

# TODAY'S CATHOLIC

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## Pope Appoints Father Wimal Jayasuriya as Bishop of Chilaw, Sri Lanka

BY SCOTT WARDEN

**F**ather Wimal Jayasuriya came to the United States from Sri Lanka in September of 2019 partly to further his education, but also, he said, because he wanted to avoid the “limelight” that might come his way had he stayed.

After he arrived in Fort Wayne, Father Jayasuriya's home diocese of Chilaw, Sri Lanka, laid vacant – without a bishop – for two years, and he knew Church leaders there were putting together a list of priests who might be “bishop material.” With his extensive education, pastoral experience, and a heart for his flock, Father Jayasuriya had all the qualifications – but none of the desire – to be a bishop. Plus, he figured, he was half a world away.

But you can't hide from the pope.

On Wednesday, December 6, Vatican officials announced that Pope Francis has appointed Father Jayasuriya as Bishop of the Diocese of Chilaw, Sri Lanka. On the weekend of December 9-10, Bishop-elect Jayasuriya told the St. Mary community that he would celebrate his final Mass there on Monday, January 1 – fittingly, the solemnity of Mary,

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Dan Stockman

Father Wimal Jayasuriya greets parishioners after Mass on Sunday, December 10, at St. Mary Mother of God Parish in Fort Wayne. On Wednesday, December 6, Vatican officials announced Pope Francis appointed Father Jayasuriya as Bishop of Chilaw, Sri Lanka.

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# Bishop Confirms 27 at Basilica of the Sacred Heart

BY MICHELLE MCDANIEL

After months of preparation, Bishop Rhoades confirmed 27 candidates at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart on Sunday, December 3. The candidates, from the University of Notre Dame and Holy Cross Catholic School in South Bend, filed in 30 minutes before Mass began to sit at the front with their sponsors.

Notre Dame senior and Campus Ministry Intern Christian Quilon passed out name tags, and Megan Urbaniak, Coordinator of Ministries at the basilica, prepared altar servers. Families strolled in to find the best spot to sit and see their candidate.

Frank Agostino and his family sat near the front so they could see their son, who was the first to be called from the Holy Cross students.

"The most important thing I can do as a father is teach my son to love God with his heart, mind, and soul. This is a choice for them; they didn't have a choice at baptism. This is my son's time to step up and choose his faith, so it's a very happy day for me to see him make that choice," Agostino said.

Along with the other Holy Cross eighth-grade candidates, Agostino's son had to interview potential sponsors, write essays about why they wanted to be confirmed in their faith, meet with a priest, create posters about their confirmation saint, and take several months of religious classes through the school.

The Notre Dame students who were confirmed took part in the Short Course Process, which included a semester of weekly classes for students who were already familiar with the faith and had developed a relationship with God.

"This program is great because it meets people where they're at and shows them what it means to be uniquely Catholic and the beauty of the Church and faith," Quilon said. "As weeks went by, our candidates grew in deeper understanding and appreciation for the faith."

One candidate, Notre Dame sophomore Thomas Huberty, grew up Protestant but chose to attend the University of Notre Dame in part to deepen his faith. On December 3, he was confirmed as a Catholic, along with the 12 other Notre Dame students.

"This program has exponentially increased my prayer life. I've spent more time developing my prayer life at Notre Dame than anywhere else. I feel so blessed. I'm just so grateful for the influences around me. Without them, I wouldn't be where I am today,"



Photos by Michelle McDaniel

**Bishop Rhoades celebrates Mass at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart at the University of Notre Dame on Sunday, December 3. At the Mass, Bishop Rhoades confirmed 27 candidates from Holy Cross Catholic School in South Bend and the University of Notre Dame.**



**Bishop Rhoades confirms a candidate during a Mass at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart at the University of Notre Dame on Sunday, December 3.**

Huberty said.

For eighth-grade Holy Cross student Julian Sanchez Murillo, receiving the sacrament meant a deepening of his already-present Catholic faith.

"To me, getting confirmed means getting closer to God, new doors opening, and discovering new things. It means getting to know the fruits and gifts of the Holy Spirit," Sanchez Murillo said.

Bishop Rhoades' homily addressed this deepening of faith and the mission of the Church, especially for con-

firmed individuals. He reminded the congregation of the Sacrament of Confirmation's relation to Pentecost Sunday.

"It was on Pentecost Sunday that the mission of the Church began – the mission of proclaiming and establishing Christ's Kingdom among all peoples," he said. "The Holy Spirit came upon the disciples in that room in Jerusalem, strengthening them for this mission."

Bishop Rhoades continued: "The Holy Spirit came upon them not as a dove like at

Jesus' baptism but as tongues of fire igniting the disciples with the fire of God's love, giving the disciples a special strength to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ the Savior. And ever since Pentecost, the baptized receive the same power of the Holy Spirit through confirmation, a sacrament that completes the grace of baptism."

Bishop Rhoades congratulated the candidates as well as urged them to take up the mission they accepted through the sacrament.


After Mass, candidates walked to the Lady Chapel within the Basilica to take photos with their groups and Bishop Rhoades, and then walked to separate receptions.

Holy Cross Catholic School students were celebrated in Remick Commons, a short walk from the basilica, which was decorated for Christmas. The students' posters of saints lined the windows, displayed for parents before they were set up at the school.

Holy Cross Principal Annie Barjas cut cake for students, congratulating them as parents and sponsors sat at tables with their students and took photos.


Meanwhile, Notre Dame students sat with their families at the nearby Coleman-Morse Center, eating and celebrating, ready to take on the Church's mission as newly confirmed members of the faith.





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**FEASIBILITY STUDY  
2023**



**THE DIOCESE OF FORT WAYNE/SOUTH  
BEND, BISHOP DWENGER & BISHOP  
LUERS HIGH SCHOOLS**

## Diocese Explores Creating Career Technical Academy

BY LISA KOCHANOWSKI

The Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend has four Catholic high schools that strive to open hearts and minds through an academically excellent environment, forming disciples of Jesus Christ. In an effort to stay connected with the times and be inclusive to students with unique talents, the diocese is undergoing a feasibility study to explore the creation of St. Joseph the Worker Career Technical Academy. This career center opportunity for students at Bishop Luers and Bishop Dwenger high schools would focus on faith, education, and service in the Fort Wayne area.

According to David L. Maugel, Superintendent of Catholic Schools for the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Bishop Dwenger High School Principal Jason Schiffli and his team communicated and initiated the conversation by sharing an aspiration to utilize a building given to the school by a generous donor.

"The Bishop Dwenger team communicated the desire to partner with Bishop Luers in

the development of a career technical academy that would serve the educational needs of students looking to gain more authentic experiences within their academic development," Maguel told Today's Catholic. "In addition, the state of Indiana has changed graduation pathways, which has challenged all high schools to develop career pathways to meet the graduation requirements for students not meeting an SAT or ACT cut-off score."

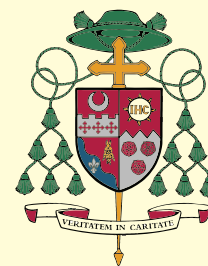
Schiffli said the high school has been part of a collaborative effort with the Fort Wayne Community Schools Career Academy at Anthis, a program that allows students the opportunity to gain technical skills to be college and career-ready. Throughout the past five years, the popularity of this program has tripled, but only a limited number of students from each school can secure spots because priority goes to students in public schools.

Recognizing that not all students are interested in pursuing a college degree but are passionate about entering a career in the trades sparked the idea of creating a new technical facility.

"We saw this as a big 'a-ha moment' for us," Schiffli said. "The Department of Education is encouraging and rewarding schools for offering career training opportunities. I think we will have a lot of people supporting this project."

Maugel said the diocese plans to renovate an existing building to develop five to seven programs that would align with the interests of local businesses and state graduation pathways. Currently, the diocese has partnered with Our Sunday Visitor to complete a feasibility study on the Fort Wayne side of the diocese. They are working with enFocus, a team of fellows who partner with civic institutions, regional businesses, and local entrepreneurs to solve problems and build capacity for innovation, to develop a business plan for long-term sustainability. Bishop Dwenger and Bishop Luers have collaborated on programs, funding resources, vision, and logistics. The Catholic School's Office has provided guidance, direction, and questions with important

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### Public schedule of Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades

Wednesday, December 20: 11 a.m. – Mass and Christmas Luncheon for Seminarians, St. Jude Church, Fort Wayne  
Thursday, December 21: 11 a.m. – Mass and Employee Christmas Luncheon, Sacred Heart Church, Warsaw, and Grace College, Winona Lake  
Sunday, December 24: 10:45 a.m. – Fourth Sunday of Advent Mass, St. Mary Mother of God Church, Fort Wayne  
Sunday, December 24: 10:30 p.m. – Christmas Eve Mass, Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Fort Wayne



### Forty Hours Devotion



### Parishes are Listed in Order by Date

#### 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. Joseph, Garrett: March 2-4

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Fort Wayne: March 3-5

St. Casimir, South Bend: 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

##### MAY

St. Joseph, LaGrange: May 12-14

##### JUNE

St. Anthony of Padua, Angola: June 2-4

St. John the Baptist, South Bend: June 23-25

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



# St. Adalbert Receives \$250,000 Grant for Renovations

BY KASIA BALSBAUGH

The National Fund for Sacred Places recently awarded St. Adalbert Church in South Bend with a \$250,000 matching grant to help the Catholic parish implement building improvements. The organization gives renovation funds to churches of all denominations across the country. The grant is generally given to churches with historical significance, remarkable architecture, and community impact.

This year, St. Adalbert Catholic Church was one of 371 congregations that applied for the grant. There were 30 finalists, from which 16 were selected. St. Adalbert was one of only two Catholic churches chosen to receive the grant worth a quarter of a million dollars.

"This year was the most competitive yet, and the members of the new cohort stood

out for their admirable commitment to using their historic religious properties as civic assets," Bob Jaeger, President of Partners for Sacred Places, said in a statement. "We are excited to collaborate with the National Trust in serving faith leaders who are working hard to ensure that their buildings are preserved, fully used, and able to serve their communities over the long term."

Holy Cross Father Ryan Pietrocarlo, Pastor of St. Adalbert, and Donald Popielarz, the coordinator of the renovation project, intend to use the grant to help fund a \$14 million renovation project.

The economic impact of St. Adalbert Catholic Church is around \$2.7 million per year, which Popielarz points out makes the return on the renovation investment very much worth it.

"That's very, very important for a lot of reasons, from the spiritual standpoint, but also from a purely economic, secular



Photos by Kasia Balsbaugh

**Father Ryan Pietrocarlo, Pastor of St. Adalbert Parish in South Bend, and parishioner Donald Popielarz, both of whom are shown in the photo at right, say renovations are desperately needed to the interior of the church, above.**

standpoint too, because this parish is really the de facto community center of the West Side," Popielarz said. "This is home base for a lot of people."

The St. Adalbert community is primarily made up of first- and second-generation Hispanic immigrants, many of whom only speak Spanish. A small percentage of the church community are elderly members who are descendants of the original founders of the church, which was founded almost 100 years ago in 1926 by Polish immigrants.

And the church is still busy and growing, as evidenced by the fact that it averages 40 funerals, 25 weddings, and almost 80 baptisms a year.

In 2003, St. Adalbert Catholic Church became a ministry under the Congregation of Holy Cross, the community that founded the University of Notre Dame. Father Pietrocarlo explained that part of the reason for that change was the closing of a former Holy Cross church, St. Stephen, in downtown South Bend in that same year.

"The church was knocked down due to structural instability," Father Pietrocarlo said, "which gives more impetus for this project because a lot of our parishioners remember that. And so it's important to care for this church so we don't have the same thing happen."

The repairs needed at St. Adalbert are extensive, parish leaders told Today's Catholic. Necessary repairs will take priority in the first phase of the renovation project – repairs that include fixing falling plaster and paint, water damage, disintegrating wooden railings and windows, and the roof, among other things.

One of the biggest renovations needed is fixing the left steeple of the church, which is slowly shifting. Professionals have also informed church officials that the stained-glass window in the steeple is slightly bowed because of the instability.

The second phase of the project will include replacing the 1950s boiler for heating and, leaders hope, putting in new air conditioning.

Phase three involves building accessible men's and women's restrooms in the back of the church, which will be made possible by enlarging the narthex. The 900-seat church currently only has one bathroom.

The last phase of the renovation will involve restoring the church's many murals and artwork.

Due to its historical and architectural value, officials say the church building is worth saving. For instance, the stained-glass windows, which were added after World War II, are of "very high quality," Popielarz said. "One historical preservationist thought these windows are equal in quality to Tiffany," he added.

Another important part of the renovation is the repainting of the church's interior. The current paint job on the ceiling and pillars is not original to the church; Popielarz calls it part of a "wreckovation of the 1980s." The new paint will be as close as possible to the original coloring, and Popielarz and Father Pietrocarlo are trying to find wedding photos in the church from the 1970s to match the colors as best they can.

Church leaders reiterated the need for the community's help – first, by sharing any wedding photos in color anyone



might have before the interior of the church was repainted in the 1980s. Second, monetary donations are also very much welcome. Contact the parish office (574-288-5708), Father Ryan Pietrocarlo (rpietrocarlo@stadalbertschool.org), or Donald Popielarz (donald-popielarz@gmail.com) for more information.

To help supplement the money they received from the National Fund for Sacred Places, the parish is applying for other grants, including Indiana Landmarks' Saving Sacred Places. They continue to contact potential donors and foundations from across the country.

The renovation plans have been underway for more than two years at this point. Having been cautioned by the project's architect that further delay would be costly – and that delaying renovations another 10 years could result in building failure – Popielarz said the project has "reached a critical point."

"We've planned," Popielarz said. "The time for doing is now."



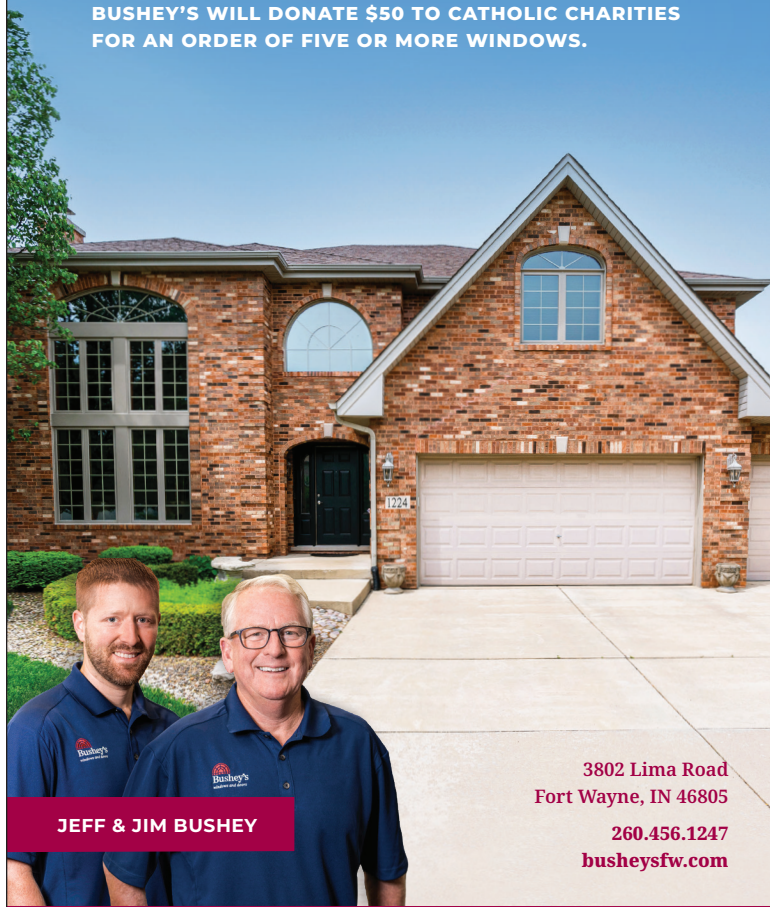
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The St. Joseph the Worker Career Technical Academy will provide three traditional academic classrooms, four lab spaces, and an activity space in its initial opening. The beginning curriculum would include: Construction Trades, Med Tech (CNA & CMA certifications), and Entrepreneurship courses.

A collaboration between the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Bishop Dwenger, and Bishop Luers High Schools

**CAREERS**, from page 3

details to address identifying programs, building and personnel logistics, and long-term funding models.

The proposed curriculum would include construction trades, medical technology including certified nursing assistant (CNA) and certified medical assistant (CMA), and entrepreneurship. All pathways would culminate with a capstone project that will include entrepreneurial elements. Each pathway would include a certification and/or dual credit.

Bishop Dwenger Development Director Katie Slee feels this venture is a great moment for the schools to be good stewards of their communities.

"We owe it to our students to recognize the gifts God has given them," said Slee, who noted that some students are athletes, others are strong in academics, and others thrive in the area of trades, and this school would allow students gifted in the trades to reach their full potential through the lens of their Catholic faith.

Slee said the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend will be the only diocese in Indiana to have a technical academy and allow for a unique moment of unity between the only two Catholic high schools in Fort Wayne.

"St. Joseph the Worker Career Technical Academy will engage our students in authentic environments that directly connect to a career pathway," Bishop Rhoades said. "The academy, as an extension of both high schools, will carry on the Catholic culture in the formation of our students through prayer, education, and evangelization that fosters disciples of Jesus Christ." He added, "I fully endorse the investigation and development of a Catholic Career Technical Academy that reflects the characteristics of St. Joseph the Worker."

"The focus is on allowing students the opportunity to develop authentic academic knowledge and skills that will allow them to pursue vocations that they are called to," Mangel said. "Secondarily, the Fort Wayne community may experience an increase in an ethical workforce that values the virtues of St. Joseph: just, faithful, righteous, silent, chaste, obedient, and devoted to the Blessed Virgin Mary."

"Fort Wayne is a great place to live," Schiffli said. "We hope these kids will go through the program, get their certifications, and then stay in the area providing smart, morally strong Christian people working and living in the area," he added, noting that many of the generous donors to both schools are alumni who have built successful careers within the trades and are strong supporters of this project.

To learn more, and to take the feasibility survey, visit [diocesefwsb.org/career-academy](http://diocesefwsb.org/career-academy).



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Q: DO I HAVE TO GO TO MASS ON SUNDAY AND CHRISTMAS?

A: YES! Catholics are obligated to attend Mass every Sunday and Holy Day (including Christmas). This year, even though the Sunday and Christmas obligations fall back-to-back, each has their own, distinct obligation. Catholics must attend a different Mass for each obligation - two Masses total.

SUNDAY OBLIGATION

CHRISTMAS OBLIGATION



## Pope Invokes Korean Martyrs Ahead of WYD

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – In preparation for World Youth Day 2027, South Korea's young Catholics must maintain the Christian witness of their country's martyrs who laid the foundation for the Catholic Church's "vibrant" community in the country, Pope Francis said. Korea's martyrs "sowed the seeds for what has become a blossoming and vibrant Church" in South Korea, the pope wrote in a telegram to Bishop Matthias Ri Jong-Hoon of Suwon, President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea, to mark 60 years of diplomatic relations between South Korea and the Holy See. Vatican officials released the text on Monday, December 11. "The youth of today are the heirs of this great testimony of faith, and I pray that they will carry on this precious witness to Christ as they prepare for the World Youth Day 2027," the pope wrote.

## Nebraska Priest Dies After Attack During Rectory Break-In

OMAHA, Nebraska (OSV News) – A Nebraska priest died after being attacked in the rectory of his parish in the early morning of Sunday, December 10. Father Stephen Gutsell was found "suffering from injuries sustained during an assault" at the rectory of St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in Fort Calhoun, Nebraska, where he served as pastoral administrator. According to a news release from Washington County Sheriff Mike Robinson, the county's 911 emergency dispatch received an emergency call that day at approximately 5:05 a.m. reporting an attempted break-in at the rectory. Deputies arrived within six minutes and took a suspect into custody while the injured priest was transported to the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha, where he later died from his injuries. Robinson said the investigation is ongoing and told local media he does not believe the death is related to the deceased priest's 2007 conviction for embezzling more than \$125,000 from a former parish, for which he received five years' probation and was returned to ministry following a successful residential rehabilitation program.

## Latin Patriarch Calls for Sides to Negotiate Lasting Peace

JERUSALEM (OSV News) – The war between Israel and Hamas may finally force a diplomatic solution to the long intractable tensions between the Israelis

## St. Peter's Square Decked Out for Christmas



CNS photo/Lola Gomez

The Nativity scene is unveiled and the Christmas tree is lighted in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican on Saturday, December 9. The tree comes from the Maira Valley near Turin, Italy, and is decorated with live edelweiss flowers cultivated at a nursery nearby. Both the Nativity scene and the Christmas tree will be on display through Sunday, January 7, the feast of the Baptism of Our Lord.

and the Palestinians in the Holy Land, said the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem. Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, 58, who has served as Patriarch of Jerusalem since November of 2020, said that while there have been constant conflicts between Israel and the Palestinians since the State of Israel was formed in 1948 and even earlier, this time, it feels very different, and a comprehensive political solution may be the only way to stop the ongoing bloodshed. "It is a political conflict, first of all, that now is assuming more and more religious connotations, unfortunately. This makes things more difficult, because religion is less open to any kind of compromise," Cardinal Pizzaballa told the Rhode Island Catholic, the newspaper of the Diocese of Providence. The cardinal said

that now is the time for leaders to concentrate their efforts on finding a viable solution for all those living in the Holy Land, including the Palestinians living in the West Bank, as well as the Gaza Strip. Cardinal Pizzaballa feels that the time is now for political leaders to finally make good on slogans that have only paid lip service to resolving the long-term conflict. "A Two-State Solution was a slogan without content for many years. Now, we have to give to this slogan some content," he said.

## Federal Judge Moves to Block Migrant Family Separations

SAN DIEGO (OSV News) – A federal judge has moved to end

separating migrant families at the U.S. border for the next eight years, heading off a possible reinstatement of a policy enacted by former President Donald Trump. On Friday, December 8, U.S. District Judge Dana M. Sabraw of the Southern District of California tentatively approved an October settlement reached between the U.S. Department of Justice and families represented by the American Civil Liberties Union. The settlement concluded the class action suit *Ms. L. vs. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement*, filed nearly seven years ago on behalf of some 4,500 to 5,000 children and their families who were forcibly separated from each other. Sabraw had ordered an end to the separations in June of 2018, with then-President Trump

having suspended them on his own after international outrage. Among those weighing in at the time was Bishop Joe S. Vásquez of Austin, Texas, then-Chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Migration, who in a June 1, 2018, statement said that "forcibly separating children from their mothers and fathers is ineffective to the goals of deterrence and safety and contrary to our Catholic values."

## Texas Court Rejects Abortion Petition

AUSTIN, Texas (OSV News) – The Texas Supreme Court on Monday, December 11, overruled a district judge's order allowing a pregnant mother to obtain an abortion under an exemption to the state's abortion ban. The justices ruled the woman's case, which required a doctor to exercise "reasonable medical judgment" regarding the danger of pregnancy to the woman's health, failed to meet the standards crafted by the Legislature. Hours before the ruling, the woman's attorneys reported she left Texas to seek an abortion elsewhere. The high court's order ruled Judge Maya Guerra Gamble erred in permitting Kate Cox to have a "dilation and evacuation" abortion under narrow exceptions to Texas' ban. The court said Cox's physician had "asked a court to pre-authorize the abortion" but "could not, or at least did not, attest to the court that Ms. Cox's condition poses the risks the exception requires." While the statute gives physicians discretion, the court ruled it "requires more than a doctor's mere subjective belief ... the medical judgment involved must meet an objective standard."

## Macron to Invite Pope to Notre Dame's 2024 Reopening

PARIS (OSV News) – On Friday, December 8, a year from the reopening of the Notre Dame Cathedral in the heart of the French capital, French President Emmanuel Macron said he will invite Pope Francis to attend the historic moment. "I hope so, in any case we'll invite him," Macron said when asked about the pope's possible presence. "The invitation will be extended. But it's not for me to answer on his behalf," he added. Macron, in his sixth visit to the reconstruction site, climbed to the scaffolding of the newly installed spire. The spire, Notre Dame's iconic topping, collapsed amid a fire on April 15, 2019, to the shock of France and the whole world. After debates on how it should be rebuilt, French and Church authorities decided to rebuild the spire exactly the same as before.



# AROUND THE DIOCESE

## Cathedral Takes Part in City of Churches Tour

BY BETHANY BEEBE

The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception opened its doors to the public at large as part of the seventh annual City of Churches Tour, held the evening of Friday, December 1, in Fort Wayne. Father Jacob Runyon, Pastor of the Cathedral, told Today's Catholic, "I hope that visitors see the beauty of the church and see the importance of beautiful art for the edification of God's people."

The tour was started by Cornelia Schulz, according to Brice Vinson-Schisler, Director of the Fort Wayne City of Churches Tour. "Fort Wayne has long been recognized as the City of Churches," he said. "Cornelia, born and raised in Germany, used this title when she decided to start the Fort Wayne Tour after the German tradition of *Lange Nacht der Kirchen*, or 'Long Night of Churches.'"

At the Cathedral, visitors could walk through the choir loft, the sanctuary and around the altar, and the crypt. Those visiting could ask questions along the way, and there was an information booklet distributed at the entrance.

The six churches featured as part of this event are all

Christian but of different denominations. This year's list included Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, Plymouth Congregational Church, St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church, Trinity Episcopal Church, and the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.

"Fort Wayne is blessed with beautiful architecture, both sacred and secular," Vinson-Schisler said. "Many times, we drive by these grand churches and wonder how they look inside, but rarely get to experience them unless we are members. I'm hoping that tour-goers get to appreciate these marvelous pillars of faith that have help[ed] shape our community for decades – centuries, even."



Photos by Bethany Beebe

Meagan Marie Belanger guides visitors on their tour of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception during the annual City of Churches Tour in Fort Wayne on Friday, December 1.



## Christmas Altars from Around the Diocese

FORT WAYNE – The Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend is home to many one-of-a-kind churches, each one as unique as the people inside of them. This can also be said for the way they decorate their altars during the Christmas season. While it may be difficult to visit every church across the diocese this Christmastime, Kathy Imler, Director of the Diocesan Museum, and her dedicated team have made it possible to enjoy many of them all in one place.

For several years, the Diocesan Museum has been host to the Christmas Altar Exhibit. This artful display features photos from many of the parishes and their spectacular decorations, fit to celebrate the birth of the King of Kings. This exhibit can be viewed anytime within the museum's normal operating hours of Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., until Saturday, January 6. The Diocesan Museum, 1103



S. Calhoun St. in downtown Fort Wayne, is open to the public and admission is free.

The Diocesan Museum has photos on display from more than 30 parishes. If your

church is not yet represented or has undergone recent renovations, please send photos to Kathy Imler, Director of the museum, at [kimler@diocesefwsb.org](mailto:kimler@diocesefwsb.org).



Photos provided by Kathy Imler

Kathy Imler, Director of the Diocesan Museum, shows the museum's Christmas Altar Exhibit, which will be on display through Saturday, January 6.



# St. John the Evangelist Parishioners 'Stuff the Boxes'

BY DENISE FEDOROW

Parishioners at St. John the Evangelist Parish in Goshen have been participating in the Box of Joy program through Cross Catholic Outreach for five years. A Box of Joy is a shoe box filled with toys, clothing, school supplies, a rosary, and a booklet in their own language that tells "The Story of Jesus." The boxes are to be sent to children in developing countries such as Haiti, Malawi, and the Dominican Republic, according to their

website, [cross-catholic.org/box-of-joy](http://cross-catholic.org/box-of-joy). This year, organizers at St.

More photos are available at [todayscatholic.org](http://todayscatholic.org)



John the Evangelist added a twist and held a "Stuff the Box" event on Friday, November 10, with three objectives. They wanted to fill Boxes of Joy, have a fun parish fellowship event, and create a means to bring together English- and Spanish-speaking parishioners of the parish.

Amanda Woodiel organized the event. She said it all began in 2019 when her five kids were aged 2-10. She couldn't sleep one night and decided to go online to see if her blog was posted to CatholicMom.com. When she got to the website, she saw a posting about Boxes of Joy and decided to investigate. She said she had heard about similar service projects at other churches but said, "I loved that Cross Catholic added a rosary and a book about the life of Jesus to each box."

She told Today's Catholic that she went to their website and learned the deadline was that day at midnight and it was already 11:30 p.m. "I had 30 minutes to decide, and my voice of reason (my husband Tom) was asleep next to me," she said.

At the time, she was leading the mom's group at the parish and was sure they could fill 10 boxes. "As I was filling out the form, I heard a voice in my soul say 100. I thought '100? What if I have to make up the difference? We have no resources for that.'" As she argued with herself internally, Woodiel said she heard 100 again.

So, she took a leap of faith with 15 minutes left to decide and ordered 100 boxes to be delivered to her house the next day. That year, with just a couple of weeks to do so, and purely through word of mouth, they filled 148 boxes. They have continued to do the project each year, but with a lot more notice and advertising.

As for the Stuff the Boxes



Photos provided by Brian Sapp

Members of the Tecpil family, from left, Reyna, Daphne Romero, and Denahii Romero, participate in the bilingual event held on Friday, November 10, at St. John the Evangelist in Goshen to fill Boxes of Joy for children overseas.

event, Woodiel said: "From the beginning, I heard people say they really enjoyed the project. After all, it combines the great American pastime of shopping with charitable works. The only lament I heard was that it would be fun to have a party to fill the boxes together. Between COVID, which occurred the following year, and our son having serious health issues in 2022, this was the first opportunity I had to test it out."

Woodiel said another reason for planning the in-person event was because the parish is always looking for ways to bring the Spanish-speaking and English-speaking communities within the parish together, but because of space constraints at the church, it is sometimes difficult to do. She felt this was an opportunity to get as many people as possible in the same place with a common goal of doing a task that doesn't need a common language. They even had games for the children who didn't speak the same languages, such as Uno, jigsaw puzzles, and coloring sheets that could be put in the boxes.

"We set up tables for people to sit together and enjoy refreshments," Woodiel said. "And we had bilingual 'human Bingo,' in which people tried

to find someone who matched the categories on their Bingo cards like 'find someone whose birthday is the same month as yours,' or 'find someone who can whistle,' and whoever got a Bingo then entered his or her card to win a door prize." She

*"From the beginning, I heard people say they really enjoyed the project. After all, it combines the great American pastime of shopping with charitable works."*

AMANDA WOODIEL

said that particular activity got parishioners talking to each other.

The "Companions of Mary Magdalene," a small group of young Hispanic women, helped with the event. "They were looking for a service project

and were excited about it," said Woodiel. "They helped make bilingual videos for Facebook and helped hand out empty boxes after Masses."

"It really benefited all of us," added Woodiel, because the group is raising money to go to the SEEK conference, a national conference put on by FOCUS, and they were able to sell tamales at the Stuff the Box event to raise funds. "They hit their financial goal, and I believe they brought in more traffic to the event from people who were coming to buy tamales."

Woodiel said about 100 people came to the come-and-go event with about 30 to 40 in the gym at one time. Instead of filling a box on their own, people could choose a slip of paper that said things like 10 T-shirts or 10 glue sticks, and those items were collected and distributed to the boxes to be filled. Those who wished to fill a box on their own were still welcome to do so. She said they filled 110 boxes that night and 284 total, with the school children filling 84 of them.

Woodiel said she was not sure if having the event brought more participation because some who filled boxes on their own in the past instead chose to purchase

items for the event. "It did bring blessings, though." She added: "I heard from several that they enjoyed the format more than trying to fill a box all by themselves. Someone else pointed out that this method allows more people to participate who couldn't fill a box on their own due to financial restraints. Finally, it shows people how to fill a box so that filling one on their own in the future wouldn't be so overwhelming."

The Knights of Columbus have also been supportive of the project, financing some of the shipping costs. Each box requires \$9 shipping, and the Knights help cover that cost for the boxes filled by the school-children at St. John's school.

Woodiel said the best year they had was in 2021 when they filled 340 boxes. "People had stimulus money, and the general mood was one of relief and helping others. This year, the economy is tighter, the cost of living is increased, and especially in our county, which has a lot of RV manufacturing, the mood is uncertain."

Woodiel said it is hard to gauge year to year. "What I can say is that throughout the five years we have done it, we have sent well over 1,000 boxes to children!"



# LEGACY OF H PE

St. Vincent de Paul Society of Fort Wayne

## St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store Renovations Begin

BY BETHANY BEEBE

Things are looking up – and will soon be going up – at the St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store.

Paid for with funds from the Legacy of Hope Campaign, a new elevator is the first of many improvements to the infrastructure of the thrift store at 1600 South Calhoun St. in Fort Wayne. According to Lara Schreck, Executive Director of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, more than 95 percent of the campaign's \$2 million goal has been raised.

The Legacy of Hope Campaign has three primary objectives. First, they hope to serve more people in need with improved operations at the store. The St. Vincent de Paul Society provides assistance with utilities, rent, food, clothing, and furniture through person-to-person service from funds raised at the store. Second, greater self-sufficiency is a goal. The onsite woodshop will offer opportunities for people to learn carpentry skills while creating beds and dressers that are donated to families who otherwise might not own such amenities. According to officials with the St. Vincent de Paul Society, the Allen County Workforce Development estimates 10,000 new Allen County construction jobs in the coming decade. Finally, the campaign aims to create equity by making the entire facility accessible to all who use it.

St. Vincent de Paul Society leaders held a special event on Tuesday, December 5, to kick off the beginning of construction at the thrift store. The goal of the community event was “to celebrate the success of our Legacy of Hope Campaign, to humbly thank all of you who were instrumental to that success, and to kick off construction of the thrift store improvements to help us better serve our community,” Schreck said.



Photos by Bethany Beebe  
On Tuesday, December 5, leaders of St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store in Fort Wayne kicked off the first phase of building renovations. At left, Executive Director Lara Schreck speaks during the open-house event.

Sam Schenkel, President of the Board of Directors and a member of the Campaign Steering Committee as well as the Leadership Gift Committee, said: “The elevator being built ... is just the start of many planned improvements,

including a new donation drop-off center, a multipurpose training room, accessible restrooms, a ramp connecting the buildings, a new e-commerce center, exterior facade renovations, and upgrades to our woodshop. It's exciting to see

construction beginning to make these plans a reality.”

Bishop Rhoades is an honorary chairperson of the campaign, supporting its work from a perspective of faith as the store's improvement plans are implemented and the last dollars anticipated. “The Society of St. Vincent de Paul attends to the poor and needy of our community in the spirit of Christ,” he said, “seeing in every poor and suffering person the face of Jesus. They



put our faith into practice through their many works of charity.”

Schreck expressed thanks to those who have supported the campaign and hopes to finish strong. “We are so grateful,” she said, “to all who have donated to the Legacy of Hope Campaign so far, and we invite the community to help us cross the finish line.”

Simply getting the job done is not the only aim, however. Speaking of the clients the St. Vincent de Paul Society helps, Darrel Dodane, Conference President of the St. Louis Besancon chapter of St. Vincent de Paul, said sharing faith is important, too. “You give them a little dignity,” he said, reminding, too, that “the good Lord is there to help, also.” He noted, with a smile, that the society does not just do the job, but uses its resources well. “We are the Von Maur of thrift stores in Fort Wayne,” he said.

There are many ways to help the St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store make a difference in the Fort Wayne community. They invite everyone to come downtown to see the new improvements, shop for deals, volunteer with a caring team, and/or donate material items to help them in their mission to serve the poor. Furniture items can be scheduled for pickup by calling 260-456-3561.

To contribute to the Legacy of Hope Campaign, visit the St. Vincent de Paul Society's website at [svdpsfw.org](http://svdpsfw.org).



# 2023: A Year in Review

BY TODAY'S CATHOLIC

From its first day, when the Church and the world were reeling from the death of Pope Benedict XVI, the year 2023 has seen moments of deep tragedy as well as times of abundant joy. It was no different in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. Below, the staff at Today's Catholic has recapped the highs and the lows of the past 12 months. To read the full version of each article, visit [TodaysCatholic.org](https://TodaysCatholic.org).

## World Mourns Pope Benedict XVI

The year began with the news of the death of Pope Benedict XVI on New Year's Eve. Bishop Rhoades remembered Pope Benedict as "one of the greatest theologians of modern times," adding that his writings show not only an "amazing intellect" but the heart of a disciple who has deeply contemplated the Lord.

## Eighteen Permanent Deacons Ordained

Bishop Rhoades ordained a class of 18 permanent deacons on January 7. In a first for diocesan high schools, two of these permanent deacons, Deacon Harry Verhiley and Deacon Andrew Oross, serve on the staff of Saint Joseph High School in South Bend. Principal John Kennedy presented both deacons with community awards, saying their new roles take "a tremendous abundance of dedication, time, effort, devotion, and prayer. They have each made a life commitment to be clergy in the Catholic Church, and this community now has two deacons in our theology department every day."

## Ecumenical Dialogue Abounds in City of Churches

An ecumenical prayer room opened in January as part of the redeveloped Fort Wayne Electric Works complex, with numerous Catholic parishes and apostolates hosting the room for the city's Christian community. The goal of the prayer room and the broader ecumenical movement in Fort Wayne is to make the "City of Churches" into the "City of the Church." This was coupled with numerous opportunities for dialogue and common praise, including Unity Nights and the beginning of the "Common Table" series, hosted by the University of Saint Francis, which will continue through the next two years.



Pilgrims on the eight-day journey from Fort Wayne to South Bend finish the final leg of their Eucharistic procession to St. Matthew Cathedral on June 11.

Joshua Schipper

## Diocese Remembers Bishop D'Arcy 10 Years After His Death

Numerous faithful gathered on February 3 for Mass at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception to remember Bishop John M. D'Arcy on the 10th anniversary of his death. In his homily, Father Mark Gurtner, Vicar General for the diocese, remarked that Bishop D'Arcy was passionate about helping people discover their vocations and to flourish in them. He also sought to ensure the culture of the priesthood remained healthy, even when that required making tough decisions.

## Holy Cross College Appoints First Lay President

Marco J. Clark made history when he became the first layperson installed as President of Holy Cross College at Notre Dame on March 25. Of his new job, he said, "After weathering some storms in recent years, this young college is poised for a bright future."

## Father Zane Langenbrunner Assists at Papal Easter Vigil

At Easter Vigil Mass with Pope Francis in St. Peter's Basilica, then-Deacon Zane Langenbrunner carried the Paschal candle and sang the Exsultet or Easter Proclamation. The solo piece,

which takes up to 13 minutes to sing, lauds Jesus Christ's triumph over sin and death. "Deacon Zane is a humble young man and exemplary seminarian," Bishop Rhoades said, adding "the privilege of chanting the Exsultet" was "not an easy musical task."

## Dwenger Grad Drafted by New York Jets

In April, Bishop Dwenger High School graduate Joe Tippmann was drafted by the New York Jets after four seasons at the University of Wisconsin. Tippmann said that when he saw a New Jersey number pop up on his phone, he knew what was about to happen. Recalling how he felt in the moment, he said, "I'm

just seeing the reactions on everyone's faces; I'm tearing up myself — it was truly a breathtaking moment."

## Cross-Diocesan Pilgrimage

Across eight days in June, Father Stephen Felicichia lead a procession of the Blessed Sacrament from the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Fort Wayne to St. Matthew Cathedral in South Bend. The journey had a core group of four people, and as many as 80 people would join from time to time along the way. Some came to Mass at the beginning of the leg and walked a few miles, while others joined at different points of the route.



CNS photo/Chris Warde-Jones

Deacon Zane Langenbrunner tips the Paschal candle and drains melted wax into a saucer before carrying the candle during the Easter Vigil Mass with Pope Francis in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican on April 8.

## Seven Men Ordained to Priesthood, Two to Diaconate

Seven men were ordained to the priesthood in June, the second class of seven ordained in the diocese in the past two years. After Mass, John Krisch, father of Father Bobby Krisch, noted the impact that receiving Communion from his son had on him, and Bishop Rhoades asked for continued prayers for the newly ordained.

## Bishop Rhoades Visits Pope Regarding Eucharistic Revival

Several U.S. bishops, including Bishop Rhoades, met with Pope Francis in June about the National Eucharistic Revival as the country transitioned from the Diocesan Year to the Parish Year. Pope Francis blessed the monstration that will be used as part of the national pilgrimage to Indianapolis for the National Eucharistic Congress next summer.

## Indiana Abortion Law Upheld by State Supreme Court

On June 30, the Indiana Supreme Court upheld a law that limits abortion up to 10 weeks' gestation in instances of rape or incest, up to 20 weeks' gestation in cases of lethal fetal anomalies, or when the mother's life is in danger from specific medical issues. The law also requires that abortions take place at a hospital or a hospital-owned surgery center. The law went into effect on August 1.

## School Choice Extended to 97 Percent of Indiana Families

In July, legislation expanding the state's School Choice program took effect in Indiana. Governor Eric Holcomb called the biennial budget one with "generational impact," with around half of the budget supporting K-12 education statewide.

## Carlo Acutis and Manuel Gonzalez Garcia Relics Tour Diocese

Relics of Blessed Carlo Acutis and Blessed Manuel



# Now Around the Diocese

González García toured the diocese earlier this year as part of the Diocesan Year of the National Eucharistic Revival. Both Blesseds are renowned for their devotion to the Eucharist. Months later, a relic of González García was donated to the diocese to be displayed at a yet-to-be-named parish with a large Hispanic population.

## Bishop Rhoades Celebrates 40 Years as a Priest

Bishop Rhoades celebrated his 40-year priesthood jubilee on July 9, saying, "It's such a privilege to be a priest and a bishop," and that "despite my own personal weaknesses, I hope that my service to the Lord and the Church has borne fruit and will continue to bear fruit."

## World Youth Day

Nearly 300 pilgrims from the diocese traveled to Portugal for World Youth Day at the end of July. Pilgrims visited apparition sites at Fatima and numerous historic sites, and they camped with 1.2 million fellow young Catholics from around the world. Reflecting on her pilgrimage, high school senior Elianna Noll said her "biggest takeaway is that there can be this peace within the world. It is possible: It just gives you a little taste of heaven. And it's so beautiful."

## Divine Mercy Funeral Home Breaks Ground on Second Location

On September 8, ground was broken for a new Divine Mercy Funeral Home location to serve Fort Wayne's growing northern suburbs. The new 17,000-square-foot facility, located in Huntertown, sits on diocesan-owned property that Bishop Rhoades said could eventually include another parish and school. The funeral home is expected to open in the spring of 2025.

## Fort Wayne Hosts Order of the Holy Sepulchre

In September, Fort Wayne played host to the annual Investiture ceremony for the North Central Lieutenancy of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre, a lay institution of the Vatican State charged with the task of providing for the needs of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem

and for all the activities and initiatives that are necessary to support Christians in the Holy Land. During its Investiture ceremony, which was followed by a memorial Mass, 12 candidates were named Knights, 11 were named Dames, and eight were named Priest Knights.

## Redeemer Radio Transitions

After 17 years, Redeemer Radio sold its two stations to the national Relevant Radio network as the organization transitioned into podcast company Spoke Street because of changes in its target demographic. At a Mass during the transition, Father Tom Shoemaker said the station brought people to the Church, inspired people to live a deeper faith, and brought people to the sacraments.

learned our tour company had made plans for us to return to the United States early."

## Notre Dame President Announces Resignation

Father John I. Jenkins, the longtime president of the University of Notre Dame, announced on October 13 that he will step down at the end of the current academic year to return to teaching and ministry at the school. Elected in 2005 as the university's 17th president, Father Jenkins was most recently reelected by Notre Dame's trustees to his fourth five-year term effective July 1, 2020. In early December, Notre Dame officials announced they had selected Holy Cross Father Robert Dowd to serve as its next president.



Evan Cobb

Marco Clark is the newly installed sixth President of Holy Cross College at Notre Dame.

## Diocesan Pilgrims Return Safely after Hamas Attack

On October 7, Hamas launched a deadly surprise attack on Israel, shocking the world. A tour group consisting of diocesan pilgrims visiting the Holy Land heard of the attack after Mass at Mount Tabor, near the West Bank. In an article for Today's Catholic, pilgrim Andy Jacobs recounted feeling safe but witnessing growing tension in the region as the war began. "Returning to our hotel, we heard the airport in Tel Aviv had been closed because of the escalating fighting between Israel and Hamas. It was then we



Provided by Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades

Bishop Rhoades works during the first session of the general assembly of the Synod of Bishops at Paul VI Hall at the Vatican.

## Bishop Rhoades Participates in Synod

After being appointed to the Synod of Bishops on synodality by Pope Francis in July, Bishop Rhoades spent nearly all of October in Rome working with his fellow synod delegates on what synodality

means to the mission of the Church. Bishop Rhoades reflected on the first session of the synod in an interview with Today's Catholic upon his return, saying the pope "really wants synodality, which he says is constitutive of the life of the Church that must be practiced on every level."



Joshua Schipper

Father Paolo Degasperi waves the American flag as he looks back at his pilgrims at World Youth Day in Portugal.



## JAYASURIYA, from page 1

Mother of God, patron of the parish. He is scheduled to be ordained and installed as Bishop of Chilaw in Sri Lanka on Saturday, March 2.

"No priest would be after this [appointment] at all because of the heavy responsibility involved," Bishop-elect Jayasuriya told Today's Catholic. "I am responsible for my soul, I am responsible for the People of God, for the priests, I am responsible for their well-being, I am responsible for the maintenance of the diocese. What you see in a bishop externally is one who presides over Mass with ornate clothes, and he is always the center of attention. But we cannot forget that he is a human being like everyone else."

"Our diocese was vacant for about two years," Bishop-elect Jayasuriya added. "I was happy that I was in the United States not getting involved in the discussion [of possible appointments]. I did not want to be in

the limelight. In fact, the nuncio was telling me it was one of the reasons why they chose me as the candidate."

Bishop-elect Jayasuriya said the papal nuncio of Sri Lanka called him in late November to tell him Pope Francis had appointed him Bishop of Chilaw, which is located on the western shore of the island nation located in the Indian Ocean off the southern tip of India. The priest didn't immediately accept, telling Archbishop Brian Udaigwe, the pope's diplomat in Sri Lanka, that he needed some time to pray and discern.

"The call came at night," Father Jayasuriya said, "and immediately I was on my knees leaning against the bed. There's a picture of Jesus where I pray every day. There were tears in my eyes. I was asking, 'Who am I to succeed apostles?' As I continued to pray about it, I just felt the assurance of Jesus' presence in me in taking up this task, and that He was promising, 'Do not worry. I'm with you.'"

After growing up within a

devout Catholic family, Bishop-elect Jayasuriya began seminary at the age of 15. Following his ordination to the priesthood in 1997, his first assignment was to the largest parish in the diocese, spiritual home to 30,000 parishioners and served by only two priests. Several years later, he received a scholarship for higher education in Rome. Though he originally intended to study Greek and Hebrew Scripture, his bishop saw a need and switched his field of study to canon law. After earning his doctorate in Rome, he returned at the age of 35 to Sri Lanka, where he was appointed to serve as Judicial Vicar. He also held the position of Executive Secretary for the Diocese of Chilaw's diocesan synod.

He has continued to utilize his skills as a canon lawyer, serving on the Tribunal during his time in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. Along with his doctorate in canon law, Bishop-elect Jayasuriya holds two bachelor's degrees and four master's degrees. He said he

pursued his education "not for titles, but for knowledge, so that knowledge could be utilized for the people. So, like a father and a mother, they totally dedicate their life for the family. My duty as a priest is to spend each second of my life for the people. So, that is what I was preparing for."

Seeing how underprivileged people were treated both in Sri Lanka and on his studies abroad inspired him to work toward change, beginning in his own office. Bishop-elect Jayasuriya refused the typical privileges given to those within the Diocese of Chilaw, including residence in the bishop's home. He opted instead to live in a small room in the sacristy. Here, he was able to meet the people of the village – some of whom he refers to as "the poorest of the poor."

In his current position as Pastor of St. Mary Mother of God, he has continued to serve, as Pope Francis has said, as a priest "with the smell of the sheep." As he did in Sri Lanka, at St. Mary, a parish known for its outreach to the poor,

Bishop-elect Jayasuriya has rejected even the most basic conveniences, including that of a car, which would have been made available to him by the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend.

"Before coming to the United States, while I was in Sri Lanka, I was already living with the poor – not by appointment, but because I felt it was best to be with the people. I gave up the so-called privileges; I lived with the poor. Mainly, St. Mary's is for the poor. I wanted the people to know the pastor also lives a poor life. So, I voluntarily gave up the vehicle. But like the poor here in Fort Wayne, I know what it means to be without a vehicle. I know what it means to walk on the snow. I know what it means to walk in the rain."

When asked how he would apply this lifestyle to his new role as bishop, he said: "I'm a shepherd, and a shepherd has no favorites. Each sheep is important."

Erika Barron contributed to this report.

## Congratulations,

Father Wimal, on your designation as  
Bishop of Chilaw, Sri Lanka.

*I will give you shepherds according to my heart  
who shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.*

Jeremiah 3:15

Most Precious Blood Parish,  
Fort Wayne

Father Wimal,  
Congratulations and  
blessings to you  
as you are appointed  
Bishop of  
Chilaw, Sri Lanka.

The faithful of  
**Saint  
Bernard  
Parish  
Wabash**

# CONGRATULATIONS TO FATHER WIMAL JAYASURIYA

as he is named  
by Pope Francis  
as the next Bishop  
of Chilaw, Sri Lanka.

May the Blessings  
of the Lord  
be upon you,  
and guide you,  
as you go about  
His work.



Cathedral OF THE  
**Immaculate  
Conception**



YOU DIDN'T CHOOSE ME,  
BUT I CHOSE YOU ...

JOHN 15:16



**Congratulations,  
Bishop-elect, Father Wimal,  
on your upcoming ordination as  
Bishop of Chilaw, Sri Lanka!**

From St. Patrick Parish, Arcola

Thank you for your service to the diocese, Father Wimal, and may God be with you as you are ordained a bishop for the diocese of Chilaw, Sri Lanka.

TODAY'S CATHOLIC

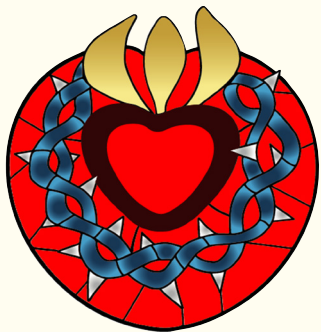


Father Emmanuel Abuh and the parishioners of Immaculate Conception Church, Ege, extend our sincere congratulations to Father Wimal Jayasuriya on his appointment as the Bishop of the Diocese of Chilaw.

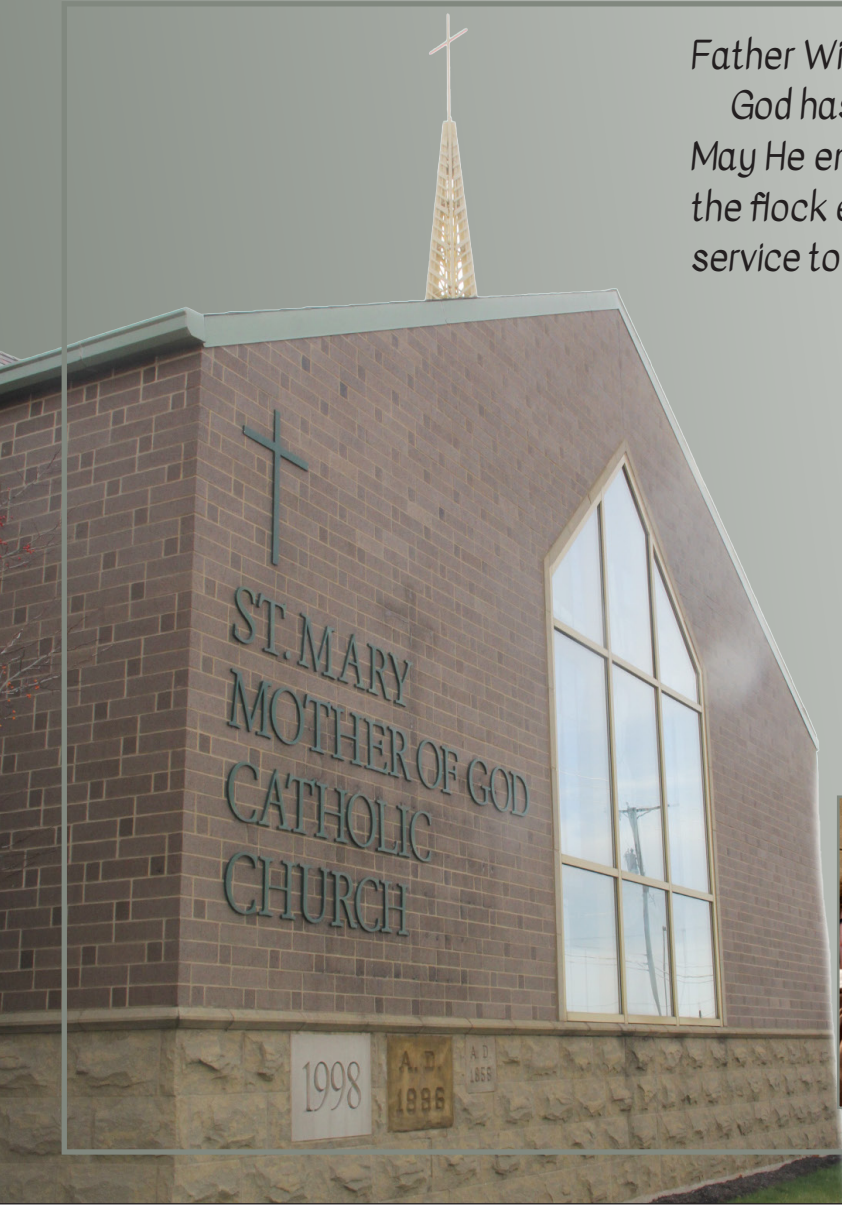
May God Bless You

*Congratulations*  
*on becoming a bishop.*

Father Wimal, May God bless you and watch over you as you embark on your new journey.

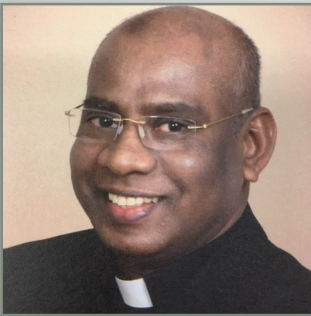


Sacred Heart Parish, Warsaw



Father Wimal,  
God has chosen you as a true witness to Christ, the Good Shepherd.  
May He endow you with wisdom and ever-deepening holiness as you guide the flock entrusted to your loving care. Congratulations as you begin your service to the holy People of God as Bishop of Chilaw, Sri Lanka.

With Grateful Thanks and Appreciation,  
St. Mary Mother of God Parish





# Notre Dame Choirs Bring Joy to the Season

BY CATHI KENNEDY

An array of choral ensembles helped kick off the new liturgical year at the University of Notre Dame with an Advent Lessons and Carols performance at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart on Sunday, December 3. The concert brought together the university's Folk Choir, Liturgical Choir, Magnificat Choir, and Basilica Schola to celebrate this season of hope, peace, joy, and love.

J.J. Wright, Director of the Folk Choir, told *Today's Catholic* that rehearsals for the performance – and the concerts to come – began before Thanksgiving. He said he eagerly anticipates the Advent season. “Each year, I like to revisit two albums that have their home in the Advent season, ‘O Emmanuel,’ which is based on the ancient O Antiphons and was recorded with the Notre Dame Children's Choir, and ‘Vespers for the Immaculate Conception,’ which we celebrate during Advent on December 8.”

Meg Beuter, a senior at Notre Dame and President of the Folk Choir, said the choir has become like an extended family. “The open-hearted nature of our community allows us to put our best selves into our music ministry and encourage one another's creativity in faith. We are a



Photo provided by Peter Ringenberg

**The Notre Dame Community Choir performs its Advent Lessons and Carols at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart on Sunday, December 3. The choir will hold another performance of Lessons and Carols at 10 p.m. on Christmas Eve in the basilica, which will be followed by Midnight Mass.**

group of musicians who sing sacred music from a wide range of eras and genres, and we are continuing to build this repertoire by composing our own music as a choir.”

Wright added: “During Advent, I think we're all invited into a space of creative longing – to challenge ourselves to be

ready at any moment for God to come crashing into our lives with something better than we could have ever dreamed possible. As the days continue to grow shorter and we seemingly become busier and busier as we inch closer to Christmas, this mindset is especially

challenging to imagine, but the beauty of Advent is that the challenge is exactly where God works most fruitfully to transform our hearts and minds through the incarnation of Jesus.”

The Notre Dame Community Choir will hold another performance on Christmas Eve in the Basilica, with a Lessons and Carols concert beginning at 10 p.m., followed by Midnight Mass – at which the choir will sing – at 11 p.m.

The Notre Dame Folk Choir is set to begin a tour of the Midwest in January that will take the performers to two cities in Michigan (Bloomfield Hills and Warren), five cities in Ohio (Toledo, Findlay, New Albany, Dayton, and Columbus), as well as Indianapolis and Fort Wayne. The concert in Fort Wayne will take place on Sunday, January 14, at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.

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## Tell Me It's Real! Contemplating the Love of Christ

BY FATHER BRIAN ISENBARGER

As a product of the '90s, there are certain songs that will come to my mind almost spontaneously. After reading the Gospel for Guadete Sunday about John the Baptist sending his disciples to ask if Jesus was truly the Messiah, I immediately heard in my head "Tell Me It's Real" by K-Ci and JoJo. With a little imagination, I can picture that was exactly what John was asking Jesus – to tell him that His love and His presence were real. That they would abide with Him and never leave Him alone.

At heart, all of us have that same desire. We all want a love that is ever-present and always faithful. We want a love that abides with us in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, a love that will honor us all the days of our life. In short, every human heart is made for perfect and unending unitive love. And as great as even the best marriage is, we know human marriage cannot fulfill the infinite desires of our heart.

C.S. Lewis wisely pointed out that if our desires are greater than the things of this world, then we must be made for something greater than this world. And it's true! We were made for a love the finite world can't contain. So, let's take a second to examine how real the love is that Jesus promises to give.

In His response to John's questions about the reality of His love, Jesus tells John's

disciples to give Him the message that the blind see, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the Good News has been proclaimed to the poor. In other words, He tells John: "I am the one who has fulfilled the Messianic prophecy from Isaiah. Yes, my love is real!"

But it doesn't stop there. Yes, it would be enough for Jesus to manifest that His love has been at work through the prophets even before His coming in the flesh. After all, He is the only Person in history to have loved humanity before His birth. Yet, His love is so extravagant that it doesn't stop there. After His ascension at the end of His earthly ministry, Jesus promises His disciples that He will be with them always (cf. Mt 28:20). How could this be?

John 16:7 gives us the answer. There, Jesus says it is to our advantage that He goes to the Father so that the Spirit will come and be our comforter. To me, it's one of the most striking passages in all of Scripture. Jesus, the Word made flesh, declares that it is better for us that He ascend to heaven and physically leaves earth so that we can receive His presence through the Holy Spirit. And we know that His Spirit is poured out in abundance at Pentecost, giving birth to the Church as the Kingdom of God on earth.

This also gives us insight to those mysterious words Jesus says to John at the end of the Gospel reading: "Amen, I say to you, among those born of women there has been none greater than John the Baptist;

yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Mt 11:11). Pause and read that passage again. If we take Jesus seriously (which I highly recommend!), He is telling us that we who have been born of water and the Holy Spirit in baptism and now live in communion with the Church (which is the Kingdom of God on earth) are greater than John the Baptist. Obviously, John entered the Kingdom by his baptism of blood, but what we have been given in baptism and in the life of the Church is greater than the gifts given to any of the patriarchs and prophets of old. We have something greater than Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and even David, because we have the almighty, ever-living God not only revealing Himself and communicating with us, but now dwelling in our own human flesh. So instead of simply being Emmanuel, God-with-us, the Holy Spirit has caused God to be in us. In a real way, the everlasting, unitive love that we all desire has already been poured into our hearts.

This is the cause of our joy. This is why we call it Guadete Sunday. It is a day to rejoice that our God has come not only be with us for a time, He has come to be one with us forever. So, yes, you can tell both John the Baptist – and K-Ci and Jo-Jo – that this divine love of Jesus is indeed real!

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

## St. John the Baptist in New Haven Gives Back



Provided by Tina Voors

Father Nathan Maskal, Pastor of St. John the Baptist Church in New Haven, presents a check for \$1,637.18 to representatives of Shepherd's House in late November. Students and staff at St. John the Baptist Catholic School raised the money through their "Penny Wars" fundraiser to support Shepherd's House, which provides safe transitional housing for men recovering from alcohol or drug addiction.

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# Detachment as a Component of God's Peace

Lately, I'm told by friends that it's become difficult to get a "reaction" out of me, whether it's about headlines or an encounter with beauty, and that I seem numb.

In truth, I feel things deeply, but – except for meeting a new baby or a puppy – I'm not one to reliably gasp and emote. I suspect that mostly I'm just too immersed in observation to make a showy response, even if they're all the rage these days.

Perhaps it's a combination of my early exposure to human strangeness and the daily examen that shows to me my own sins and failings with crystal-clarity, but few things really surprise me; I understand all too well how easily we bring ourselves to places we never expected to be.

It's possible that I am simply weary. The breathlessness of modern life – the division, raised fists, conspiracy theories, mean memes, and the endless human self-advertisements that comprise social media content (where, make no mistake, we are both consumer and product) lately leave me wanting only to sit quietly in my room – to be still and know that God is God.

In that quiet space, my so-called numbness feels rather like a manifestation of God's peace. It is a peace that comes with (and some might not like to hear this) a component of

detachment.

Detachment scares people – it sounds like coldness or indifference – but I'm coming to believe it's actually a deep manifestation of love.

It's striking how God forces nothing on us. He puts Christ and goodness out there, and we're free to take it or leave it, without His love draining away even a bit. The love is constant and steady, neither pleading nor haranguing; it's just there, beside me and within me.

The love doesn't have to be more; it doesn't need to grow, because it is already full, and so it remains. In the stillness, what I feel is quite different from indifference – more like a great, deep, and wide embrace with the consolation that very few of the things we get balled up about really matter, in the end. We are, like Martha, "anxious about many things." We spin about thinking we are serving goodness with our efforts to force the world, and circumstances, into an alignment of perfection, rarely figuring out that things will mostly be alright.

I love someone who is trapped in a terrible mental illness of depression and anxiety. I wonder, sometimes, whether her state has to do with having spent her entire life working so diligently to set everything to rights – ironing shirts at 10 p.m., mopping the floor at 11, rising at 6 a.m. to do it all



GUEST  
COMMENTARY

ELIZABETH SCALIA

again – only to one day discover that her pursuit of perfection had served a big fat illusion that it all "meant something and mattered greatly," when, in fact, she could have relaxed a bit, enjoyed her family more, and things would have ended up pretty much as they had, anyway.

I suspect that once she did realize this, she became angry but permitted herself no outlet to express it (Freudians say depression is "anger turned inward"), and this has debilitated her.

Anger, at decades of non-stop doing, when it really didn't matter if the baby shoes were pristine or the steps were vacuumed. Anger, and perhaps disorientation, at the realization that all the things she drove herself to do are not really missed by her family now that she's stopped doing them. She didn't get to figure out that just because no one misses all the stuff doesn't mean they didn't appreciate it;

SCALIA, page 17

# Keep the Candle Lit: Pouring Out the Greatest Gift

Oprah Winfrey looks regal in a purple pleated skirt and matching sweater, beaming on the cover of the magazine that delivers her much-anticipated Favorite Things – "112 crowd-pleasing gifts for everyone on your list."

Now in her ninth year partnering with Amazon, Oprah vouches for each product with her trademark hype: a \$22 silk eye mask she calls "life-changing," \$350 Beats headphones that are "the best of the best," a \$600 TrueBrew Drip Coffee Maker she lauds as "a dream for persnickety coffee drinkers." Not to mention her new book, which will help you "be happier in 2024."

It's commerce with a spiritual bent. "What I know for sure," Oprah writes, "is that what you give comes back to you."

I've always been intrigued by the television queen's shopping list, but what strikes me most is how much company she now has. These days, everyone has a holiday gift guide – from high-profile peddlers to micro-influencers and suburban moms.

You can follow them in real time, linking every item. The wreaths they're hanging. The bows they're hanging on the wreaths they're hanging. The



TWENTY  
SOMETHING

CHRISTINA CAPECCHI

joggers they're wearing while they're hanging the bows on the wreaths they're hanging.

'Tis the season to spend money. It's never been easier to do, requiring the kind of deliberation that vanishes in the blink of an eye, the tap of a button. It can almost feel like play money – no paper trail, no accountability, just an invisible Venmo transaction.

What we lack in time, we try to make up for in money, throwing it at people and problems who actually need minutes and hours. The kindergartener doesn't need a fancy new baseball glove but an adult to play catch with. Back and forth, again and again, chasing all the errant throws until, finally, there are fewer.

Our immigrant ancestors had no money and all the time in the world. They made use of long bus rides, early mornings, tiny apartments, daily walks to

CAPECCHI, page 17

# In Advent, May We See Christ's Coming as a Source of Peace



THE  
SUNDAY  
GOSPEL

MONSIGNOR OWEN F. CAMPION

## Third Sunday of Advent

This weekend, the Church celebrates Gaudete Sunday, the name coming from the opening word of the entrance antiphon. In Latin, *gaudete* means "to rejoice." Rejoicing is not indicated because Advent, and its stress on prayer and penance, is half completed, but rather because Christmas is nearer.

Another reason for rejoicing is that, hopefully, we all feel closer to God because of observing Advent with prayer, reflection, and penance. If we have used Advent as intended by the Church, we are nearer to a fuller communion with the Lord, the "light of the world."

Priests may wear rose-colored vestments on this week-

end, symbolizing the darkness of Advent already being lightened by the forthcoming light of the Lord's arrival in our souls.

The third part of Isaiah furnishes the first reading. When this passage was written, God's people were weary and frustrated. They, or their forebears, had undergone the humiliation, uncertainty, and misery of exile in Babylon. When finally allowed to leave Babylon and return to their homeland, they were understandably overjoyed.

Instead, however, they found a sterile and parched land awaiting them. Life was brutally hard. Had God tricked them, providing for their release from Babylon only to subject them to further, worse trials at home? Did God even exist?

Typically for Third Isaiah, this reading glows with optimism. Whatever may be the reality of the moment, for those loyal to God, a wondrous future awaits.

St. Paul's First Epistle to the Thessalonians provides the second reading. Belief in the Lord's Second Coming, and impatience to see it occur, were widespread in the first generations of

Christianity. This reading well catches this mood.

Longing for the Second Coming among the early Christians is not hard to explain. They had much to endure. Severe persecution had developed. The culture all around the Christians was hostile. Temptations to renounce the Gospel abounded.

Paul reassured the Christians of Thessalonica, urging them to be true to the Gospel. God, and God's goodness, will one day prevail.

St. John's Gospel is the source of the last reading. The reading is a story about John the Baptist, whose own identity puzzled his contemporaries. Some even assumed that John was the Messiah. If not the Messiah, others wondered if he were Elijah, or another prophet who had returned to earth.

Replying to these questions, John was very firm. Another would follow him, he insisted. John was to prepare the way for this future representative of God, who would be wonderful for all humanity. John is not worthy even to untie the straps of His sandals.

## Reflection

In calling us to rejoice this Gaudete weekend, the Church either presumes that we have spent the weeks of Advent pondering within ourselves the meaning of salvation for us personally and individually, or it urges us to use the remaining time in this season to seek God with all our hearts.

Christ was born, in God's merciful plan, to meet human needs, for guidance, for hope, and for life.

As Christmas 2023 draws near, the land blessed by the footsteps of Christ is in anguish. The war continues between Hamas, the Palestinian extremists, and Israel – consuming, or ending lives, destroying hope, building despair.

Fighting endures in Ukraine. Less bloody, but bitter divisions, separate Americans, filling them with fear and hatred.

How much evidence must humans see to realize the damage that their dismissal of God creates for themselves and others? What proof is needed to convince us that the way of

Christ is the only way to peace and goodness?

See Christ's coming as the answer, determined to bring Jesus into our hearts and lives, and thereby to begin, at least in ourselves, the process of living sanely and peacefully.

## READINGS

**Sunday:** Isaiah 61:1-2a, 10-11; (Psalm) Luke 1:46-50, 53-54; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28

**Monday:** Jeremiah 23:5-8; Psalms 2:1-2, 12-13, 18-19; Matthew 1:18-25

**Tuesday:** Judges 13:2-7, 24-25a; Psalms 71:3-4a, 5-6ab, 16-17; Luke 1:5-25

**Wednesday:** Isaiah 7:10-14; Psalms 24:1-2, 3-4ab, 5-6; Luke 1:26-38

**Thursday:** Song of Songs 2:8-14 or Zephaniah 3:14-18a; Psalms 33:2-3, 11-12, 20-21; Luke 1:39-45

**Friday:** 1 Samuel 1:24-28; (Psalm) 1 Samuel 2:1, 4-5, 6-7, 8ab; Luke 1:46-56

**Saturday:** Malachi 3:1-4, 23-24; Psalms 25:4-5ab, 8-9, 10, 14; Luke 1:57-66



# This Advent, Echo John the Baptist: 'Behold the Lamb!'

I often think of John the Baptist at one particularly dramatic moment during Mass.

John is the forerunner, the one who gives testimony. "I am not the Messiah," John says in answer to those asking if he was the long-awaited Messiah (Jn 1:20). John is not the anointed one. He's the one who points to Christ.

I think of John the Baptist at Mass after the Lamb of God. Holding the consecrated host over the chalice, the priest reveals it to the people and declares, "Behold the Lamb of God" (Jn 1:29). It's a declaration. A proclamation. A crying out like the voice in the wilderness: "This is our God!"

I recently offered an Advent Mass at a friend's home. Gathered in the living room, children helped set the altar. I explained the linens, vessels, and vestments as we prepared. We sang Advent hymns, including my favorite, "Lo He Comes." During the Mass, a soon-to-be first communicant read the second reading, and her younger brother assisted with the lavabo and purification. They were attentive, reverent, and absolutely darling in their service of the sacred liturgy.

But the best moment was when I said, "Behold the Lamb of God." Turning from the fireplace-altar, holding the host aloft, I saw a host of little faces craning in awe, squirm-

ing to get a better view. For this instant, their wiggles were cast off; their eyes locked in at the host. Their parents gently encouraged them, saying, "Look, it's Jesus."

John the Baptist cries out to us, like parents urging their children, saying, "This is the Lord!" But when we gaze upon Him, what do we see?

Pope Benedict XVI declares, "He has brought God, and now we know His face, now we can call upon Him." He tells us the origin and destiny of our hearts. He gives our lives purpose, opening a new horizon and awakening us to our eternal destiny.

"Behold the one who loves!" we might declare. Because He has loved us, we can follow in His way of love. It is a path, a story, an identity. And yet, when we look up at the host, do we see that?

"Behold the one who comes to you!" This is the marvelous thing about a Eucharist procession. I love opening the Forty Hours Devotion with a small procession through the church. Bowing heads and striking the chest are little ways I see people echoing the Baptist's words, "I am not worthy to untie His sandals" (Jn 1:27). I am always touched by people's reverence when they see the host coming to them.

"Behold the one who is not withholding!" Can the little host really be enough



## GUEST COMMENTARY

FATHER PATRICK BRISCOE

for us? Yes, yes, yes! Pope Benedict warns, "It is when we attempt to avoid suffering by withdrawing from anything that might involve hurt, when we try to spare ourselves the effort and pain of pursuing truth, love, and goodness, that we drift into a life of emptiness, in which there may be almost no pain, but the dark sensation of meaninglessness and abandonment is all the greater." Living with Christ does not mean being spared pain. Life without difficulty, life without sorrow, is not the goal. But through all of that, He will not withdraw from us.

"Behold the Lamb of God!" Behold the one we will worship for eternity. We will gather around His throne, joyfully singing His praises. Like new John the Baptists, we will delight in pointing to Him, forgetting our unworthiness before Him at last. And then, the peace of having met our destiny will wash over us.

Father Patrick Briscoe is Editor of Our Sunday Visitor.

SCALIA, from page 16

it just means it was never why they loved her to begin with – that their love for her wasn't contingent on all she did but purely for who she was.

And there is the detachment component I'm calling part of "God's peace." Detachment from the worldly illusion that we can and should be perfect permits more time to come to know that God is God.

What we do, or fuss over – none of it is why God loves us to begin with. God just loves His creatures because God is 100 percent love. And, as we read in Sirach (15:19), "The eyes of God behold His works, and He understands every

human deed."

Of course He does. God understands what makes us tick and what makes us sick. God sees all that He has permitted to happen in our lives and comprehends what lies beneath our intentions and impulses (for good or for ill) – and all their origins – better than any of us ever can.

That being so, we have no idea the state of our own souls, much less anyone else's, and await the day God fully reveals Himself to us and then shows us to ourselves within that full, mirror-bright light, so that we may finally understand, too.

Naturally, awaiting that day

of blessed revelation doesn't mean we shouldn't try to have the very best intentions or to curb our worst impulses; we should, especially if our actions may have negative effects on others.

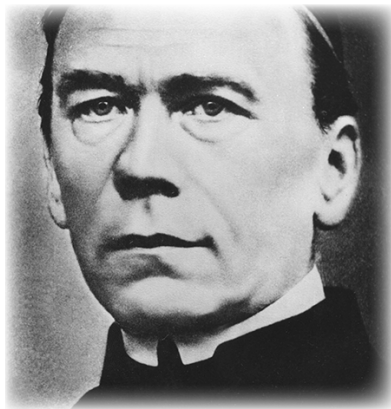
It does mean, though, that we are all deep wells of mystery, and God is yet deeper still. As such, it is good to not be shocked or scandalized too easily (Jesus never was). Good, too, to perhaps climb down off each other's backs a little bit.

Elizabeth Scalia is the Culture Editor for OSV News.

## BLESSED ADOLF KOLPING

1813-1865 FEAST: DECEMBER 4

As a shepherd and shoe-factory worker, Adolf experienced poverty and social upheaval in 19th-century Germany. He worked 12-hour days, studied at night, and graduated from high school at 24. After priestly ordination in Cologne in 1845, he began his industrial mission preaching the dignity of both the worker and the work. This soon led to "Kolping Families," which stressed the Christian response to work and family for workers living in hostels. The movement spread beyond the Rhine Valley to the United States, Argentina, Australia, and India, and today has 420,000 members. When Pope John Paul II beatified Adolf in 1991, he called him "the precursor of the great social encyclicals."



## SCRIPTURE SEARCH®

Gospel for December 17, 2023

John 1:6-8, 19-28

Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for the Third Sunday in Advent, Cycle B: Showing how John the Baptists was foretold. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

A MAN	FROM GOD	TESTIFY
LIGHT	TESTIMONY	JOHN
JEWS	PRIESTS	LEVITES
TO ASK HIM	DENY IT	ELIJAH
I AM NOT	ANSWER	CRYING OUT
STRAIGHT	THE LORD	ISAIAH
WATER	AMONG	UNTIE

## JOHN'S ANSWER

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

CAPECCHI, from page 16

Mass. Stitching and scheming, painting and plotting.

Today, we have flipped the script. We have all the money in the world, so it seems, but no time. We're busy. And when we're not busy, we're distracted by screens siphoning our precious time. But the things we buy cannot replace quality time spent with loved ones.

I once read an article about a troubled teen who was turning to the wrong remedies. Her parents recognized a better one and chose to lavish her with their time and attention.

"We took her kayaking, played more board games with her, watched more TV with her, and took other short family trips," her mom said. They asked their teen to stay off the internet and instead keep a journal. She obliged, even though she was frustrated.

Eventually, something shifted. Her depression lifted, and, in its place, a sense of self emerged.

This will be our first Christmas without my paternal grandma, who showered us with loving attention. She and

my grandpa bought a modest cabin on a little lake up north where we all squeezed in countless hours and memories.

The porch was the gathering place where grandma was always perched, catching all the comings and goings, the fishing reports, the sunscreen applications. We played so many games at the long dining room table where grandma placed the centerpiece: a chianti straw bottle holding a taper candle. She lit it every day, letting the wax from candle after candle drip down the straw, lumpy strands of mauve and violet, sage and cream.

It was a visual of our time together, hour after hour – a work of art that could not be rushed. Our layered family, ever expanding yet bound together. The sum, greater than the parts.

It will not make Oprah's Favorite Things list. But it was, indeed, "life-changing," "the best of the best." Time together – the ultimate Christmas gift.

Christina Capecci is a Freelance Writer from Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota.





# Pope Marks 800th Anniversary of Nativity Scene

BY CINDY WOODEN

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Away in a cave near Greccio, Italy, St. Francis of Assisi had the first Nativity scene – a live one – staged for the faithful on Christmas Eve in 1223. A 15th-century fresco now decorating the cave inspired the Nativity scene erected in St. Peter's Square for the 800th anniversary celebrations.

Before the scene was unveiled and the Christmas tree in the square was lighted on Saturday, December 9, Pope Francis met with the more than 100 people involved in erecting the creche, officials from the Rieti Valley, which includes Greccio, and from the little town of Macra, in northern

Italy, which donated the silver fir tree.

For St. Francis of Assisi, who had traveled to the Holy Land, “the caves of Greccio reminded him of the landscape of Bethlehem,” the pope said. The saint asked that a donkey and an ox, some hay, and a manger be brought to the cave on Christmas Eve and invited other friars and people from the village, “creating a living Nativity scene. Thus, the tradition of the Nativity scene as we understand it was born.”

Whether the Nativity scene is in St. Peter's Square, in a church, or in one's home, the pope said, people passing one should remember Jesus' birth 2,000 years ago and be moved to “silence and prayer in our often so hectic daily lives.”

“Silence to be able to listen to what Jesus tells us from the unique ‘cathedra’ of the manger,” he said. “Prayer to express grateful wonder, tenderness, and perhaps the tears that the Nativity scene stirs in us.”

Enrico Bressan, Co-Curator of the Nativity scene in the square, told reporters that when he and Giovanna Zabotti were asked two years ago to create the Vatican creche for the anniversary, “We felt like Giovanni Velita and his wife, Alticama,” who helped St. Francis of Assisi stage that first scene.

Pope Francis, who usually visits the scene after vespers December 31, stopped by on Wednesday, November 29, to see the work in progress and

bless the workers, Bressan said. “It was a great joy for us and gave us strength.”

Among the 103 people who worked on the scene, he said, one of the first was Francesco Artese, a master creche maker, who used the fresco now in the cave to design the scene. Antonio Cantone, who has been making Nativity scene figures in Naples for more than four decades, created the life-sized figures of the Holy Family, St. Francis of Assisi, other friars, and the Velita couple. Set and lighting designers from Cinecittà, the famed Rome movie studio, created the cave and the lighting.

Cantone also created the figures for Nativity scenes in the square in 2013 and 2017. But those had the facial features

and clothes of Neapolitans in the 1700s, which is now the standard for Italian Nativity scenes. However, this year's figures resemble how people would have looked and dressed in central Italy in the 1200s, he said.

“For an artist who lives making Nativity scenes year-round,” he said, being part of the 800th anniversary celebration “is like winning an Oscar for the years of sacrifice and the creches of the past.”

The figures include a Franciscan priest celebrating Mass, just as one of St. Francis' confreres did in the cave on Christmas Eve in 1223.

Cardinal Fernando Vergez Alzaga, Head of the office governing Vatican City State, told those gathered in the square in the evening for the unveiling that the representation of the Mass at the manger “emphasizes how the incarnation of the son of God has remained among us through His body and blood in the Eucharist.”

Zabotti said that for her, Nativity scenes were always part of a family celebration of Christmas, but the two-year project for St. Peter's Square made her realize how St. Francis was trying to tell the simple people of Greccio that “whenever in the world people gather on that night in Jesus' name, there is the Incarnation.”

“Whenever someone sets up a Nativity scene,” she said, “there is not just Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus. We are there. The people of today. We are the shepherds now.”



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# WHAT'S HAPPENING?

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.

## Young Adult Prayer, Penance, and Pub Night

FORT WAYNE – Looking to meet other young adults who are striving to grow their Catholic community? Check out Cor Jesu, a group of young adults in the Fort Wayne area on Wednesday, December 20, from 5:30-8:30 p.m. Mass at St. Peter's Catholic Church, 518 E. Dewald St., is followed by adoration and confession, then social time at Summit City Brewwerks, 1501 E. Berry St. Contact Kate MacDonald at 260-710-9811 for information.

## Posada Juvenil

FORT WAYNE – Alpha Jovenes are hosting a posada on Thursday, December 21, to celebrate the Christmas Novena. Posadas commemorate Mary and Joseph's difficult journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem in search of a place for the Christ Child to be born. Rosary begins at 7 p.m. at the Archbishop Noll Catholic Center, 915 S. Clinton St. All young adults and their families are invited. Contact Maria Solis at [msolis8@gmail.com](mailto:msolis8@gmail.com) for information.

## Ava's Grace Support Group for Those Grieving the Loss of a Child

MISHAWAKA – Anyone who has experienced miscarriage, stillbirth, or infant loss may attend a monthly online support group sponsored by Ava's Grace, the diocesan ministry that offers spiritual, emotional, and practical support to families who have lost a child before or after birth. The support group meets on Zoom on the third Wednesday of the month from 8-9:30 p.m. Email Lisa Everett at [leverett@diocesefwsb.org](mailto:leverett@diocesefwsb.org) for meeting link and password. Visit [diocesefwsb.org/avasgrace](http://diocesefwsb.org/avasgrace) for details.

## Little Flower Holy Hour for Vocations

FORT WAYNE – The Little Flower Holy Hour is held from 7-8 p.m. on the first Tuesday of each month, September-May, at the St. Mother Theodore Guerin Chapel next to the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. The Holy Hour is led by a different priest or deacon each month. Join in praying for vocations. Contact Christine Nix at 260-422-4611 or [cbonahoom-nix@diocesefwsb.org](mailto:cbonahoom-nix@diocesefwsb.org).

## Sensory Friendly Masses Held at St. Vincent de Paul

FORT WAYNE – The 1:30 p.m. Sensory-Friendly Masses held every Sunday at St. Vincent de Paul, 1502 E. Wallen Rd., provide a safe, comfortable, and stigma-free setting for children and adults with sensory challenges, mental illness, or any kind of disability.

## Andrew Dinners Planned in Diocese

FORT WAYNE/GRANGER – The annual Andrew Dinners are open to young men ages 16-30 who are interested in learning how to discern their vocation and learn more about seminary and the priesthood. New this year, the evenings will begin with a Holy Hour on Thursday, January 4, at 5 p.m. at St. Vincent de Paul Church, 1502 E. Wallen Rd., in Fort Wayne and the next night, Friday, January 5, at St. Pius X Church, 52553 Fir Rd., in Granger. The Holy Hour is open to the public followed by dinner and conversation just for the young men attending. For more information, Contact Christine Nix at 260-422-4611 or [discernpriesthood@diocesefwsb.org](mailto:discernpriesthood@diocesefwsb.org).

## REST IN PEACE

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## First Saturday Devotion

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# Raclin Murphy Museum of Art Opens at Notre Dame

BY KASIA BALSBAUGH

An installation on the facade of the Raclin Murphy Museum of Art reads, “We are in the midst of reality responding with joy.” The museum’s collection – and even the museum itself – is the result of artists doing just that.

The Raclin Murphy Museum of Art is the culmination of at least 20 years of discussions at the University of Notre Dame about finding a permanent home for its extensive art collection. During its grand opening on December 1-3, the museum saw more than 4,000 visitors pass through its doors. The museum is open to the public six days a week and is free to all visitors.

“We’re seeing a huge breadth of our community come in,” said Laurene Grunwald, Associate Director of the museum.

Grunwald credited much of the success of opening week to the creativity of the events and special promotions, from pastries inspired by art in Raclin Murphy’s collection and a DJ on Friday night, to various dance and musical performances, Shakespearean monologues, and local artist demonstrations on Saturday and Sunday. The staff also provided ways to engage explicitly with the art, with sketchbooks and reflection prompts available throughout the weekend.

Notre Dame’s art collection is one of the largest academic collections in the United States, and it has a long history. As early as 1875, the main building of the college – which at that time held classrooms, dormitories, and more – housed an art museum on the top floor. More recently, the university’s collection was housed on campus at the Snite Museum of Art.

Joseph Becherer, Curator of Sculpture and Director of the Raclin Murphy Museum of Art, said the Snite building became insufficient as both the collection and the university grew. Another issue was that the road and parking lot that led to the Snite were built over, making it much more difficult to visit. “There had been a longstanding desire, and then commitment, to basically pull the museum out and make it as accessible to the world as possible,” Becherer said.

After a donation from Ernestine Raclin and Chris and Carmen Murphy, for whom the museum was named, the project began in earnest in 2017. Work continued remotely throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to a delayed groundbreaking in



Photos by Kasia Balsbaugh

The Raclin Murphy Museum of Art at the University of Notre Dame held its opening weekend December 1-3. The installation art by Jenny Holzer on the facade of the museum reads, “We are in the midst of reality responding with joy.”



Visitors spend time in the 17th-century European and American art gallery.

April of 2021. Now the finished museum stands at the edge of campus at an extremely accessible intersection, with free parking readily available.

The Raclin Murphy Museum houses much of the collection kept formerly at the Snite building, which has now become the Snite Research Center in the Visual Arts. “Everything’s going to seem very fresh and very new because the context is so very different,” Becherer said. “We’ve never really had the luxury of 16-foot ceilings and huge, vast expanses of space.”

The building has four floors total – three stories and a lower level. The circular lobby forms the center around which the galleries gather. The lobby itself is a work of art, featuring hand-cast stars in its floor by artist Kiki Smith, who took inspiration from medieval, Renaissance, and Byzantine depictions of Stella Maris: Mary, Star of the Sea. The clean expanse of ceiling above the third story adds to the airy feeling of the museum, along with

the blending of earth, sea, and sky in its interior architecture, which reflects the caption on the sculpture at the museum’s entrance: “Our search for knowledge is endless – it joins earth and sky.”

The museum’s collection extends across time and space, spanning continents and centuries. Some featured artists will be familiar to any student of art: Rembrandt, Dürer, Rodin. Some works will be familiar to those who visited the former Snite museum; some are brand new.

An example of a work newly on display is Vincenzo Spisanelli’s 17th-century altarpiece *Noli Me Tangere*, a depiction of Christ’s appearance to Mary Magdalene after His resurrection. The painting is Spisanelli’s only altarpiece displayed in a public collection in the United States. After spending decades in the vaults of the Snite, *Noli Me Tangere* spent months in conservation. As Becherer explained, conservation uncovered details that were hidden before, such as the garden in the background and even Christ’s original beard in the painting – a goatee, which had been painted over later with a full beard.

In addition to the lobby, the museum comprises several commissions specific to the building and site, one of the most prominent being the Mary, Queen of Families Chapel on the second floor. Icons and vessels in the chapel are centuries old, yet the mosaic ceiling and backdrop are brand new. Museum officials commissioned Mimmo Paladino, a renowned Italian artist, yet these works include many symbols referencing the local St. Joseph River valley, the University of Notre Dame,

and its founding Congregation of Holy Cross. Many of the symbols look primitive, as if drawn by children, yet much of the medieval art in the chapel is more intricate.

On the unconventional decision to put a chapel in the museum, Becherer said that “nestling that chapel ... in the midst of these art galleries helps people understand the past.”

“Most major museums have a significant portion of their collection – medieval, Renaissance, Baroque – that

part of the museum collection.”

According to Becherer, another of the intentions for the chapel was to showcase contemporary religious art. The chapel will be used for Mass and will be open for personal prayer.

More broadly, on the Catholic identity of the university and how it fits with the museum, Becherer said: “The history of art and the history of the Catholic Church have been conjoined since they put fish and loaves and little sheep on the catacomb walls. So there’s a long history there. Not that this is a religious art museum. But it’s a religious collection in many parts ... that basically has a responsibility to keep stories and narratives alive.”

Rebecca Walton, a local artist and teacher at Saint Thomas More Academy, visited the Raclin Murphy Museum of Art on opening night as well as later in the weekend. “The gallery spaces themselves have been beautifully laid out with attention to proportion and color, which showcase the collections wonderfully,” Walton said. “South Bend is certainly fortunate to have a place devoted to both the stewardship of art and the education of the community.”

Similarly, Becherer stressed the accessibility of the museum, both in its central location and free admission. While the museum is a central point for the University of Notre Dame and used by more than 40 of its academic departments every year, Becherer said it is intended to be a “bridge” between the university and the larger community.

“Anybody’s welcome here. Everybody’s welcome here,” Becherer said.

*“Nestling that chapel ... in the midst of these art galleries helps people understand the past.”*

JOSEPH BECHERER

is religious,” Becherer said. “However, none of those objects were made for a museum. They were made for a chapel, they were made for somebody’s home and personal devotion, they were made for a basilica, so on and so forth. So as time has progressed, the original context, the original animated life of those objects, was taken away. And so one of the things that I in particular wanted to do was to help people understand that so much of what they’re seeing in the medieval galleries or the Renaissance galleries was actually an object that had another life before it became