Eventually, Perkins said, he returned home after "caving" to his dad's pressure, but it didn't last. Perkins said after about a week and a half, "I couldn't handle it. I told my mom, I said, 'I'm about ready to kill myself. I can't stay here.' So I packed up my stuff in the middle of the night and left." He said toward the end of his senior year of high school, he was "battling with depression and struggling with self-harm" in the form of cutting himself. "It was bad."

Perkins said his parents' divorce further eroded his already deteriorating mental health. "It sent me down a spiral," he said.

He got involved with drugs, and for a couple of years, he hung out with a crowd "where at any point I probably could have gotten shot." Around 2014, Perkins said, he was at such a low point that he considered taking even harder drugs, "because, at that point, it didn't feel like I really had a purpose in life. ... I was ready to be done. I had no desire to live."

PERKINS, page 14



## Public schedule of Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades

Tuesday, December 12: 6 p.m. – Mass and Mexican Fiesta, Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, St. Adalbert Church, South Bend  
Thursday, December 14: Noon – Meeting of Board of Directors of Catholic Community Foundation of Northeast Indiana, Archbishop Noll Center, Fort Wayne  
Friday, December 15: 9:30 a.m. – Presentation to Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters, Victory Noll, Huntington  
Friday, December 15: 11 a.m. – Mass with Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters, Archbishop Noll Memorial Chapel at Victory Noll, Huntington  
Saturday, December 16: 9 a.m. – Mass and Breakfast with Fort Wayne District of St. Vincent de Paul Society, Queen of Angels Church, Fort Wayne  
Sunday, December 17: 11:15 a.m. – Mass and Social with World Youth Day Pilgrims, Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, Warsaw



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## Parishes are Listed in Order by Date

### DECEMBER

Immaculate Conception, Ege: December 7-8

### 2024

#### JANUARY

St. John Bosco, Churubusco: January 29-31

#### FEBRUARY

St. Joseph, Garrett: February 11-13  
Immaculate Conception, Auburn: February 18-20  
St. Charles Borromeo, Fort Wayne: February 25-27

#### MARCH

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Fort Wayne: March 3-5  
St. Casimir, South Bend: March 3-5  
St. Joseph, Garrett: March 3-5  
St. Joseph, Fort Wayne: March 10-12  
St. Joseph, South Bend: March 17-19  
St. Joseph, Mishawaka: March 17-19  
St. John the Evangelist, Goshen: March 17-19  
Queen of Angels, Fort Wayne: March 17-19

#### APRIL

St. Vincent de Paul, Fort Wayne: April 14-16  
Blessed Sacrament, Albion: April 14-16  
Our Lady of Good Hope, Fort Wayne: Apr 21-23  
St. Adalbert, South Bend: April 21-23  
St. Robert Bellarmine, North Manchester: April 21-23  
Sacred Heart, Notre Dame: April 28-30

For the complete schedule, visit [diocesefwsb.org/eucharist](http://diocesefwsb.org/eucharist).



# Priest Helps Bring Mother Cabrini to Life on Big Screen

BY JOE JORDAN

HOBOKEN, New Jersey (OSV News) – For the past decade, Monsignor Paul Bochicchio of St. Francis Church in Hoboken has been advising as a spiritual consultant on the upcoming film “Cabrini,” produced by Angel Studios about the life and ministry of St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, which is set to debut in theaters in March of 2024.

The highly anticipated movie, from the studio that produced “The Chosen” and “Sound of Freedom,” gives a dramatic look into the life of Mother Cabrini, as she is best known, and the uphill battle she faced ministering to the immigrant poor of New York.

For Monsignor Bochicchio, a priest of 52 years, the film is the latest fruit of a lifelong devotion to the first American saint, who has impacted his family for generations.

His account begins with a story passed down within his family. His great-grandmother knew Mother Cabrini personally, as they were both community leaders among New York Italian immigrants at the turn of the 20th century.

He recalls how, when Mother Cabrini, herself an immigrant from Italy, was just beginning her ministry and working to open a school in the city for Italians, his great-grandmother helped her develop religious education classes and sewing classes for young immigrant women.



Monsignor Paul Bochicchio, a priest in residence at St. Francis Church in Hoboken, New Jersey, is pictured in an undated photo with Cristiana Dell'Anna, who plays Mother Cabrini in the upcoming film “Cabrini,” produced by Angel Studios about the life and ministry of St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, set to debut in theaters in March of 2024.

So, when Monsignor Bochicchio thinks of Mother Cabrini, he thinks of his great-grandmother, and he also thinks of his grandmother, who had an enormous influence on his vocation to the priesthood.

“I always had a great devotion to (Mother Cabrini), because a very special church

for me is Our Lady of Pompeii in Greenwich Village” in New York, he told Jersey Catholic, the online news outlet of the Archdiocese of Newark. “It was my grandmother’s parish, and she had a tremendous effect on my spirituality. After she died, I would go there. That was my way of keeping in touch with

her. And they always had a shrine in the back to Mother Cabrini, because Mother Cabrini actually worked there.”

This personal connection to a saint and what she stood for has since had an influence on his priesthood. After the death of his grandmother, Monsignor Bochicchio began reading more about Mother Cabrini. He found that he had a calling to work with Italian immigrants due to his background and that he had the perfect model in the patron saint of immigrants.

As one of many technical advisers on the set of “Cabrini,” but also as a Catholic priest, Monsignor Bochicchio accompanied the cast and crew on work retreats, where they would work on the film and he would celebrate Mass every day and give spiritual reflections on the saint. As a script adviser, he would receive every revision and be asked to comment on its accuracy.

He recalls one such retreat in Buffalo where he was supposed to celebrate Mass with the cast and crew, but a scheduling conflict meant that most of the big-name actors couldn’t attend. Instead, some Italian American men from the Buffalo area who were on set as extras heard that there was Mass and soon the tiny hotel room was filled with Italians – some of whom might well have been descendants of those Mother Cabrini once helped.

“It was the highlight of the trip,” he said.

On that same trip, Monsignor Bochicchio was

invited to play a role in the movie as a member of the Board of Directors of a hospital Mother Cabrini opened.

“We went through the scene nine times,” he said. “I remember we had no speaking part. We came into the doors, and we were supposed to look around, confer with one another and then approve (the decision for the hospital).”

While the scene was ultimately cut, he did have an impact on the film as an adviser. One example was the inclusion of the Bible passage from Philippians 4:13 – “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” – which was a favorite of Mother Cabrini’s.

“On almost every statue of her, she’s holding the Scriptures and it’s open to that quote,” Monsignor Bochicchio said. After seeing a private screening of the movie at its 90-percent completion, he noticed it was excluded from the movie. “I brought it to his (the producer’s) attention. He called me the next day and said it’s back in.”

Having seen an almost-finished product of the movie, Monsignor Bochicchio notes that while Angel Studios takes some liberties with Mother Cabrini’s story, the depiction is ultimately riveting and real. The movie highlights how she stood up to cardinals and politicians in advocacy of the poor, how she overcame a fear of drowning to bring her ministry to the world, and her great care to educate and uplift the vulnerable.

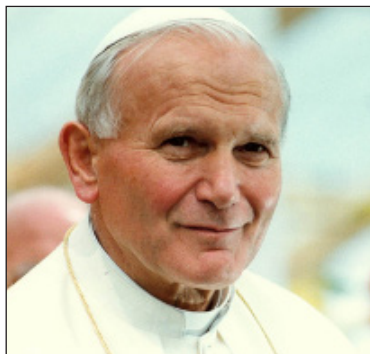
“She was not a strong woman physically; she was weak, but she was strong in spirit,” Monsignor Bochicchio said. “(The movie shows how she was) bold in a good sense of the word, where she set her mind to something and she stood up respectfully but very clearly to those who opposed her.”

He points to one real-life scene where, in response to being dismissed by a powerful figure, she says, “I am a woman. And I am Italian. And we are all human beings. We are all the same.”

The story of Mother Cabrini is particularly meaningful for what the Catholic Church and the world is facing right now, Monsignor Bochicchio said.

“I think one of the things that makes her timely, and particularly in regard to the film, is that immigration is uppermost in people’s minds today. She’s the patron of the immigrants. She’s also a great woman leader. In an age when women are trying to find their place in the Church, she could be a great guide,” he said.

*Joe Jordan is Social Media Specialist at Jersey Catholic, the online news outlet of the Archdiocese of Newark.*



## The St. John Paul II Fund for Seminarian Education

Did you know that the Catholic Community Foundation of Northeast Indiana manages the St. John Paul II Fund for Seminarian Education? This special fund was established for the purpose of providing ongoing funding for our seminarians. Investing in this fund supports our shepherds for years to come. To learn more about how to donate to this important fund, please call the foundation at 260-399-1436 or visit our website at [ccfnei.org](http://ccfnei.org). Thank you!

St. John Paul II, pray for us.

CATHOLIC COMMUNITY  
**FOUNDATION**  
OF NORTHEAST INDIANA





Photos by Georgia Lieb

# Luers Highlights Spirit of Christmas with Lessons and Carols

BY GEORGIA LIEB

When one attends the Lessons and Carols Concert at Bishop Luers High School, they should expect to be drawn in by the beautiful sacred music, Scripture readings, and artwork in the school's Chapel of St. Francis of Assisi. This annual Bishop Luers tradition is a concert revolving around nine Scripture passages and nine hymns pertaining to each passage. Each of the lessons provides a reflection on the true reason of the Christmas season, and it is a unique opportunity to hear the Bishop Luers High School Choir mixed with BLHS alumni voices.

Karlene Krouse, Chair of the school's Performing Arts Department, came up with the idea for the school to perform Lessons and Carols in 2016. She worked on this project during the fall to make Christ the focal point of the Advent and Christmas seasons, following the guidelines of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops when selecting the music and Scripture passages. Krouse directed the first concert on December 19, 2016. That first performance led to another, and it soon became an annual tradition at Bishop Luers. In the 2017-18 school year, Krouse handed on the concert respon-



Members of the Bishop Luers Choir perform a Lessons and Carols Concert in the school's chapel in 2022.

sibilities to Choir Director Kris Andorfer, who had also been involved with the program since the beginning.

Krouse has continued to be involved, playing piano for the show for the past five years. Last year, she invited BLHS alumni to participate in the event alongside current students. Her favorite part about Lessons and Carols, she told Today's Catholic, is "Listening to the Gospel message and the story of Christmas through the words of Our Lord."

Andorfer has continued with

the program ever since. "It's a special performance after the hustle and bustle of the semester for the high school kids," he said. "It's a nice chance for stillness and intimacy and helps calm us down for break and Christmas."

Lessons and Carols is an intimate concert – a combination of a performance and a prayer service. Andorfer chooses one student to read the Scripture passages between each hymn, someone who is a leader among their peers. The songs range from hymns to contemporary choral music. No microphones are needed in the chapel, as it is acoustically resonant. Andorfer himself performs "Every Valley" acapella from Handel's "Messiah," surprising the audience with the operatic qualities in his voice.

When asked what he enjoys about the concert, Andorfer

said: "It is really fun to use my craft a little differently and see the reaction of the kids. It's cool, it's like being a part of the team. It really showcases our whole department, too." It is a group effort, as Krouse plays the piano and Band Director Adam Hanke performs on the acoustic guitar.

Jan Serrani, Campus Minister at Bishop Luers, has attended Lessons and Carols and said she has had a great experience. "Lessons and Carols is inspiring because the choir tells a story based on Scripture," she said. "This elevates my Advent journey. It's a wonderful celebration for the entire family to enjoy during the Advent season!"

The 2023 Lessons and Carols Concert will be held on Sunday, December 10, at 3 p.m. in the Bishop Luers chapel. It is free and open to the public.

*"Lessons and Carols is inspiring because the choir tells a story based on Scripture."*

JAN SERRANI

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## Pope Prays as Fighting in Holy Land Resumes

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – The end of the temporary cease-fire agreement between Israel and Hamas “means death, destruction, misery,” Pope Francis said in remarks read by his aide on Sunday, December 3, after reciting the Angelus from his Vatican residence. Fighting continued in the Holy Land on Friday, December 1, after a weeklong truce. “Many hostages have been freed, but many are still in Gaza” in the hands of Hamas, the pope’s text said. “Let’s think about them, their families who had seen a light, a hope to embrace their loved ones again.” Israel and Hamas had agreed on the temporary cease-fire to allow Hamas to release hostages captured in Israel on Saturday, October 7, in exchange for the release of Palestinians jailed in Israel. The agreement also allowed aid agencies to deliver needed food, water, medicine, and fuel to Gaza.

## Explosion in Philippines Kills Four During Mass

MARAWI, Philippines (OSV News) – A deadly bomb that exploded during a Mass on Sunday, December 3, killed at least four people and injured dozens at a university in a predominantly Muslim city in southern Philippines. Media reports that the explosion caused panic among dozens of students and teachers in a gymnasium, where the Mass was taking place, at Mindanao State University in Marawi, capital of Lanao del Sur province. The explosion took place at around 7 a.m. local time. Islamic State militants claimed responsibility for the deadly blast, according to Reuters and The New York Times. After praying the Angelus, Pope Francis assured the victims of his prayers. A telegram, addressed to Bishop Edwin de la Peña of Marawi, assured the people of the Holy Father’s spiritual closeness amid this tragedy, and that he commended the souls of those who died to God’s mercy and prayed for “the divine gifts of healing and consolation upon the injured and bereaved.”

## Kissinger, 100, and O’Connor, 93, Die

WASHINGTON, D.C. (OSV News) – In the span of a few days in late November and early December, two people who helped shape the American political landscape for decades passed away. On Wednesday, November 29, Henry Kissinger, a former Secretary of State who shaped U.S. foreign policy, died at his Connecticut home. He was 100. Kissinger served as Secretary of

## Baltimore Natives Advocate for Black Catholic Saints



OSV News/courtesy Ralph Moore

A trio from Baltimore visits Rome in late October to advocate for the sainthood causes for six Black Catholics from the United States. Joined in St. Peter’s Square by Father Willy Kingston, a friend from New York who works at the Vatican, they are, from center left, Mary Sewell, Dolores Moore, and Ralph Moore. The group met with officials from the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints to tell of the importance of the “saintly six,” as Ralph Moore called the Black Catholic candidates for sainthood, who include Venerable Mother Mary Lange, Venerable Mother Henriette Delille, Venerable Father Augustus Tolton, Venerable Pierre Toussaint, Servant of God Sister Thea Bowman, and Servant of God Julia Greeley.

State under Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford and advised subsequent U.S. presidents. Throughout the span of his career, Kissinger met with several popes, including Pope St. Paul VI, Pope Benedict XVI, and St. John Paul II. In 2014 remarks to New York seminarians, Kissinger said Pope St. John Paul once personally told him that “the function of the Church is to tell the truth.” On Friday, December 1, Sandra Day O’Connor, who was the first female U.S. Supreme Court justice, and often a crucial swing vote as a moderate, died in Phoenix. She was 93. In her nearly a quarter-century on the court, O’Connor became known as a pragmatist and a moderate, often considering the facts of the case to reach rulings on issues like abortion or the death

penalty that varied in scope. Nominated to the court at 51, O’Connor served for 24 years before retiring in 2006. Justice Samuel Alito now holds the seat she once held.

## Pope Offers Condolences to Parents of British Infant

NOTTINGHAM, England (OSV News) – Indi Gregory, an 8-month-old British girl who died on Monday, November 13, because her life support was not extended, had a Catholic funeral on Friday, December 1, in the British Nottingham Cathedral, celebrated by Bishop Patrick McKinney. Her parents battled the British courts to have her life support extend-

ed. The father of Indi, Dean Gregory, wrote a moving tribute to his daughter on the day of her funeral, where her casket arrived in a white horse-drawn carriage. He said his daughter was a “beautiful warrior.” Pope Francis sent a message to Bishop McKinney, signed by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Vatican Secretary of State. “His Holiness Pope Francis was saddened to learn of the death of little Indi Gregory, and he sends condolences and the assurance of his spiritual closeness to her parents, Dean and Claire, and to all who mourn the loss of this precious child of God,” the pope said. Indi had been battling a rare mitochondrial disorder since she was born in February. In September, Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust brought a case against the fami-

ly to the High Court arguing that life support should be removed in Indi’s “best interests.” “She had to fight to live from day one of her life,” Indi’s father said, adding that his daughter’s mission on earth was to “expose evil in the world.”

## Texas Court Considers Request for Clarity on Abortion Ban

AUSTIN, Texas (OSV News) – The Texas Supreme Court on Tuesday, November 28, heard arguments in a challenge to the state’s abortion ban after a group of women alleged that the law forced them to continue pregnancies despite grave risks to their health. In March, five women who said they were denied abortions under the Texas law despite experiencing pregnancy complications filed a lawsuit challenging the law. Pro-life supporters of the law argued it already considers life-threatening situations. The case has since grown to include nearly two dozen plaintiffs. The law, which restricts abortion after six weeks gestation, is among the strictest abortion laws in the country. The lawsuit, however, does not actually seek to repeal the law but to clarify when exceptions are permitted. Texas’ highest court scrutinized both sides’ arguments, and its ruling could take several months.

## Sources Say Pope to Withdraw U.S. Cardinal’s Vatican Salary

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Pope Francis told the prefects of Vatican dicasteries that he saw no reason for the Vatican to continue giving U.S. Cardinal Raymond L. Burke a monthly salary and questioned why the Vatican should be providing him with a free apartment in Rome, various sources have confirmed. “He didn’t see why he should continue to subsidize Burke attacking him and the Church,” and the pope thought “he seemed to have plenty of money from America,” a person who spoke to Pope Francis later told Catholic News Service. Riccardo Cascioli, Director of the Italian Catholic publication *La Nuova Bussola Quotidiana*, reported on Monday, November 27, that Pope Francis announced the provisions regarding Cardinal Burke during a meeting on Monday, November 20, with the heads of the offices of the Roman Curia. A source who spoke to CNS said his understanding was that Pope Francis was not planning to evict Cardinal Burke from his Vatican-owned apartment but that he did plan to ask the cardinal to begin paying rent.



# From French Persecution to a New Eden: Early Catholicism in Indiana

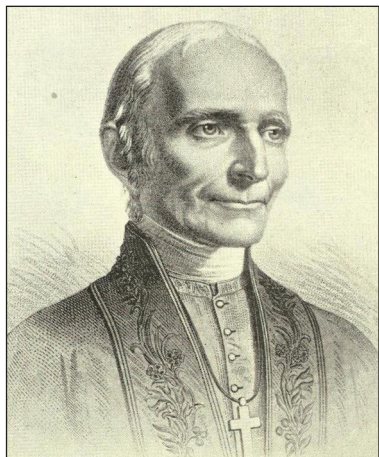
BY ALEX KROUSE

In 1818, Father Simon Brute, a leading Catholic missionary in Indiana, stated, "The Age of Reason, as [Thomas] Paine calls it, was, as they hoped, fully established in our France. ... Now, it all seems like a dream. ... Those who had established them supposed that they would accustom the multitude without religion." Father Brute was referencing the rise of Revolutionary France that began with Enlightenment ideals but ended with persecution of the Catholic Church and a movement to de-Christianize society. It was in this tragic history that Father Brute grew up in the Catholic faith along with other pioneer missionaries who spread Catholicism in Indiana.

Brute was born in Rennes, France, in 1779. A historic city with roots thousands of years old, Rennes had an established Catholic presence by A.D. 453 that continued for at least another 1,000 years. Yet, when Brute was in school in the early 1790s, he saw dramatic changes occurring in France. The once-Catholic monarchy quickly transitioned into turmoil with the advent of the French Revolution, which was driven by several factors, including widespread economic hardship and an animosity toward the dependence of the Catholic Church and nobility.

Brute witnessed steps taken by revolutionaries to shake the foundation of Catholicism that was entrenched deep within the people, the country, and the culture. The government of France began to implement laws to curtail Church influence. One such law required all clergy to profess an oath to France as having authority over all religious matters, which was viewed as loyalty of country over God. Brute recalled, "As soon as it became a law, the most violent measures were taken to oblige the bishops and clergy to take it." For example, according to an eyewitness, a priest was approached after Mass by thousands "demanding him to take the oath" or face the "pain of being dragged out of the pulpit."

The focus of proclaiming authority in France over God was met with resistance by the Church and clergy, but this was just the beginning of what turned into much more violent steps. In the early 1790s, the monarchy was abolished, King Louis XVI was executed, and the tone of the revolution became measurably darker. Brute witnessed two priests he

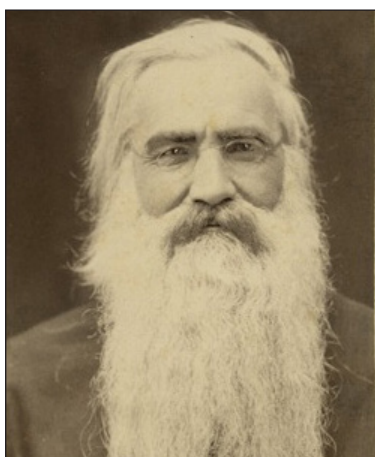


BISHOP SIMON BRUTE

knew get executed – the order of which came from a tribunal led by an old friend of theirs. One of the priests, soon to be under the guillotine, reproached this former friend "and the whole cause he served with their crimes, and remind[ed] him of the Tribunal of an outraged God, before which he would one day have to appear." Still, the leader called upon guards to silence the priest with the guillotine and ordered four additional priests be beheaded that same day.

Regarding this revolution in France, Charles Dickens wrote in "A Tale of Two Cities," "Liberty, equality, fraternity, or death – the last, much the easiest to bestow" was commonplace. Despite violent efforts to silence the Church, though, whispers of Catholicism and Christianity somehow managed to survive. The destructive work to remove Christian roots from France would require more than changed laws and increased violence. According to revolutionaries, it needed a complete ideological shift among the populace.

A national motto for France was created to capture a new ideology: "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity." This motto was credited to Antoine-Francois Momoro and Maximilien Robespierre. They understood that requiring allegiance through laws and silencing the most vocal opponents with violence was not enough. Therefore, Momoro, one of the most anti-religion revolutionaries, developed a replacement for Christianity. Famous French writer Voltaire once said, "If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him," and that was precisely Momoro's solution. The Cult of Reason became France's first state-sponsored substitute for Christianity. As Brute noted, "I can still see with my mind's eye the curious processions which they made through the streets of the city on those days, going to the Temple of Reason."



FATHER EDWARD SORIN

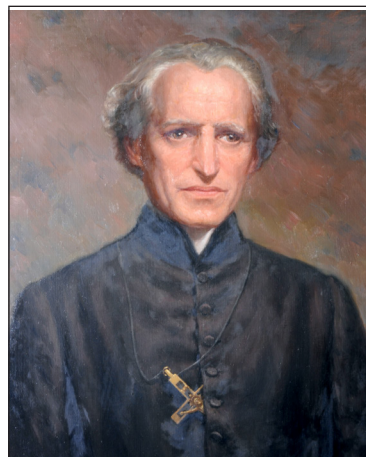
This "religion" sought to deify core principles of reason, liberty, nature, and others. It culminated in the Festival of Reason at the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris, where the altar was dismantled and replaced with an altar to "liberty." Women and girls were clothed in white Roman dresses, and flames were lit, portraying the symbol of Truth. Across all of France, religious statues, crosses, and monuments were desecrated or destroyed.

Momoro's religion was short-lived, and soon he was under the guillotine himself. Taking its place was the Cult of the Supreme Being led by Robespierre. While this ideology recognized a god, it was vehemently anti-Catholic. Within two months, though, Robespierre also met his death. Still, the persecution of Christians and clergy continued until the end of the century, displacing as many as 30 thousand priests, many of whom were silenced by execution.

This French history provides the backdrop to Brute's eventual turn to the priesthood. Brute recalled his feelings as "generally a mixture of horror, and pity, and admiration, and exaltation religious views of heaven, mixed with a detestation of deism and naturalism, which at such moments seemed destined to prevail over the Christian religion in France." Despite Brute's initial training in medicine, a seminary reopened by 1803, and the calling to become a member of the clergy was evident.

Brute was ordained a priest in 1808 with a strong interest in missionary work. Perhaps his outreach to imprisoned clergy in the early 1790s influenced this. He explained, "I visited them twice while they were confined there, disguised as a baker's boy, a big bread basket on my head." The individuals he visited were locked in a church that had been converted to a prison during the French Revolution.

Shortly into his priesthood,



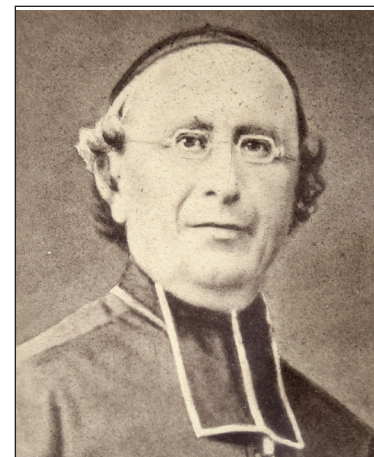
FATHER BASIL MOREAU

Father Brute would be called upon to travel west to the fledgling United States of America. Father Brute spent most of his time in the United States at Mount St. Mary's College in Maryland. It was there he met Elizabeth Ann Seton, and the two developed a close friendship. At Seton's death, one of her personal bibles was given to Father Brute and is currently housed in Evansville.

As the United States expanded, so did the need for Catholicism. Father Brute found himself in Indiana and was appointed bishop of Vincennes. In the 1830s, Indiana contained a few hundred thousand individuals, but the populace was scattered. Because of this, it was common for religious missionaries to ride on horseback from town to town to spread Catholicism. However, Bishop Brute needed more priests to spread the word, which required him to visit his native France in search of priests interested in missionary work. Conversations along the route from Rennes to Le Mans sowed French-Catholic ties to Indiana.

On Bishop Brute's initial trip back to France, he recruited Father Célestin Guynemer de la Hailandière, his future successor. Father de la Hailandière, also born during the French Revolution, was baptized by a priest hiding in his father's home in revolutionary France. Both Bishop Brute and Father de la Hailandière immediately recruited others to join them in Indiana.

Father Edward Sorin was also one of the first individuals to help lead the missionary expedition. At the time, Father Sorin helped lead the Congregation of Holy Cross with founder Father Basil Anthony Moreau in Le Mans, France. In witnessing Bishop Brute's efforts, and at the behest of Father de la Hailandière, Father Sorin and the congregation's six brothers joined them in Indiana in 1841.



BISHOP CELESTIN GUYNEMER  
DE LA HAILANDIERE

Although Father Moreau stayed in France, he was Father Sorin's mentor and undoubtedly impacted his worldview. Father Moreau, like Bishop Brute, was born during the turmoil in France. His parents, devout Catholics, assisted with the underground Church during that time. Father Moreau spent his initial years rebuilding the Church where as many as two-thirds of the clergy had been exiled or killed.

Father Sorin, who founded the University of Notre Dame, wrote a letter to Father Moreau about the site of the future university. He stated, "Oh, may this new Eden be ever the home of innocence and virtue!" Father Sorin also invited four sisters of the Holy Cross from Le Mans to join him, writing, "Once the sisters arrive, and their presence is ardently desired, they must be prepared not merely to look after the laundry and the infirmary, but also to conduct a school, perhaps even a boarding school." By 1844, these sisters established the school that would become Saint Mary's College.

Beyond Father Sorin, Bishop Brute recruited Father Julian Benoit during his 1835 trip to France. Father Benoit came to Indiana in 1840 from Lyons, France. Father Benoit was instrumental in developing the Catholic community around Fort Wayne, helping build the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception and cementing Catholic education with St. Mother Theodore Guérin.

Thanks to the monumental efforts of Bishop Brute and these missionaries who forged a path of faith in uncertain times, Catholicism was spread throughout the Diocese Fort Wayne, which was officially established in 1857, and across the midwestern United States. The vast persecution of religion and the Church witnessed by these founding Catholic missionaries in France surely fueled their work to build a "new Eden" in this far-off place.



# The Benefits of Fasting During a Season of Feasting

## How Personal Sacrifice in Advent Can Help Us Prepare for the Coming of Christ

BY BETHANY BEEBE

**S**hopping, baking, wrapping, and decorating can seem to eat away at our time as we prepare for the Christmas holiday. Efforts to spread cheer, no matter how well-intentioned, can distract us from the spiritual significance of the Advent and Christmas seasons. All this distraction, however, can lead us to seek means to how we can grow closer to the Christ Child as we prepare for – and then celebrate – His birth. Fasting is one such option.

The word “Advent” comes from the Latin *ad-venire*, meaning “to come to.” This liturgical season encompasses the four weeks leading to Christmas. During this time, we are invited to prepare our minds and hearts for the coming of Jesus at the end of time and recall His birth.

The Church recognizes the preparatory aspect of Advent in its practice. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal calls for a simpler altar decoration and the wearing of purple vestments on the First, Second, and Fourth Sundays of Advent (and rose on the Third Sunday) by the

priest. “Like Lent,” the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops notes, “the liturgical color for Advent is purple since both [Advent and Lent] are seasons that prepare us for great feast days. Advent also includes an element of penance in the sense of preparing, quieting, and disciplining our hearts for the full joy of Christmas.”

Historically, Advent has been celebrated with some form of fasting since the fourth century. In Latin, “December” means “10th month,” and the earliest Christians would have connected it to the prescribed fast of Jewish tradition in Zechariah 8:19.

Beyond tradition, though, modern thinkers point to benefits of fasting during this season of preparation. In an article entitled “The Advent Fast” for the Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University, Professor Thomas Turner wrote: “Fasting helps us proclaim God’s story – a narrative of love that requires watchful preparation of our hearts and minds, and patient waiting for God’s faithful completion of divine promises – in a countercultural way. While the surrounding culture is being consumed by a perpetual feast beginning at Thanksgiving, we can present the Gospel by returning to the Advent fast. ... This can be a prophetic, redemptive rejection of the personal instant gratification, materialism, and gluttony exhibited in cultural holiday celebrations.”



Like Lent, some modern Catholics may add elements of fasting to their recognition of the time before Christmas. Modern Catholic practices have placed greater emphasis on the personal meaning of liturgical observance, the time of Advent being no exception. For example, in their November 1966 writings, the National Council of Catholic Bishops articulated its hopes for genuine connection to God through penance during Advent, writing: “Forms and seasons of penance vary from time to time and from people to people. But the need for conversion and salvation is unchanging, as is the necessity that, confessing our sinfulness, we perform, personally and in community, acts of penance in pledge of our inward penitence and conversion. ... Christian peoples, members of a Church that is at once holy, penitent, and always in process of renewal, have from the begin-

ning observed seasons and days of penance. They have done so by community penitential observances as well as by personal acts of self-denial; they have imitated the example of the spotless Son of God Himself, concerning Whom the Sacred Scriptures tell us that He went into the desert to fast and to pray for 40 days (Mk 1:13). Thus, Christ gave the example to which Paul appealed in teaching us how we, too, must come to the mature measures of the fullness of Christ (Eph 4:13).”

With a good plan, a meaningful Advent fast is possible for the modern Catholic and a variety of ways in which we can participate.

In an article for Radiant magazine – an online publication for young Catholic women – writer Laura O’Callaghan reminds readers that the Church does not require fasting during the Advent

season. Rather, she offers that one might look to activities such as volunteering in one’s parish or larger community. “While fasting during Advent isn’t required of us Catholics, one thing is required of us: seeking holiness. Whatever the season, our number one job as followers of Christ is to follow Him more closely every day.”

Another version of fasting is embodied in the giving up of something other than food. Social media or Netflix could go, O’Callaghan suggests, to create a climate to focus on silence and turn our attention to the coming of Christ. “Honestly,” she writes, “deliberately cultivating silence in the leadup to Christmas can be as difficult as giving up chocolate for Lent.”

Fasting from food, of course, is still very much an option for Catholics seeking to sacrifice for the purpose of growing closer to Christ this Advent. While the liturgical calendar need not dictate our fasting, the Advent season can offer an ideal time parameter. O’Callaghan writes: “Fasting detaches our spirit from this world, teaches us self-control, and helps us to long for God as the fulfillment of all our desires. That is perfect for Advent.”

So, while it may not be a Church requirement, fasting during Advent can reap benefits to help us grow closer in our most important relationship – that with God – that can last the whole year.



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# Ministry Offers Hope, Help to Parents Whose Children Have Left the Faith

BY PAULA LENT

**T**he suffering of seeing children with no normal practice of the faith that we hold dear is a very keen suffering," Lisa Everett told the crowd of parents gathered on Wednesday, October 25, at St. Therese, Little Flower Catholic Church in South Bend for the most recent presentation given by the RETURN ministry. "And you know from your own spiritual journey, when we are suffering, whatever that suffering is, instead of withdrawing, God actually leans in. And sometimes He leans in precisely through His body, the Church, to feel supported and uplifted, and that you are not alone in this journey."

Run by Ablaze Mission in conjunction with the diocesan Marriage and Family Ministry, the RETURN ministry helps to alleviate some of the burdens of parents whose adult children have left the faith by offering tools for bringing their children into a personal relationship with Jesus and a supportive community of peers with whom to journey.

The ministry, which celebrates its one-year anniversary this December, began after both Sean Allen, the founder of Ablaze Mission, a Catholic young adult apostolate in South Bend, and Everett, the diocesan Director for Marriage and Family Ministry, became aware of the need to support these parents.

"As I was engaging an older demographic, partly for fundraising, but partly just to understand the broader picture," Allen said, "it turned out they were very aware there was a problem of young adults leaving the Church, because it was in their families."

It was a follow-up conversation with his and Everett's mutual friend who had recommended to both of them Brandon Vogt's book, "RETURN: How to Draw Your Child Back to the Church," which sparked the ministry.

"I was asking her questions like, 'What did they think was needed for young adults? What do they think is the problem?'" Allen said. "It wasn't a response to a question I asked her; she just said, 'What we really need is ... something for us, for the parents.' So, we talked about that for a while. I learned there are a lot of feelings of helplessness and hopelessness," because parents feel there's nothing they can do but pray and wait, which can lead to feeling hopeless when years pass with seemingly unanswered prayers.



"There was an element of guilt and shame," Allen said, "like 'we're bad parents because our kids are not faithful adults.' There was a reluctance to talk to other people about it because they didn't want to out themselves as bad parents. Since most of their friends' kids are off somewhere else, they assume that in everyone else's families, their kids are still practicing, that they're the only ones whose kids aren't practicing. And it turns out, as they talk more and more, and they open up, they find out, everybody's got kids who aren't practicing."

So, Allen and Everett teamed up with a group of parents to discern how to meet these needs.

"Sean and I began meeting with a core team of interested parents in the South Bend area, and our first event was last December, which we called Home for the Holidays, which presented some key ideas from [Vogt's book] and provided time for discussion, prayer, and fellowship," Everett said. Even though the inaugural event was held during a busy time of year, more than 50 participants showed up – a sign of the need for this type of ministry.

Following Home for the Holidays, the ministry held a six-week book study during January and February of 2023 on the "RETURN" book. The study had both a morning and evening session, to provide options for attending. Allen noted that one thing parents learned through the study is that evangelization involves playing the long game. "They realized, wow, this is going to be a longer process than we thought," he said.

To support parents along this process, the RETURN ministry regularly provides opportunities for communal learning, empowering parents with tools they can immediately use while at the same time creating a space for them

*"Being able to help the parents of adult children who've left the faith realize that there are things that they can do to help their children beyond praying and waiting is one of my favorite parts of the ministry."*

SEAN ALLEN, ABLAZE MINISTRY

to share their successes and struggles with peers. Prayer is also a key element of the ministry, and, in addition to a weekly Rosary prayer group, an early presentation focused on spiritual fasting.

"We have been holding events every two months so far," Everett said. "In March, we had a presentation on spiritual fasting by Catholic fasting coach Beth Bubik, and in June, we had a presentation by my colleague, Caty Burke (Associate Director for Marriage and Family Ministry) called 'Shedding Light on the Millennial Mind.'"

"In August, we sponsored a special Mass on the feast of St. Augustine to pray for the return of adult children or other relatives who no longer practiced their faith," Everett said. "It was a really powerful experience. People who were there said it was a very anointed event, where they could really feel the Holy Spirit and the mercy and love and compassion of God."

Vogt's book encourages parents to evangelize through relationships, highlighting the importance of having open

dialogue with children to understand what they think and why, instead of trying to force one's own belief onto them or telling them what they should or should not be doing. By more fully understanding where another is at, one can then better meet them there and accompany them at each step as they journey closer to the Lord.

At October's event, participants had time to pray together and share with their small groups any moments where they could see the Lord at work as they accompanied their children, or any struggles and intentions for which the group could pray. Allen gave the night's presentation, "The Stages of Returning to the Faith," based on the concept of thresholds of conversion from Sherry Weddell's book, "Forming Intentional Disciples," which each participant received that evening. Allen has used the book to create the Intentional Discipleship Series that Ablaze offers as leadership training for young adults.

"What we're going to be talking about ... is a road map of that spiritual journey so that you can see where your child might be and what their next step would be to get to where you hope they will get to," Allen told participants. "We're going to learn this road map so that you can use this to be a better guide on this journey. Because we can all be a guide on this journey."

He laid out Weddell's "5 Thresholds of Conversion": Initial Trust, Spiritual Curiosity, Spiritual Openness, Spiritual Seeking, and Intentional Discipleship. Each threshold marks a transition from one phase to another, such as from initial distrust to trust for the first threshold, and from being complacent to being curious about Jesus for the second.

"One thing you'll notice is that the focus of all these

thresholds is ultimately one's relationship with Jesus," Allen underscored.

Participants had time to discuss with their group which threshold they thought their child was at and why, and what they could do to help their child toward the next threshold.

RETURN's next presentation, "Home for the Holidays: Steps to Awaken Faith in our Adult Children" was scheduled to take place on Monday, December 4, at St. Pius X in Granger, from 7 to 8:30 p.m. In the meantime, parents can also receive ongoing prayer and community support by participating in a weekly prayer group that meets on Wednesdays from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. in the side chapel at St. Therese, Little Flower. In addition to praying five decades of the Rosary together and a Divine Mercy Chaplet, the group also shares "praise reports" and prayer intentions.

For both Allen and Everett, this unexpected ministry has been a good extension of their existing ministries.

Allen notes that "being able to help the parents of adult children who've left the faith realize that there are things that they can do to help their children beyond praying and waiting" is one of his favorite parts of the ministry, and as he looks to its future, he says he hopes they will "develop a community where there's a culture of accompanying their children back to faith and the Church."

"This first year has been a great learning experience of how prevalent this issue is in families and the great need for Ablaze Mission to be helping them accompany their children back. I have been happily surprised at the progress we've been able to make in our first year," Allen said.

"A significant part of my ministry over the years has involved supporting parents who are suffering in various ways – serious challenges like infertility, a difficult prenatal diagnosis, the loss of a baby before or after birth," Everett said. "This most recent outreach in conjunction with Ablaze Mission is enabling us to provide support to another group of suffering parents: devout Catholics whose adult children no longer practice the faith that these parents hold dear. It is a privilege to walk alongside these parents and provide spiritual, emotional, and practical support as they strive to walk alongside their adult children and help lead them back to a personal relationship with Jesus through His mystical body, the Church."





File photo

## Heaven's Construction Company and Paving the Way for Christ

BY FATHER BRIAN ISENBARGER

One of my favorite characters of the Advent season is St. John the Baptist. And let's be honest, he's kind of a crazy figure. In the Gospel for the Second Sunday of Advent (Mark 1:1-8), we are told that John is living in the wilderness wearing camel's hair. If that weren't enough, we are then told that his diet consists of the desert delicacies of locusts and wild honey. Apparently, he liked the sweet-n-salty combo!

But, what in the world is John doing out there in the first place? He's preparing the way for the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It might be easy to overlook if we have heard these readings before and are familiar with John's role in Advent, but if we stop and think about it, John is essentially acting like heaven's construction company. He is the one who is paving the way so that the Son of God can be revealed as a light to the nations. His role is to fill in the valleys, make low the mountains, and make the rough places straight. What's his method? He calls for repentance and the forgiveness of sins.

Like a good construction company, John not only does the road work to make the way for Christ passable, he also clearly sets up road signs to keep us on track. Like a road work site that has big barricades saying, "Do Not Enter" and "Wrong Way," John uses the same messaging:

*As our world continues to go about its regular business of the various holiday preparations, be like John. Make a good confession. Don't be afraid to be a little weird. Think and act a little different.*

"REPENT!" In other words, "Turn around; you're going the wrong way!"

In the original Greek, the word used for repentance here is metanoia. It literally means to change one's mind or to totally change the direction of one's life. In other words, it means to think and to act differently. This is why John is a credible witness to the call to repentance – because he clearly thought and acted differently. Instead of going about trying to fit in to first-century Israel, John knew his role as the precursor of Christ called him to be a sign of contradiction. He knew he had to stand out from the crowd if he was going to make the Messiah stand out to the rest of humanity.

In a certain sense, I think we can all learn a couple things from the example of John. First, all of us are called to ongoing repentance and conversion. The road to heaven is a long one, and there are many temptations to make us lose sight and to send us off course. John reminds us to stay focused on Jesus and our communion with Him. So, if you haven't already, make a good confession this Advent. There's a reason it's called the Sacrament

of Penance – because it truly is the sacrament of conversion, the sacrament of metanoia.

The other inspiration John gives us is the freedom to be a little crazy. While I'm not necessarily recommending all of us to dress in camel's hair or to eat locusts and honey (but let me know how locusts taste if you do!), all of us who bear the name Christian are called to be a sign of contradiction, to

think and act differently.

Why was it that all the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the whole Judean countryside were going out to see John the Baptist? Because he was radically different. And my opinion is that it wasn't simply to see the display of some weird clothing and diet habits. It was because John possessed a radiant joy in a desert wasteland. From his first moments in

his mother Elizabeth's womb, when he encountered Jesus in the womb of the Blessed Mother during the Visitation, we are told that John leaped for joy. I imagine that joy was an abiding presence John kept the rest of his earthly life and is what strengthened him to go before Christ, even in death.

As our world continues to go about its regular business of the various holiday preparations, be like John. Make a good confession. Don't be afraid to be a little weird. Think and act a little different. Radiate the supernatural joy of knowing Jesus Christ. And join heaven's construction company with a smile to prepare the way of the Lord!

*Father Brian Isenbarger is a Parochial Vicar at St. Vincent de Paul Church in Fort Wayne.*

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# Muralist Tells Stories of Faith, Love, Community

BY LISA KOCHANOWSKI

Great works of art aren't always made on canvas and hung in a museum. Michelangelo's masterpiece of the Sistine Chapel was painted on a ceiling. What makes a piece of art so memorable is not the location but the story it tells the viewer and the impressions felt by the audience.

Federico Rodriguez, a graduate of St. Adalbert Grade School, Saint Joseph High School, and Holy Cross College in South Bend, uses his art to tell stories about faith, justice, and the community through murals in the area.

"I remember during one of our Friday Masses in second grade that the priest had instructed us to look around the church and marvel at the many statues and stained-glass windows," Rodriguez told Today's Catholic. "He remarked that we were so lucky to have so many amazing depictions of our faith so beautifully shown. I recall after hearing that having a feeling like the environment around me changed from black and white to color. My Catholic education has provided me with an emphasis on servitude, which I find to be my calling."

His mural on the side of Rosales Supermarket in South Bend includes an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Navarre Middle School has a mural with Jaguar Nation that incorporates the school's athletics and culture of the community. Recently, he completed a mural at La Casa de Amistad on the side of the building that depicts the journey of immigrants.

"I have always had a compulsion to create and was fortunate to be born into a family that was always in a state of sharing culture, customs, food, and stories. My parents had a Mexican folkloric dance group in the early '90s, and my house basement was the rehearsal studio. They would create dresses and floats for parades and always rehearsed their dance routines. "Growing up on the west side of South Bend, I was fortunate enough to have a very artistic group of friends. We were always finding ourselves drawing and bringing drawings of one another's work to display our abilities. We would call it 'batling,' and this created a certain reverence for the one who was the best artist, of which I never was amongst my friends," shared Rodriguez about his inspiration to get into art. "Growing up, my father purchased a restaurant to which he placed a two-story mural on, and we lived in the apartment above it. My mother, father, and I have our likenesses painted on the landscape mural. I have



Photos provided by Federico Rodriguez

**Federico Rodriguez painted his first mural, the Rosale Mural, as an 18-year-old at Holy Cross College in 2013. The mural was created as part of his internship with La Casa de Amistad. The objective for creating the piece was to use the transformative power of art to create a sacred space that was welcoming, inclusive, and vibrant.**



Photos provided by Federico Rodriguez

**Federico Rodriguez of South Bend uses his artistic talent to beautify buildings, inspire peace and harmony, and tell a story about the area.**

always maintained this love of creating, showing the dialogue that blossoms as a result and the new ideas and inspiration it brings. I carried this with me throughout high school and initiated a senior mural tradition that continued after me until my former high school was demolished and relocated."

In college, Rodriguez knew right away he wanted to study art and spent the next four years dedicating his time to studying techniques, honing his style, and absorbing as much knowledge as he could about the world of art.

"The Rosales Mural was my first mural piece as a young 18-year-old at Holy Cross

College in 2013," Rodriguez said. "This mural was created as part of my senior internship with La Casa de Amistad. My objective for creating the piece was to use the transformative power of art to create a sacred space that was welcoming, inclusive, and vibrant. My inspiration for the mural came to me all at once one evening. I was able to make a quick sketch on a small note card and then approached the owner of Rosales with it. Without hesitation, he agreed to allow me to create the piece. I know that the incorporation of the image of La Virgen de Guadalupe, along with the symbolism of

unity, life, and connection, is what moved him to accept my project," recalled Rodriguez. "I have always known the image of La Virgen de Guadalupe to provide a sacredness to any environment. The image itself is God's gift of art to man. Thus, I knew that incorporating the imagery would transform the space into something greater than it was."

Since that first mural, Rodriguez has worked hard to bring his love of art to the community and share his experiences with the youth who are the future of our communities.

His faith plays a profound role in his artistic process as he seeks inspiration through prayer and relies on guidance from the Holy Spirit. "My artistic endeavors are dedicated to giving back to the community, utilizing my gifts, talents, and unwavering determination," Rodriguez said. "Through my work, I aim not only to express my gratitude and admiration for the community, organization, or business, but also to align with and reflect the goals and missions of their impactful work carried out within our community."

Rodriguez's creative process

has evolved throughout the years. In the beginning, he used a grid and sketch to begin the process. The acquisition of a projector now allows him to create the pieces digitally.

"The research that goes into my work varies based on the narrative," he said. "The common theme in my work is community involvement. Thus, my research typically involves dialogue between individuals or groups. Then, from those conversations and discussions, I dive into the historical significance, aiming to tie the current situation with the experiences of the past."

The painting process itself doesn't take too long, Rodriguez said; it's the planning, set-up, and tear-down that take the most time. In the end, he strives to create a piece that has a lasting impact on the community.

"When I create art, my profound aspiration is that those who encounter my work experience a profound sense of inclusion and a deep connection with the essential message it conveys," he said. "The central themes that drive my art are unity, empathy, and the inherent interconnectedness of all humanity. I believe that art has the unique ability to transcend boundaries, inviting people from diverse backgrounds and walks of life to come together, share in the experience, and find common ground. In my artistic journey, I seek to craft pieces that not only stimulate the senses but also touch the hearts and minds of viewers. I want my art to serve as a mirror that reflects the shared human experience, evoking emotions and fostering a sense of belonging. By exploring themes of unity and empathy, I hope to inspire dialogue, understanding, and a profound recognition that we are all threads in the intricate tapestry of humanity. Through art, I aim to remind us of our interconnectedness and the collective responsibility we share to build a more compassionate and harmonious world."



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# My Experience at the Synod

Now that I've had a bit of time to readjust to my normal rhythm and to think through the rather extraordinary experience of the last month in Rome, I would like to share some impressions of the synod on synodality, even as I will endeavor not to violate the pope's request that we refrain from talking about particular participants and votes. So, I will limit myself to commenting on the published document that the synod members approved and on my own interventions during the deliberations.

The summary statement very accurately expresses the fact that the overwhelming concern of the synod members was to listen to the voices of those who have, for a variety of reasons, felt marginalized from the life of the Church. This motif was the common denominator in all of the preliminary sessions leading up to the synod, and it was prominently featured in the working document that provided the basis for our discussions. Women, the laity in general, the LGBT community, those with disabilities, young people, men and women of color, etc., have felt unappreciated and, most importantly, excluded from the tables where decisions are taken that affect the whole life of the Church. I can assure everyone that their demand to be heard was heard, loud and clear at the synod. And I'm glad it was. The Church is meant to announce the Gospel

to everyone (*todos, todos, todos*, as the pope rightly says) and to gather them into the Body of Christ. Therefore, if there are armies of Catholics who feel excluded or condescended to, that's a major pastoral problem that must be addressed with humility and honesty. And I can say, as someone who has been a full-time ecclesiastical administrator for the past 12 years, I am delighted to receive the counsel of laity in regard to practically all aspects of my work. Expanding the number and diversity of those who might aid the bishops in their governance of the Church is all to the good, and bravo to the synod for exploring this possibility.

A question that I raised several times in the small group conversations, however, was whether, in our enthusiasm to include people in the governance of the Church, we forget that the vocation of 99 percent of the Catholic laity is to sanctify the world, to bring Christ into the arenas of politics, the arts, entertainment, communication, business, medicine, etc., precisely where they have special competence. Generally speaking, I was worried that both the *instrumentum laboris* and the synod conversations were far more preoccupied with the *ad intra* than with the *ad extra*, and this despite the fact that Pope Francis has been consistently calling for a Church that goes out from itself. On a number



BISHOP ROBERT BARRON

## WORD ON FIRE

of occasions during the synod, I proposed the Catholic Action model that was, in the preconciliar period, such an effective way to form the laity in their mission to the world.

Another principal theme of the synod discussions was the play or perceived tension between love and truth. On the one hand, we must welcome everyone, but lest this welcoming devolve into a form of cheap grace (to use Dietrich Bonhoeffer's term), we at the same time must summon those we include to conversion, to live according to the truth. As you might suspect, this issue became concretized around the outreach to the LGBT community. Practically everyone at the synod held that those whose sexual lives are outside of the norm should be treated with love and respect, and, again, bravo to the synod for making this pastoral point so emphatically. But many synod participants also felt that the truth of the Church's moral teaching in regard to sexuality ought never to be set aside. One of the interventions that I made to the plenary assembly was on this theme. I observed that, when the terms are rightly

understood, there is no real tension between love and truth, for love is not a feeling but the act by which one wills the good of another. Therefore, one cannot authentically love someone else unless he has a truthful perception of what is really good for that person. There might, I argued, be a tension between welcoming and truth but not between authentic love and truth.

A third area of interest/concern for me centered around the notion of mission. The term "mission" was used constantly in the texts we considered and the conversations we had. That the Church is a mission, to use Pope St. Paul VI's language, was taken for granted by the synod members, and this represents a significant and very encouraging appropriation of the teaching of Vatican II and of the postconciliar papal magisterium. Pope St. John Paul II's indefatigable teaching on the New Evangelization has evidently worked its way into the heart and mind of the worldwide Church. But there was, at least to my mind, a fair amount of ambiguity around the meaning of the word itself. Judging from what we read in the *instrumentum laboris*, mission seemed, more often than not, to designate the Church's work in favor of social justice and the betterment of the economic and political situation of the poor. Conspicuous by their absence in the texts on mission were references to sin, grace, redemption, cross,

resurrection, eternal life, and salvation, and this represents a real danger. For in point of fact, the primary mission of the Church is to declare the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and to invite people to place themselves under His Lordship. This discipleship, to be sure, has implications for the way we live in the world, and it certainly should lead us to work for justice, but we must keep our priorities straight. The supernatural should never be reduced to the natural; rather, the natural order should be transfigured by its relationship to the supernatural order.

A final point – and here I find myself in frank disagreement with the final synodal report – has to do with the development of moral teaching in regard to sex. The suggestion is made that advances in our scientific understanding will require a rethinking of our sexual teaching, whose categories are, apparently, inadequate to describe the complexities of human sexuality. A first problem I have with this language is that it is so condescending to the richly articulate tradition of moral reflection in Catholicism, a prime example of which is the Theology of the Body developed by Pope St. John Paul II. To say that this multilayered, philosophically informed, theologically dense system is incapable of handling the subtleties of human

BARRON, page 13

# In Advent, Our Entire Focus Should Be on the Coming of Christ



## THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

MONSIGNOR OWEN F. CAMPION

## Second Sunday of Advent

The second part of the Book of Isaiah provides the first reading for this Second Sunday of Advent.

When this book was written, God's people were very happy. Their long, dreary exile of four generations in Babylon was about to end. They were looking forward to returning to their homeland.

Also, and importantly, these verses well convey the sense that this happy circumstance occurred because of God's mercy and of God's faithfulness to the Covenant.

It was not as if the people had earned God's generosity in this regard, or that they

had been unusually loyal to the Covenant themselves. To the contrary, their sins had brought misery upon themselves.

Nevertheless, God's mercy endured! So, the prophet insists that upon returning to their homeland, the people must go to Jerusalem, to the holy mountain where stood the Temple, and there proclaim aloud the goodness of God.

For its second reading this weekend, the Church presents a passage from the Second Epistle of Peter. Its theme differs from that of the first reading. The first reading was wonderfully optimistic. This reading is grim in its predictions of dark days and of unwelcome possibilities in the future.

However, and this is critical, it does not predict everlasting death. Bad things will happen. Difficult times will come, but God will always protect the faithful. In this last reassurance, the reading parallels the message of the first reading.

St. Mark's Gospel furnishes the last reading. It is the beginning of the Gospel, as the first

verse of the reading states, and the very opening verse states the purpose of this Scripture. It is the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

In these relatively few words, the entire reality of salvation is revealed. Something new is being proclaimed, utterly different from the sad moods and dreariness of human life, unbound by the variances of earthly existence. The news, furthermore, is good! Jesus, the Son of God, both conveys this Good News and brings its effectiveness into human life.

This reading quotes Isaiah's prophecy that God will send a representative to guide the people from death to life, from the deadly effects of their sins to the bright realms of God's forgiveness. God has been true to this pledge. He gives us Jesus.

The Gospel then tells of John the Baptist, who went throughout Judea calling people to repentance. John recognized Jesus. Anyone can recognize Jesus, the Son of God. Too many create an unrealistic image, an invention to confirm the easy way out, or to excuse

them from the task of genuine conversion.

## Reflection

The "Christmas season" is here, big time. Somber Advent seems out of place, but Advent makes sense. It calls us to remember the birth of Jesus, what it meant, and to allow the Lord entry into our hearts.

A Protestant minister in New York, James Allen Francis, years ago, noted this about the Lord's time on earth. "Twenty centuries have come and gone, and today He is the central figure of the human race. I am well within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the parliaments that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned – put together – have not affected the life of man on this earth as much as that one, solitary life."

Jesus transformed human life by sweetening it and giving it purpose. He brightened millions upon millions upon millions of individual lives.

Nothing, before or after,

matched what Jesus brought to, and gave, the world. Of course, the birth of Christ is entitled to our primary attention.

His mercy has not ended. Bringing Jesus into our own personal lives is worth every effort.

## READINGS

**Sunday:** Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11; Psalms 85:9-14; 2 Peter 3:8-14; Mark 1:1-8

**Monday:** Isaiah 35:1-10; Psalms 85:9ab, 10, 11-12, 13-14; Luke 5:17-26

**Tuesday:** Zechariah 2:14-17 or Revelations 11:19a; 12:1-6a, 10ab; Judith 13:18bcd, 19; Luke 1:26-38 or 1:39-47

**Wednesday:** Isaiah 40:25-31; Psalms 103:1-2, 3-4, 8, 10; Matthew 11:28-30

**Thursday:** Isaiah 41:13-20; Psalms 145:1, 9, 10-11, 12-13ab; Matthew 11:11-15

**Friday:** Isaiah 48:17-19; Psalms 1:1-2, 3, 4, 6; Matthew 11:16-19

**Saturday:** Sirach 48:1-4, 9-11; Psalms 80:2ac, 3b, 15-16, 18-19; Matthew 17:9a, 10-13



# How Do We Win the Abortion Battle? Maybe Like This

For abortion's opponents, it has been a frustrating year.

When it came to the courts, the pro-life movement scored its most significant victory when the U.S. Supreme Court in 2022 reversed its 1973 decision calling abortion a constitutional right.

When it has come to the ballot box, however, the pro-life movement has suffered a string of defeats, even in conservative-leaning states such as Kansas and Ohio.

The loss of popular support, despite

Americans' conflicted feelings about abortion itself, has resulted in some pro-life advocates arguing for renewed legal efforts, blaming the losses on lack of funding for political campaigns to win elections.

If messaging is questioned at all, the common response is that pro-lifers need to do a better job of explaining their position. The president of the U.S. bishops' conference, Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, said in a news conference on Wednesday, November 15, that the bishops' role "continues to be one of catechesis and education." He added, "I don't think the role has changed very much, other than perhaps we need to make our position clearer."

The painful truth, however, is that pretty much everyone does know what the Church's position is. Unfortunately, it is understood in the narrowest

of terms: NO. What the pro-life movement in general, and unfortunately even the Church, has not done is to campaign convincingly for what replaces the "safety net" of abortion in the voters' minds.

One year ago, after a whopping 70 percent of Californians enshrined abortion in the state constitution, then-chair of the bishops' pro-life committee, Archbishop William E. Lori, challenged his fellow bishops "to take stock" of the election results. The demise of Roe v. Wade "will be a pyrrhic victory

if we fail to win the minds and hearts first and foremost," he told his brothers.

The battle at the ballot box has consumed the pro-life movement for 50 years. It has wedded the movement to one political party, and it has become odd bedfellows with a lot of positions that seem hardly pro-life.

Perhaps the way to win

the abortion battle is to step away from focusing solely on the courts and constitutional amendments.

In a Washington Post opinion column a few months ago, a pro-life columnist, Marc Thiessen, and a pro-abortion columnist, Alyssa Rosenberg, outlined a pro-family agenda that both sides should and could support. What they agreed upon is that there needs to be a bipartisan effort to better support children and families. It benefits mothers by making it more possible to have and support a child.



## AMID THE FRAY

GREG ERLANDSON

What both Thiessen and Rosenberg understand is that in terms of family support and in terms of maternal and infant health, keeping a pregnancy involves huge risks and costs. They compiled a long series of proposals to change the equation. Their proposal addresses scandalous U.S. maternal and infant mortality rates, the lack of available medical care, the lack of job protection for pregnant women, the marriage penalties in federal welfare programs, the lack of Medicaid coverage after birth, the skyrocketing cost of child care, and the shortage of paid parental leave.

While Catholic leaders have supported many of these issues throughout the years, their voice is not nearly as loud, nor are these issues understood to be their preeminent political concerns. Until Catholics in the pews – not to mention other Americans – see pro-lifers as fiercely supportive of these programs as they are of restrictions, the battle for hearts and minds is unlikely to be won.

Abortion is a decision made often in a moment of fear. We need to acknowledge that the fears are not imaginary. There are lots of proposals available to help America become truly family friendly. Thiessen and Rosenberg have suggested where we can begin making a difference.

Greg Erlandson is an award-winning Catholic Publisher, Editor, and Journalist whose column appears monthly at OSV News.

Christ's Church – and like it or not, this kind of encounter changes you, compelling you to see that your vision of things is one perspective among many.

All of these ideas and experiences from the synod will continue in the coming year to percolate in the mind of the Church, in preparation for the second and final round next October. Might I invite everyone to continue to pray for the work that we synod members must do both in the interim and at the Vatican next year?

Bishop Robert Barron is the Bishop of Rochester, Minnesota, and the Founder of Word on Fire Catholic Ministries.

## SCRIPTURE SEARCH®

Gospel for December 10, 2023

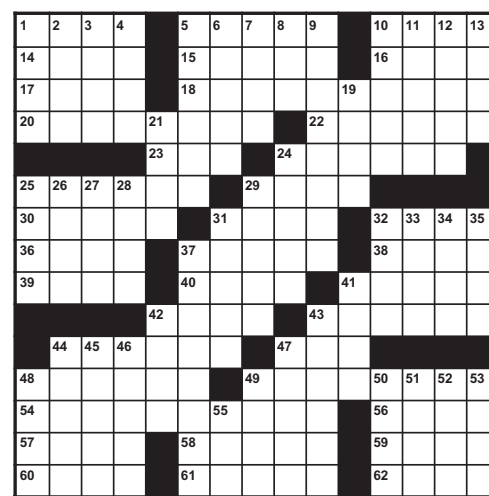
Mark 1:1-8

Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for the Second Sunday in Advent, Cycle B: The beginning of Mark's Gospel. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

GOSPEL	JESUS CHRIST	ISAIAH
PROPHET	SENDING	MESSENGER
YOUR WAY	VOICE	LORD
BAPTISM	SINS	JORDAN
LEATHER	WAIST	LOCUSTS
HONEY	WORTHY	STOOP
SANDALS	WATER	SPIRIT

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H G C H U P G A A Y S G  
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F J O R D A N O H C S D  
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### ACROSS

- 1 OT prophetic book
- 5 Take to the soapbox
- 10 Half of a Pacific paradise's name
- 14 Facility
- 15 Stormed
- 16 Landed
- 17 Former "evil empire"
- 18 Gospel writer
- 20 Newcomer
- 22 Brothers of Joseph
- 23 Long period of time
- 24 Scandinavians
- 25 Partner of Cosmas
- 29 Follows 2 Thess
- 30 Total
- 31 Shepherd-turned-prophet
- 32 Canine comment
- 36 Book after Proverbs (abbr.)
- 37 Large wading bird
- 38 Hosea, in the Douay
- 39 Barely passing grades
- 40 Zeus took away her wings
- 41 The Church is the \_\_\_\_ of Christ
- 42 Bric-a-\_\_\_\_
- 43 Catholic United States Supreme Court justice, Sherman \_\_\_\_

### DOWN

- 44 Security
- 47 Unit of weight
- 48 AKA the land of Israel
- 49 Squirms
- 54 Reception of Holy Orders
- 56 The Archdiocese of Dubuque is here
- 57 Clench
- 58 First Mass in Canada was celebrated on this peninsula
- 59 Soared
- 60 Disrespectful back talk
- 61 Foil relatives
- 62 Small mountain lake
- 1 In the Acts of the Apostles, people in Lystra called Barnabas this
- 2 Direction from Bethlehem to the Jordan
- 3 Redemptorist community (abbr.)
- 4 Daughter of Cronus
- 5 The Diocese of Baker is here
- 6 Symbol of St. Benedict, because this animal saved him

- 7 Culture medium
- 8 Commandment number
- 9 Sideways
- 10 Bundled hay
- 11 Biblical food
- 12 Ascends
- 13 Envelope letters
- 19 Type of sch.
- 21 Catholic actress, winner of Academy Award for her role in "Hud"
- 24 This was rolled in front of Jesus' tomb
- 25 "Christ has \_\_\_\_; Christ has risen..."
- 26 An end to repent?
- 27 Clublike weapon
- 28 Evils
- 29 OT historical book
- 31 Marshal
- 32 "... in the city of David a Savior has been \_\_\_\_..." (Lk 2:11)
- 33 "\_\_\_\_ was in the beginning, is now..."
- 34 Repeat
- 35 Sharp
- 37 Ancient city-state in N Africa
- 41 Catholic actor and crooner, Crosby
- 42 Pole or kidney
- 43 Iowa city named for monks, Des \_\_\_\_
- 44 Franciscan founder of California missions
- 45 Certain cars
- 46 Somersaults
- 47 Literary device
- 48 Moors
- 49 Describes some men in the Bible
- 50 Wisdom or knowledge from the Holy Spirit
- 51 Catholic performer Falana
- 52 Pitcher
- 53 Cut, as a log
- 55 Theology on \_\_\_\_ program

Answer key can be found on page 15

### BARRON, from page 12

sexuality is just absurd. But the deeper problem I have is that this manner of argumentation is based upon a category error – namely, that advances in the sciences, as such, require an evolution in moral teaching. Let us take the example of homosexuality. Evolutionary biology, anthropology, and chemistry might give us fresh insight into the etiology and physical dimension of same-sex attraction, but they will not tell us a thing about whether homosexual behavior is right or wrong. The entertaining of that question belongs to another mode of discourse. It is troubling to see that some of the members of the German

bishops' conference are already using the language of the synod report to justify major reformulations of the Church's sexual teaching. This, it seems to me, must be resisted.

The very best part of the synod was, of course, coming into close contact with Catholic leaders from all around the world. In my various small groups – and during the very lively coffee breaks – I met bishops and laity from the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Lithuania, Hong Kong, Germany, Canada, Mexico, Argentina, Austria, Australia, and on and on. The four weeks in Rome was a uniquely privileged opportunity to sense the catholicity of



**PERKINS, from page 3**

But God stepped in, and it was then he met his future wife. "When I met Natali, there was a desire in me that wanted to give up all the stuff that I was doing ... all the people I was using, the substances I was abusing. I saw Jesus in this woman, and I wanted what she had."

Throughout the course of the three years he and Natali dated, Perkins said he got sober and dug deeper into the faith of his youth. Then came the breakup – and the breakthrough.

During a six-month period when he and Natali had stopped dating, Perkins began working at a tattoo shop "where I got to see a whole other side of life that I had never seen. All the type of guys I was running around with, the type of guys coming in and getting tattoos ... I was just seeing the brokenness and seeing Jesus in the people that are forgotten by society that everyone looks down on because of what they look like."

Perkins told the audience at St. Charles about one particular night that had a profound effect on his faith. He and some friends were in the tattoo shop, and they began playing worship music, praising and singing to the Lord. It was "so weird and so beautiful at the same time," he said. "This guy I was with had been in and out of prison; he had three kids with three different women. And I just saw Christ in all of them. And through all of this, the Lord really drew me to Himself."

He and Natali got back together in 2018, and, as a couple, they were leaning into their faith. While Perkins felt the call to become a youth pastor, he knew he was intellectually unequipped, so he began researching various aspects of Christianity. "I just started ask-



Scott Warden

**Members of Shema Culture – from left, Caleb Perkins, Natali Perkins, and Gloria Kohrman – play music and sing during Eucharistic adoration at St. Charles Borromeo on Thursday, November 16.**

ing myself the question, 'What do I believe, why do I believe it, and can I give a defense for it?' I didn't feel like I could."

He pored through the Scriptures, read about the Church Fathers and the lives of the saints, investigated the dogmas and doctrines of Catholicism. "And over the course of about two years – in secret, because I tried to share with Natali at one point, and it didn't quite go over very well – I started ... chewing through what the early Christians had done."

It was the Church's teaching – Jesus' teaching – on the Eucharist that brought Perkins to the faith. He quoted Father Mike Schmitz who said, "If you don't want the Eucharist, then you don't fully want Jesus." Perkins said: "And I wanted Him. I wanted Him so badly. I wanted to let go of all the junk I had dealt with over the years. I wanted the healing. I wanted the renewal. I wanted to be bold and know what I believed."

Fully convinced that Catholicism contained the fullness of Christ's truth, he approached Natali and told her,

"I've got to become Catholic. I have to."

He and Natali "lovingly worked through everything,"

and they went through RCIA as a couple and came into the Church on March 14, 2021.

Perkins is the Praise and Worship Director for youth ministry at St. Vincent de Paul Church in Fort Wayne, and he and Natali are co-founders, along with fellow St. Charles parishioner Gloria Kohrman, of Shema Culture, which aims to facilitate unity among the Christian community in the Fort Wayne region by worshipping Our Lord together as one body in Christ through praise and worship music.

Toward the conclusion of his testimony at St. Charles, Perkins said: "If you walk away from tonight having heard anything, walk away with the message of the Gospel, that Jesus Christ came to set each and every one of us free – free from whatever sin we're struck with, whatever pain we're dealing with, whatever sorrow we're dealing with, whatever we're holding on to, whatever we feel like we can't let go of. Jesus came to set you free."

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

**Two Shows for Ecce Young Adult Choir**  
FORT WAYNE – St. Rose of Lima Church, 209 Mulberry St., and St. Vincent de Paul Church, 1502 E. Wallen Rd., will each host a performance by the Ecce Young Adult Choir on Saturday, December 9, where audience members will be called to ponder the wonder and beauty of the Incarnation through sacred music, Scripture, and prayer. St. Rose in Monroeville will host the choir for a show from 1-2 p.m. The choir will then perform at St. Vincent de Paul Church from 7-8 p.m. Both concerts are free and open to all. Contact Jessica Schuster at [jessica.schuster.155@gmail.com](mailto:jessica.schuster.155@gmail.com) for more information.

**Notre Dame Children's Choir Lessons and Carols Concert**  
NOTRE DAME – The annual Notre Dame Children's Choir Lessons and Carols will be held on Saturday, December 9, from 4:30-5:30 p.m. in the Church of Our Lady of Loretto at Saint Mary's College. The concert will feature six children's choirs that include more than 100 children from the area, ages 5-18, performing sacred works with Scripture readings,

prayers, and congregational hymns. All are welcome to this free concert, which is handicap accessible. Contact Susanna Villano at 574-631-5858 or [SacredMusicAcademy@nd.edu](mailto:SacredMusicAcademy@nd.edu) for information.

**Breakfast with St. Nicholas**  
SOUTH BEND – A free breakfast of pancakes, sausage, eggs, and hash-browns will be served at St. Hedwig Memorial Center, 331 S. Scott St., on Sunday, December 10, from 10 a.m to 1 p.m. Call 561-344-9677 for free tickets or the St. Patrick Parish Office at 574-287-8932. Enjoy a visit with St. Nicholas, gifts, and games for children. Contact Robert Barber at 561-344-9677 or [niswongerpg1963@yahoo.com](mailto:niswongerpg1963@yahoo.com) for more information.

**175th Anniversary Celebration**  
MISHAWAKA – St. Joseph Parish, 225 S Mill St., will celebrate the 175th anniversary of the 1848 founding of the parish on Sunday, December 10. Bishop Rhoades will celebrate the 11:15 a.m. Mass with the participation of all of the parish choirs. Brunch will follow in the school cafeteria. Coffee and

main dishes will be provided by the parish; contributions of side dishes are warmly welcomed. Contact Margaret Cabaniss at [mccabaniss@gmail.com](mailto:mccabaniss@gmail.com) for more information.

**Lessons and Carols**  
NOTRE DAME – Saint Mary's College community and the Sisters of the Holy Cross will host Lessons and Carols on Sunday, December 10, from 7-8 p.m. at the Church of Our Lady of Loretto. Journey through Advent and prepare to celebrate the birth of the Savior. The event will also be livestreamed on the Church of Loretto YouTube channel.

CROSSWORD SOLUTION

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## REST IN PEACE

<b>Arcola</b> Janet Claxton, 76, St. Patrick	<b>South Bend</b> Levi T. Sulentic, 32, Christ the King	Evelyn Marie Hacker, 94, St. Anthony de Padua
Gerald Johnson, 94, St. Patrick	Betty Yonto, 95, Holy Cross	Bobby Newbill, 76, St. Augustine
<b>Fort Wayne</b> Rick Hines, 77, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton	Genevieve A. Szynski, 96, Holy Family	Marina Cabral, 50, St. Casimir
<b>Granger</b> Judith Phillips, 81, St. Pius X	Hector Morales Delgado, 60, St. Adalbert	Jeanette H. Rybicki, 90, St. John the Baptist
	Carmen Navarro Lopez, 67, St. Adalbert	

Send obituaries to [obituaries@diocesefwsb.org](mailto:obituaries@diocesefwsb.org).

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On the campus of Notre Dame

Mass | Prayer | Fellowship

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# Advent, Christmas are Special for Saint Anne's Residents

BY CLAIRE KENNEY

While the Advent and Christmas seasons can be difficult for seniors who reside in assisted living or nursing care facilities, employees of Saint Anne's Communities in Fort Wayne help their residents prepare their hearts for the coming of Christ by organizing fun and holy traditions. Each year, throughout Advent, Saint Anne's residents actively participate in community events.

"Christmas is always a special occasion at Saint Anne's," said Elaine Wilson, the Chief Operating Officer/Administrator at Saint Anne Communities.

The elderly who reside at Saint Anne's vary in their ability to leave the campus. Many cannot leave without assistance. By hosting special seasonal events on Saint Anne's grounds, all residents can comfortably and easily celebrate. The retirement community, which offers services ranging from rehabilitation, to assisted living, to memory care, independent living, and 24-hour nursing care, even includes the opportunity for the families of residents to celebrate the season with them.

Each year, Saint Anne's hosts the Winter Wonderland Christmas Dinner "to help ensure these residents get special time with their families," Wilson told Today's Catholic. "For two nights, the Saint

Anne's team takes on the role of wait staff, and the residents and their families are invited to an evening of a three-course meal, music, and a beautiful environment in which to celebrate."

Bill Langschied, a longtime volunteer with Saint Anne's and member of its administrative team, said the event is a wonderful way to create beautiful Christmas memories.

"Winter Wonderland is a celebration of Christ's joy with residents and their families – spectacular memories of Christmas!" he said.

In addition to Winter Wonderland, Saint Anne's also organizes a way for residents to give back at Christmastime.

"Something else that we have done for several years here at Saint Anne's to help celebrate the joy and true meaning of Christmas is we have two nurses who organize donations to help support a local family for Christmas," said Miranda Haupt, Director of Fund Development and Marketing.

Saint Anne's staff and others come together with residents to help support the sponsored family.

"The entire facility is given a list of items that are on the children's Christmas list, and staff, visitors, and residents are invited to donate to this cause," Haupt explained.

This year, like others, the event was quite successful. "We come through every year," Haupt said.



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Fort Wayne

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(260)484-5555

[www.sacfw.org](http://www.sacfw.org)

What is your favorite Christmas tradition or memory?

Tell us at  
[editor@todayscatholic.org](mailto:editor@todayscatholic.org)  
by December 12

TODAY'S CATHOLIC