

TODAY'S CATHOLIC

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Bishop Celebrates Epiphany at St. Matthew Cathedral

BY MICHELLE MCDANIEL

On the solemnity of Epiphany, a day in which the Church remembers the Magi's visit to the infant Jesus, Bishop Rhoades celebrated Mass at St. Matthew Cathedral in South Bend. During his homily at the 11 a.m. Mass on Sunday, January 7, Bishop Rhoades spoke about the celebration of the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles and how it relates to our own spiritual journey.

He began his homily with the story of the three wisemen and their journey – how they left their homes far in the East and searched for the newborn king of the Jews. When they arrived in Jerusalem, they naturally sought out the palace, assuming the new king must have been born there. Of course, they found him instead in the manger.

“Our life is a journey – a journey to see and worship our King, a journey to His kingdom of justice and peace, of truth and love,” Bishop Rhoades said. “It is a journey to the new Jerusalem, where He reigns in glory, in the house of the Father, where He has prepared a place for us.”

Bishop Rhoades compared our journey to theirs in terms of



Michelle McDaniel

Three children dressed as Magi carry the gifts to Bishop Rhoades during Mass on the solemnity of Epiphany, Sunday, January 7, at St. Matthew Cathedral in South Bend.

EPIPHANY, page 3



The Notre Dame Folk Choir will be touring the Midwest in January.

The choir will be singing at the **Sunday, January 14, 11:30 a.m. Mass** at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.



Young Men
Discerning a Priestly
Vocation Gather at
Andrew Dinners

Page 2

Christ the King Gives
Back to Sister Parish
in Bangladesh

Page 4

How to Mark the
Day of Prayer for the
Protection of the
Unborn

Page 5

U.S. Bishops Request
New Round of Synod
Listening Sessions

Page 11

Young People from
the Diocese Gather at
SEEK Conference

Page 16

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Andrew Dinners Aim to Promote Priestly Discernment Among Young Men

BY CLAIRE KENNEY

Each year, the Vocations Office of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend hosts two dinners – one in South Bend and one in Fort Wayne – to help offer resources and support for young men who are discerning a call to the priesthood. These annual events, called Andrew Dinners, have a long history both nationally and locally.

"The Andrew Dinner opens the door of discernment for young men considering a vocation," said Father Daniel Niezer, Diocesan Promoter of Priestly Vocations.

The dinner, which cultivates a casual and relaxed atmosphere to promote a comfortable environment for discernment, provides the opportunity for the men in attendance to speak with current seminarians and priests about the unique life the priesthood offers.

"It is a great environment to both enjoy building new relationships as well as asking any questions about these topics," Father Niezer told Today's Catholic.

This discernment opportunity is named after St. Andrew to underscore the importance of God's calling – as St. Andrew is known as "the First Apostle."

Father Niezer knows firsthand how impactful attending an Andrew Dinner can be to the discernment process, as he attended one such event during his discernment period.

"I remember attending an Andrew Dinner at my home parish, St. Elizabeth in Fort Wayne, when I was in high school," he said.

This year, a Holy Hour preceded the dinners, which took place at St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Fort Wayne on Thursday, January 4, and at St. Pius X in Granger on Friday, January 5.

"We had a very successful two evenings for these Andrew Dinners," Father Niezer said. "I focused on equipping the young men with basic discernment tools centered around the four dimensions of seminary formation: the human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral dimensions."

Seminarian Sam Martinez was in attendance and told Today's Catholic he was highly impressed with both dinner events.

"What a great two evenings praying and joining in community with stellar young men from around the diocese," said Martinez, a son of St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Fort Wayne, who is studying at Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Maryland. "From adoration to



Photos by Joshua Schipper

Above, Seminararian Sam Martinez talks to an attendee at the Andrew Dinner at St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Fort Wayne on Thursday, January 4. At left, Father Daniel Niezer, Diocesan Promoter of Priestly Vocations, prays during a Holy Hour at St. Vincent de Paul prior to the Andrew Dinner.



witnesses and plain encouragement, I pray we can give the People of God shepherds after His own heart."

Discerning the priesthood can be overwhelming and filled with questions. The tradition of the Andrew Dinner helps facilitate faith in considering one's vocation. Each Andrew Dinner hosted by the diocese strives to do the same.

"It is our hope that those who attend the Andrew Dinner will not only have their questions answered but will leave motivated to discern their vocation by living out their faith with great courage and zeal," Father Niezer explained.

And in the end, it is God's will that these dinners seek to facilitate.

"Ultimately, we hope that God's will be done in the hearts of our young people discerning a vocation," Father Niezer said. "By providing events like the Andrew Dinners, we are offering a time and a place to think and pray more specifically about a vocation to the priesthood."

To learn more about vocations within the diocese, visit diocesefwsb.org/vocations.





Photos by Michelle McDaniel

With the church decorated for the Christmas season, Bishop Rhoades delivers his homily during Mass on Epiphany Sunday, January 7, at St. Matthew Cathedral in South Bend.

EPIPHANY, from page 1

the many hardships and sacrifices each of us faces, as well as the temptation to give up.

"But there is a star to guide us, like there was a star that guided the Magi," he said.

"The star that guides us in our journey is the word of God, the Gospel."

Bishop Rhoades implored the congregation to keep seeking the Lord and following that star. He reminded listeners that while we all seek out meaning in our lives, the devil tempts us to find that meaning in self-centered pleasures that are not Christ.

In the Magi's journey, they experienced similar lies and deception through King Herold. Like the wisemen, we must turn away from these lies and keep seeking the Lord, guided by his star.

"[The Magi] experienced authentic and deep joy when they followed God's star and went into the house and saw the Child with Mary, His mother," Bishop Rhoades said. "They experienced awe, wonder, comfort, and joy before the mystery of God, who had lowered Himself to take on our human condition and offer us sinners salvation."

Bishop Rhoades encouraged people to take up this holy journey as a new resolution in 2024.

"I can't think of a better New Year's resolution for all of us than this: to seek to grow in holiness in 2024."

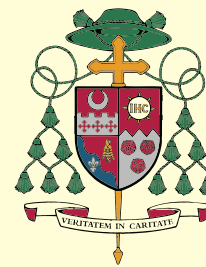
He ended his homily by reminding the congregation of the words spoken by the prophet Isaiah at the beginning of the first reading: "Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come; the glory of the Lord



shines upon you."

"The Church, like Jerusalem of old, is called to be the city of light, which reflects God's light to the world and helps humanity to walk in His ways," Bishop

Rhoades said. "This is what we as disciples must do by living in the way of the Beatitudes, attracting others to God and the beauty of His Kingdom through our witness of love."



Public schedule of Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades

Monday, January 15: 10 a.m. – Meeting of Bishop's Cabinet, Archbishop Noll Center, Fort Wayne
 Wednesday, January 17: 9:45 a.m. – Mass and Pastoral Visit, Bishop Luers High School, Fort Wayne
 Thursday, January 18: 10:30 a.m. – Presbyteral Council Meeting, Sacred Heart Rectory, Warsaw
 Friday, January 19: 8:15 a.m. – Mass and Pastoral Visit, St. Joseph School, South Bend
 Saturday, January 20: 6 p.m. – Mass for Nocturnal Adoration Society, St. Michael Church, Plymouth
 Sunday, January 21: 10 a.m. – Melkite Divine Liturgy, Malloy Hall Chapel, University of Notre Dame



Priest Assignment

The Most Reverend Kevin C. Rhoades, Bishop of Fort Wayne-South Bend, has made the following assignment.

Reverend Bartholomew Okorie, as Parochial Vicar at St. Vincent de Paul Parish, Elkhart, effective January 23, 2024.



Forty Hours Devotion



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



For up-to-date information about Eucharistic Revival events and resources, visit diocesefwsb.org/eucharist or diocesefwsb.org/eucaristia.

Christ the King Partners with Parish in Bangladesh

BY JILL A. BOUGHTON

In *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis' 2020 encyclical on fraternity and social friendship, the Holy Father wrote at length about the need for communities to be willing to extend their help and friendship to others which might have less. "A love capable of transcending borders is the basis of what in every city and country can be called 'social friendship.' Genuine social friendship within a society makes true universal openness possible," he wrote (No. 99). He continued: "Social friendship and universal fraternity necessarily call for an acknowledgment of the worth of every human person, always and everywhere. If each individual is of such great worth, it must be stated clearly and firmly that 'the mere fact that some people are born in places with fewer resources or less development does not justify the fact that they are living with less dignity'" (No. 106).

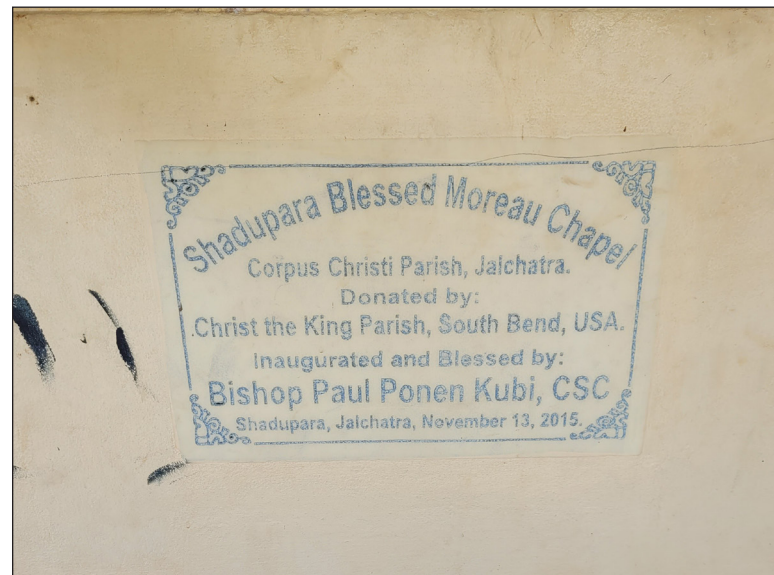
For the past 15 years, Christ the King Parish in South Bend has truly lived out this vision of social friendship.

At an assembly this past fall, students at Christ the King Catholic School learned about their community's sister parish in Bangladesh. Guests that day were Holy Cross Seminarian T.J. Groden and Will Robbins, a Notre Dame student who boxes in Bengal Bouts to raise money for the missions in Bangladesh. Both young men had spent time this summer at Corpus Christi Parish in Jalchatra, Bangladesh. They told stories and showed slides and videos of the places they went and people they met in the small country located on the eastern border of India.

Christ the King students were able to identify with shared experiences their counterparts in Bangladesh had – experiences such as first Communion and confirmation – but they also noticed differences in the culture and living conditions: the simplicity of the classrooms and the way their peers eat, dance, and celebrate.

"Hopefully these images will be in their minds as they pray for them and bring in money for fundraising events," said Christ the King parishioner Kathleen Kloska, a member of the parish committee that oversees the relationship between these sister parishes. "This creates a unique connection within the universal Catholic Church."

The two parishes began their partnership in 2008. The former Pastor, Holy Cross Father Neil Wack, said he "felt that forming a sister parish relationship was an important way of emphasizing that we at Christ the King are part of a universal Church that is much bigger than just our parish, our diocese, or our



Photos by T.J. Groden

Funds from Christ the King Parish in South Bend helped to build a new chapel, above, which is run by its sister parish in Jalchatra, Bangladesh.

nation." He assigned the task to Holy Cross Father Steve Lacroix, who is now the Pastor at Christ the King but was the Associate Pastor at the time. Father Lacroix reached out to the Holy Cross Mission Center and began what is now a 15-year relationship.

A parish committee helped launch the effort. Kloska, a member of that first committee, told Today's Catholic, "We found fun and informative ways to introduce the Corpus Christi Parish to parishioners and students while raising funds to help them." From the beginning, they wanted a mutually beneficial relationship involving prayer and cultural exchange, not just sending money overseas. A parish prayer is regularly included in the bulletin, and each parish regularly offers Masses for the intentions of the other. Father Lacroix said, "They pray for us an awful lot!" There have also been special Holy Hours and assigned prayer partners. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, there was talk of a pilgrimage overseas; perhaps that idea will be revived, parish leaders said.

The two parishes regularly exchange emails and photos, which often appear in the bulletin at Christ the King, which helps to keep everyone in the community informed about what's happening at Corpus Christi in Jalchatra.

While there are many similarities between the two Catholic parishes, the differences are striking. Corpus Christi is located in a largely Muslim country where less than 1 percent of the population is Christian. Parishioners at Corpus Christi are tribal peoples, so they're ethnic as well as religious minorities. For that reason, the parish offers many services American parishes don't typically provide, including health care, legal advocacy, and economic development initiatives. Their parish structure is also different, as Corpus Christi includes more than 20 chapels and 18 schools,



Members of the community of Corpus Christi Parish in Jalchatra, Bangladesh, gather inside one of its chapels, above, and during an outdoor service, below.



some of them boarding schools, across the region.

Needless to say, Corpus Christi in Jalchatra has great financial needs. Christ the King sponsors an annual fish fry, sending all the profits to their sister parish, as well as free-will offerings at various times. During Advent and Lent, several of the school service projects are designated to assist Corpus Christi.

"One of the most amazing surprises from all of this has been to see how far our money goes in Bangladesh," Father Lacroix told Today's Catholic. "For instance, they sent us photos of the dedication of a new chapel they built; the cornerstone said that it was donated by Christ the King! I never imagined that the amount that we donate would be able to fund an entire chapel – you certainly couldn't build one for that amount here in the U.S. – but it goes to show how even what seems to be a small gift to us can make a big difference to others in the developing world."

Despite the differences, Father Lacroix said, "We see so many similarities in the way we celebrate the sacraments, worship the Lord, and form our children. I think that seeing how they practice their faith in their context helps us understand how to practice our faith more fully here at Christ the King."

Kloska agrees. "This has been a great way to view our Catholic faith in a universal way, remembering that although people and cultures are different around the world, we are all united through the Eucharist. We have been introduced to a community with far fewer modern amenities and living in poor conditions, yet they exude such happiness and love of their faith. We have learned so much about true gratitude and joy from them. We, in turn, as a parish and school, pray for our sister parish and share what we can to help improve their living conditions."

Bishops Urge Faithful to Mark Day of Prayer for the Unborn

BY TODAY'S CATHOLIC

Each year on January 22, the Church in the United States honors the dignity of life in the womb by celebrating the solemn and important Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children. This special day is held on the anniversary of the 1973 Supreme Court decision *Roe v. Wade*, which, until the ruling was overturned in 2022, legalized abortion nationwide.

But while the Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* ushered in a new era – one where states can once again legislate their own abortion regulations – the need for legal protection for pre-born children has not gone away. Far from it.

According to The New York Times: "In the year after the Supreme Court ended the constitutional right to abortion, something unexpected happened: The total number of legal abortions in the United States did not fall. Instead, it appeared to increase slightly, by about 0.2 percent, according to the first full-year count of abortions provided nationwide."

Also, since *Dobbs* was decided, 20 states and Washington, D.C., have enacted laws that have taken away the right to life of children in their mother's wombs, including Indiana's neighbors Illinois, Michigan, and Ohio.

According to the website of the U.S. Conference of Catholic

Bishops, "On June 24, 2022, the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* decision overturned *Roe v. Wade*, and we praise God for the great opportunity state and federal legislators now have to protect pre-born children. While God, in His mercy, ended the nearly 50-year nationwide regime of abortion on demand, right now state and federal laws, in many instances, are still hostile to pre-born children. So, great prayer and advocacy is very needed. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM), No. 373, designates January 22 as a particular day of prayer and penance, called the Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children: 'In all the Dioceses of the United States of America, January 22 (or January 23, when January 22 falls on a Sunday) shall be observed as a particular day of prayer for the full restoration of the legal guarantee of the right to life and of penance for violations to the dignity of the human person committed through acts of abortion.'"

In a 2022 letter addressed to Archbishop Timothy Broglio, President of the USCCB, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican Secretary of State, expressed Pope Francis' gratitude for the work being done in the United States to protect the innocent lives of the unborn. Cardinal Parolin said the pope was "deeply grateful for the faithful witness shown publicly over the years by all who promote and defend the right to life of the

most innocent and vulnerable members of our human family." According to Cardinal Parolin's letter, the pope also noted that "the building of a truly just society rests upon respect for the sacred dignity of every person and the welcome given to each one as a brother or sister." Cardinal Parolin went on to say that Pope Francis "trusts that Almighty God will strengthen the commitment of all, especially the young, to persevere in their efforts aimed at protecting human life in all its stages, especially through adequate legal measures enacted at every level of society."

In January of 2021, Bishop Rhoades prayed: "You have given us the wonderful gift of freedom, but this freedom destroys itself when we see it as absolute autonomy. The pro-choice philosophy is a corruption of your gift of freedom for it gives to people power over others and against others. As your servant, John Paul II wrote: 'To claim the right to abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia, and to recognize that right in law, means to attribute to human freedom a perverse and evil significance.' It is the death of true freedom. Lord, we thank you for the gift of living in our democracy, yet we know that the democratic ideal is only truly such when it is obedient to the truth of your law, when it acknowledges and safeguards the dignity of every human person created in your image."

To this end, the Church urges the faithful and clergy

alike to mark Monday, January 22, as a day of prayer for the unborn. For resources, including prayers, Mass readings, and more, visit usccb.org/january-22.

The U.S. bishops' conference is also inviting Catholics across the country to participate in its "9 Days for Life" novena

for the protection of human life, which can be found at respectlife.org. Each day's intention is accompanied by a short reflection and suggested actions to help build a culture of life.



Blessing of a Child in the Womb

God, author of all life,
bless, we pray, this unborn child;
give constant protection
and grant a healthy birth
that is the sign of our rebirth one day
into the eternal rejoicing of heaven...
– excerpt from the Prayer of Blessing

January 16-24, 2024

www.respectlife.org/9-days-for-life



Regenerate Indiana: Land and People Made Whole

Join the Moreau College Initiative for the launch of their student-led documentary.

Directed by AmeriCorps member Cam Stillson.

Produced by Parable Films.

**WEDNESDAY
JANUARY 17
6:30 P.M.**

**DRISCOLL AUDITORIUM
HOLY CROSS COLLEGE**

RECEPTION TO FOLLOW.

**HOLY CROSS
COLLEGE** 
at Notre Dame, Indiana

54515 State Road 933 North • Notre Dame, IN 46556

The production and distribution of this film is supported by a generous grant from Indiana Humanities.



Archbishop: Epiphany Highlights Ukrainians Fight for Freedom

KYIV, Ukraine (OSV News) – Amid Russia's war on Ukraine, which continues attacks begun in 2014, and which has been declared a genocide in two human rights reports, the feast of the Epiphany highlights Ukrainians' fight for "something new: the movement toward freedom," said Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, Head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. "The enslaving Russian ideology proposes nothing more than a return to the old," the prelate said. "They attempt to force upon us re-adoption of the old imperial and Soviet ways of thinking and living," said the Major Archbishop, who celebrated a Divine Liturgy at the Patriarchal Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ in Kyiv on Saturday, January 6. "We want to live in a new way; we seek the renewal that Christ gives us in today's life-giving impulse of his Epiphany over the Jordan." The waters of the Jordan River also recall the Red Sea through which God led the ancient Israelites out of slavery, while Pharaoh and his army perished, said Major Archbishop Shevchuk. "The power that had kept God's people in bondage was ... defeated," he said. "Instead, a power that calls for and guides (us) toward freedom emerged."

Dicastery Bishops Shouldn't Stop Blessings for Gay Couples

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – While bishops may take a cautious approach to the Vatican's guidance on blessing same-sex or other unmarried couples, they should not deny their priests the possibility of discerning and imparting blessings on people who ask for them, officials with the Vatican's Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith said. "Prudence and attention to the ecclesial context and to the local culture could allow for different methods of application, but not a total or definitive denial of this path that is proposed to priests," officials said in a January 4 news release. Each bishop has a responsibility to discern the local application of the declaration *Fiducia Supplicans* on "the pastoral meaning of blessings," signed by Pope Francis and published by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of Faith on Monday, December 18, but a bishop should not deny priests the ability to bless people who come to them, the press release said. Signed by Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, Prefect of the dicastery, the statement said it hoped "to help clarify" the reception of *Fiducia Supplicans* among bishops' conferences.

NEWS BRIEFS

Iowa Town Holds Prayer Vigil After School Shooting



OSV News photo/Sergio Flores, Reuters

Michelle and Dylan Woods embrace during a prayer vigil after a shooting at Perry High School in Iowa on Thursday, January 4. A 17-year-old opened fire at the small-town Iowa high school before classes resumed on the first day after the winter break, killing a sixth grader and wounding five others as students barricaded themselves in offices, ducked into classrooms, and fled in panic. The high school shares a campus with Perry Middle School.

Court Reinstates Idaho's Abortion Ban

WASHINGTON, D.C. (OSV News) – The U.S. Supreme Court will hear arguments on Idaho's near-total abortion ban, which the court temporarily reinstated after the Justice Department asserted the law conflicted with a federal statute on emergency medical care. In a January 5 order, the Supreme Court scheduled oral arguments regarding the ban for April of 2024, while granting a stay on a preliminary injunction against the ban issued in August of 2022. At issue is Idaho's "Defense of Life Act," which bans abortion except in cases of rape, incest, or where a physician deems the procedure medically necessary to save a pregnant woman's life, and went into effect following the Supreme Court's decision in the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* case, which returned the issue of abortion to the states. The Justice Department argued Idaho's law conflicted with the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act, or EMTALA, under which hospitals that receive Medicare funding and have emergency rooms must provide "necessary stabilizing treatment for emergency medical conditions and labor."

Former Minnesota Archbishop Acted 'Imprudently' but not Criminally

ST. PAUL, Minnesota (OSV News) – A multiyear investigation overseen by the Catholic Church into Archbishop John C. Nienstedt, who resigned from the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, has ended with the Vatican finding he acted "imprudently" in several instances but not criminally under canon law, Archbishop Bernard A. Hebda said in a statement released on Friday, January 5. "None of those instances, either standing alone or taken together, were determined to warrant any further investigation or penal sanctions," Archbishop Hebda said, but Pope Francis determined several administrative actions "are justified." Among them, Archbishop Nienstedt "may not exercise any public ministries" in the "Province of St. Paul and Minneapolis" and "may not exercise ministry in any way outside of his diocese of residence" without permission of the local bishop. Archbishop Nienstedt resigned after criminal and civil charges were brought against the arch-

diocese in June of 2015 for failing to protect children from a former pastor convicted of sexually abusing three minors in his parish.

Vatican Doctrine Official Says Priestly Celibacy Should be Optional

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – The Catholic Church should revise its celibacy requirement for Latin-rite priests, a senior official in the Vatican's doctrinal office said. "If it were up to me, I would revise the requirement that priest(s) have to be celibate," said Archbishop Charles Scicluna of Malta, Adjunct Secretary of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, in an interview with the Times of Malta that was released on Sunday, January 7. "Experience has shown me this is something we need to seriously think about." The interview was conducted in Maltese, but the Times of Malta provided an English translation of his remarks in its story and in subtitles on the video clip it released. Archbishop Scicluna said the Latin-rite Church "should learn from the Catholic Churches of the Oriental rite," which have

a tradition of married priests. Celibacy, Archbishop Scicluna said, "was optional for the first millennium of the Church's existence, and it should become optional again."

Nigeria's Sorrow 'Overflowing' After Christians Massacred

SOKOTO, Nigeria (OSV News) – Governor Caleb Mutfwang of Nigeria's Plateau state declared a week of mourning January 1-8 to honor the deaths of at least 200 Christians killed around Christmas by Fulani Muslim herders, targeting Christians in the country. Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah of Sokoto said the attackers are "children of darkness" and come "from the deepest pit of hell." The December 23-28 killings have also led to thousands of people being forced to flee their homes. As many as 80 villages in Plateau state were attacked, officials with Christian aid group Release International reported on Saturday, December 30. Bodies continue to be discovered, and attacks are expected to continue, officials with Release International reported. "I urge all citizens to use these days for intense prayers to seek the intervention of the almighty God in defending our territories against wicked men that have risen against us," Mutfwang said in a video statement released on Tuesday, January 2.

USCCB Affirms Pope's Description of Surrogacy

WASHINGTON, D.C. (OSV News) – Pope Francis told diplomats on Monday, January 8, that he finds surrogacy "deplorable" and would like to see the practice universally banned. The remarks made headlines in major U.S. secular news outlets, prompting calls to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the conference's Spokesperson and Executive Director of Public Affairs Chieko Noguchi told OSV News. "As Pope Francis stated, with surrogacy, an unborn child is turned into 'an object of trafficking' because it exploits the birth mother's material needs and makes the child the product of a commercial contract. This is why the Catholic Church teaches that the practice of surrogacy is not morally permissible. Instead, we should pray for, and work towards, a world that upholds the profound dignity of every person, at every stage and in every circumstance of life," Noguchi said in a January 8 media statement. Gestational surrogacy is the practice in which a woman carries and delivers a baby for an individual or couple, sometimes for compensation. The gestational carrier is impregnated through in vitro fertilization, a practice the Church also forbids.

AROUND THE DIOCESE

St. Pius X Students Sing in Rome

Spanning late December and into the new year, members of the St. Pius X Parish community in Granger traveled to Rome to participate in the 44th International Congress of Pueri Cantores. Jeremy Hoy, Director of Liturgy and Music at St. Pius X Parish, and Samantha Kneibel, Band Director at St. Pius X Catholic School, accompanied 23 children's choir members and other guests to the global event, which is a weeklong celebration of sacred music that brings together children's choirs from around the world every five years.

On Thursday, December 28, the St. Pius X choir – one of just 19 from the United States to participate in the congress – began the festival by performing a concert at Sant'Andrea della Valle in Rome with a choir from Ann Arbor, Michigan. That evening, they participated in the event's opening ceremony, which brought together 4,000 choir members from more than 100 choirs from around the world.

Choir member Maddie

Mousaw said: "I particularly enjoyed seeing all the singers together for the first time. It was truly inspiring to see all the amazing youth gathered together for a unified purpose: to preach the Gospel of peace through the gift of sacred music."

Other highlights of the trip included performing with the other choirs from the U.S. at the Mass of Nations at the Major Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, during which Hoy served as the organist.

"This whole trip was truly an amazing and unforgettable experience," Hoy said. "It is hard to put into words what we just experienced. ... I have always wanted to go to Rome and to the Vatican, but to say that I got to play the organ at one of the major basilicas is more than a dream come true."

The choir members and their chaperones also got a private tour of the Vatican Museums and the Sistine Chapel, joined the other participating choirs in an audience with Pope Francis, toured the relics of ancient



Rome, and sang at Mass on the solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, on Monday, January 1, in St. Peter's Basilica, which was celebrated by the pope.

"We are truly so blessed to have been given this opportunity," Mousaw said. "The Lord was present in all of our music, and this congress was an amazing testament to the heart of Christianity: encounter."



Photos provided by St. Pius X

Transitional Deacons Make European Pilgrimage



Photos provided by Mount St. Mary's Seminary

Transitional deacons studying at Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, Maryland, made a pilgrimage to Europe during the first week of January, visiting numerous holy sites throughout the continent. Stops included the Fatima apparition sites, the Santiago de Compostela, and the home of St. Theresa of Avila. Deacon Oscar Duarte (pictured right) and Deacon Caleb Kruse – both from the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend – assisted at Mass throughout the trip.

Rob Schneider Opens Up About Catholic Conversion

BY KATIE YODER

(OSV News) – In 2023, actor and comedian Rob Schneider celebrated his first Christmas as a Catholic.

"I think the reason the Catholic Church works for me is it's closest to the actual words of Jesus Christ," the 60-year-old told Our Sunday Visitor newspaper from Arizona. (Both Our Sunday Visitor newspaper and OSV News are owned by the OSV publishing company.)

Schneider spoke about his newfound faith after revealing that he converted to Catholicism in a social media post on October 31. The actor rose to fame as a cast member and writer for NBC's "Saturday Night Live" and is perhaps best known for starring in films including "Deuce Bigalow: Male Gigolo" in 1999, "The Hot Chick" in 2002, and "The Benchwarmers" in 2006.

He chatted with Our Sunday Visitor after also starring

in a new children's series called "Chip Chilla" and while working on a project about the Shroud of Turin, which is believed by many to be Jesus Christ's burial cloth.

Schneider said many things led to his conversion, in particular, his family priest in Phoenix taking him to see Father Chad Ripperger, whom he called "an amazing priest."

"We got to hear him speak for two hours, and it was really powerful," Schneider said of the theologian and exorcist based in Colorado. He called Father Ripperger's words reassuring.

"At the same time, it was 'prepare yourself and be vigilant, but not fearful,'" he remembered. "His message at the end was, 'Jesus already won. This is just a mop-up mission' – and I love that. I think it's true."

While speaking about his conversion, Schneider revealed that he has been working for several years on a script about



OSV News photo/courtesy Rob Schneider

Actor and comedian Rob Schneider, in an undated courtesy photo, spoke with Our Sunday Visitor about his 2023 conversion to Catholicism.

from The Daily Wire. The animated show follows a family of homeschooled chinchillas who embark on adventures and learn about literature, history, and culture. The show, which premiered in October, embraces the importance of family and loving one another. Schneider does the voice of "Chum Chum," the father. He wanted to support Daily Wire entertainment, he said, and took on the role after seeing a need for wholesome creative content.

"It's been a couple of years already since we've been working on this," he said. "It really was during the height of the pandemic where you had a real shutdown in Hollywood, not just physically but ideologically. And it became kind of the height of where entertainment was indoctrinating people – and especially the family – into some ideas that were anti-theological to what entertainment, I think, should be."

He felt the world going to a darker place, Schneider said, pointing to how places such as liquor stores and strip clubs remained open during the COVID-19 pandemic while church doors were shuttered.

"I think there's been a real attack on Christianity – a concerted, aggressive attack, especially in the Catholic Church," he said.

In the midst of it all, Schneider spoke about finding and embracing the Catholic faith. "Jesus Christ only lets you wander so far," he said. "I have young children, and I want (them) to have a nice foundation and a beautiful way of seeing the world."

Schneider shared that he was recently present when his good friend, actor Kevin James, said a prayer in Latin. "Luckily, Latin and Spanish are pretty close, so I'm able to pick up and start to understand it," Schneider said.

"I think it's important to be close to the actual words of Jesus Christ," he said. "And that's why the Catholic Church, like I said, works for me."

Katie Yoder is a Contributing Editor for Our Sunday Visitor newspaper.

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the Shroud of Turin, a cloth located in Turin, Italy, believed to have wrapped Christ's crucified body and to bear his photographic-negative image.

"It's real," Schneider said. "People try to dismiss it as a medieval relic, but it's impossible. They can't say how ... what was done – and how it was done in a (photo) negative."

"If it was a medieval thing," he added, "someone would've had to think, 500 years later, there would be this invention of the photograph to get that negative to a positive."

He wondered at the French Poor Clare nuns who repaired the shroud after it survived a fire in the 16th century: "If you can imagine the dedication of the French nuns who were repairing the cloth of their Lord; how they would make it perfect."

When performing radio-carbon dating in the past, he argued, scientists failed to account for the newer repairs to the shroud, which led them to miscalculate its age.

"Everything described in the Bible, including there were

blood samples that they found on the cloth, everything in there is from exactly what the sacrifice of Jesus Christ – and what the cloth really is, is a receipt," he said. "The receipt of what Christ paid for all of us, the greatest gift ever to mankind."

That realization deeply impacted him. "There's only so many times in life where you can look at something that's irrefutable and go, 'I'm going to ignore that,'" he said.

"I think I just want to be open to the truth and wherever it can bring you," Schneider added.

He hoped that he could make the movie not only because it is inspiring, but also because it could bring other people to the faith.

"Whatever God's calling is for me, I would be honored, and it would be the only gift that I could possibly give back besides raising my kids in the faith," he said.

Schneider is also working on a new series for children ages 3 and older called "Chip Chilla," available through Bentkey, a subscription streaming service

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'Padre Pio' Actor Shia LaBeouf Enters the Catholic Church

BY GINA CHRISTIAN

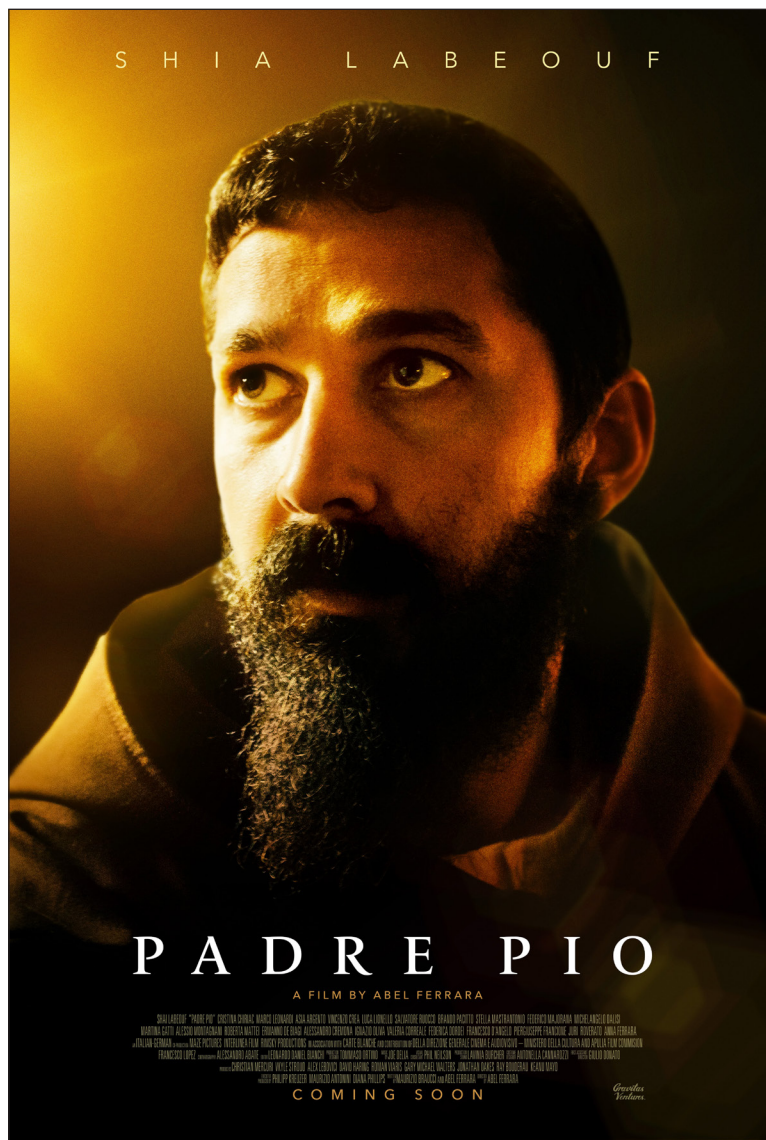
(OSV News) – An actor who recently portrayed a beloved saint on screen has now fully come into the Catholic Church in real life.

Shia LaBeouf, a Hollywood veteran and star of director Abel Ferrara's film "Padre Pio," received the Sacrament of Confirmation, completing his initiation into the Catholic faith, during the New Year holiday weekend, according to announcements posted on Tuesday, January 2, to Facebook and Instagram by the Capuchin Franciscans' Western American Province.

The friars posted several pictures of a smiling LaBeouf with the friars and Bishop Robert E. Barron of Winona-Rochester, Minnesota, who had previously interviewed the actor through his Word on Fire apostolate.

Capuchin Father Joseph Seraphin Dederick, the Provincial, told OSV News that Bishop Barron administered the sacrament to LaBeouf at the Old Mission Santa Inés in Solvang, California, on Sunday, December 31.

"We are thrilled to share that our dear friend Shia LaBeouf has fully entered the Church this past weekend through the Sacrament of Confirmation!" the friars said in their posts, adding that they "are overjoyed to welcome him into the fold and witness his deep commitment to his faith journey."



LaBeouf developed both working and personal relationships with the friars while researching his role in "Padre Pio."

Speaking to OSV News in

May, LaBeouf said he "wasn't even trying to make movies" when Ferrara approached him about the role.

The acclaimed 37-year-old actor – whose Emmy-winning

career as a kid on the Disney Channel blossomed into big-screen success – found himself "totally lost" after his inner demons led to partying, work conflicts, and run-ins with the law.

"I was wandering around, living in my truck," he said. "I wasn't interested in acting anymore."

As LaBeouf began confronting his personal issues, Ferrara tapped him for "Padre Pio," a saint to whom the Bronx-born director – best known for his gritty cinematic takes on the underworld – felt himself "drawn."

While researching the film, LaBeouf met Brother Alexander Rodriguez, a Capuchin Franciscan who is Assistant Vocation Director at the order's Old Mission Santa Inés in Solvang, California. Soon, LaBeouf was asking about more than one of the congregation's most beloved saints.

"Shia was looking to know about Padre Pio, and then delved into the faith," Brother Alexander told OSV News in May. "He got into RCIA (referring to the Order of Christian Initiation for Adults). The friars and I were helping to catechize him."

LaBeouf told OSV News at the time that "(learning) how to pray the Rosary" brought a "tangible relief" that he had previously sought through drugs, alcohol, and life in the fast lane.

The lessons continued as Brother Alexander accom-

panied LaBeouf to Italy for filming, with the Capuchin providing technical assistance for the project while appearing in the movie as Padre Pio's fellow Capuchin and spiritual adviser.

"I fell in love with Christ," LaBeouf told OSV News in May.

Now the actor, "known for his incredible talent and passion in the entertainment industry, has embarked on a profound spiritual journey that has led him to embrace the teachings of the Catholic Church," the Capuchin friars wrote in their January 2 Facebook and Instagram posts. "His decision to fully enter the Church is a testament to his sincere desire to grow in his relationship with God and live out the Gospel values."

The friars added: "As Capuchin Franciscans, we believe in the transformative power of faith and the incredible impact it can have on one's life. We are humbled and grateful to walk alongside Shia as he takes this important step in his spiritual journey."

"We invite you to join us in celebrating this momentous occasion and to keep Shia LaBeouf in your prayers as he continues to deepen his faith and seek God's guidance in his life," the friars said. "May his example inspire others to explore their own spiritual paths and find solace in the loving embrace of the Church."

Gina Christian is a National Reporter for OSV News.

Newly Translated Padre Pio Letters Coming to Your Inbox

BY GINA CHRISTIAN

(OSV News) – A beloved Italian saint is speaking to faithful anew through a series of letters sent directly to their email inboxes.

The St. Pio Foundation has announced the release of "Epistolary," a collection of 365 letters written by St. Pio of Pietrelcina, widely known as Padre Pio, to his spiritual directors and students. A dedicated page on the foundation's website includes a sign-up form (available at saintpiofoundation.org/saint-pios-epistolary) for receiving a weekly PDF with seven letters, one for each day of a given week. The first batch of letters was sent out on Monday, January 1, by the foundation based in Tuckahoe, New York.

Freshly translated into English from the original Italian, the Epistolary represents a fraction of the "thousands and thousands of letters" Padre Pio wrote during his lifetime, Luciano Lamorcarca,

Founder and CEO of the St. Pio Foundation, told OSV News.

Born Francesco Forgione in 1887 in Pietrelcina, Italy, the future saint entered the Capuchin order at age 15 and was ordained in 1910. Between 1915 and 1918, he served intermittently in the Italian Army's medical corps during World War I but was ultimately discharged because of poor health. He returned to his monastery at San Giovanni Rotondo in southern Italy, and in 1918 received the stigmata (the wounds of Christ), the first known priest to receive such marks in the history of the Church.

Amid sustained physical and spiritual suffering – compounded by austerity and long hours of prayer – he established Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza, now a renowned national research hospital located in San Giovanni Rotondo. The Capuchin also devoted himself to the healing of souls, often spending more than 15 hours a day hearing confession. Padre Pio died in 1968 and was

canonized in 2002 by St. John Paul II, with whom he had been friends since 1947.

The Capuchin's voluminous correspondence was a ministry unto itself, imparting encouragement, fatherly corrections, and commonsense spirituality centered in an intensely personal relationship with Christ.

"If God has not abandoned you in the past, how would He abandon you in the future when now, more than in the past, you want to belong to Him from now onwards?" wrote Padre Pio to Antonietta Vona, one of his "spiritual daughters," in November of 1917. "Do not fear that something bad could happen to you in this world, because it may never happen to you. But, in any case, should this ever happen to you, God will give you the strength to overcome it."

At the same time, Padre Pio's writings reveal his own struggles with spiritual dryness.

"I'm alone in the day, I'm alone during the night, and no ray of light comes to shine on me, never a drop of refreshment

comes to put off the flame that engulfs me continuously without ever consuming me," he admitted in a 1916 letter to his superior, Capuchin Father Benedetto of San Marco in Lamis, who would later attest to Padre Pio's reception of the stigmata.

With the Epistolary, Padre Pio's ministry of spiritual counsel continues – and faithful have been eagerly waiting, said Lamorcarca.

"I always find people around the (U.S.), when I travel with the relics (of Padre Pio) especially – they're very demanding (about access to the letters, asking), 'How can we get all that? It's difficult to find.'"

Lamorcarca told OSV News the Epistolary is one of several "gifts" he wanted to give to the Catholic community to mark the foundation's upcoming 10th anniversary in April.

But the gifts he has received from his own devotion to the saint have been life-changing, he added.

A native of the Puglia region in southern Italy, Lamorcarca

– an opera singer and philanthropist – was accustomed to visiting the saint's shrine there as a child with his mother and brother.

Lamorcarca told OSV News that Padre Pio's spiritual wisdom is summarized in one of the saint's best-known maxims: pray, hope, and don't worry.

Along with his letters, Padre Pio's suffering is instructive, said Lamorcarca, adding that he has become "completely different" because of his devotion to the saint.

"I consider being grateful to God for everything that's happened in my life, bad and good," said Lamorcarca. "Because those bad experiences also bring us to understand and to help us be better people."

While "in this life, many try to get rid of their sufferings, even the small headaches," following Padre Pio's example – which modeled Christ's own – offers "a way of looking at (suffering) with much more relief," and bearing it "with much more dignity," said Lamorcarca.

For St. Matthew's Sacristan, Sewing Is in Her DNA

BY LISA KOCHANOWSKI

Mending and sewing was embroidered into her framework, and St. Matthew Cathedral Sacristan Anna Stein has spent the last 20-plus years providing clergy and religious with hand-tailored vestments and more.

"I do all the linens on the altar, the servers' surplices, corporals, purificators, and anything they need," Stein told Today's Catholic.

Her grandmother was an avid sewer and an inspiration to Stein.

"I remember as a 5-year-old, you know, I loved the idea of seeing somebody mending or sewing. I would sit there watching like a hawk," recalled Stein, who got her first sewing machine from her parents – a brand new Singer. "As I grew up, I started making clothes for myself, my mom, and my sister. I would make curtains around the house if my mother needed them."

During junior high and throughout high school, she took home-economics classes. After graduation, she moved to Manhattan and worked for Dumont clothing with men's suits. She handled all the finishing work on the Oscar de la Renta line.

"I met him of quite a few times," Stein said of the fashion mogul. "He would come into the factory and inspect. He would look to see if stuff was done right."



Photos by Lisa Kochanowski

Anna Stein, Sacristan at St. Matthew Cathedral in South Bend, poses next to one of the many vestments she has made for priests of the diocese.

After getting married, Stein began doing alteration work for people out of her home. She also spent some time at a bridal shop working in the evenings on alterations to be home with her children when they were

babies.

"I did a lot of wedding dresses from scratch and a lot of repairs," Stein said. She got most of her work through word of mouth. Often, neighbors would ask her to



One of the many vestments made by Sacristan and parishioner Anna Stein of St. Matthew Cathedral in South Bend is seen in this photo.

make Communion dresses for relatives, do alterations for a friend, or knew someone needing a dress made for a special occasion.

After Stein's family moved to South Bend and her kids got older, she found an opportunity to do what she loves while working outside the home.

"Bishop Jenky was looking for a seamstress because the parish (St. Matthew Cathedral) needed a lot of new things," Stein said. "Things were very old, they were tattered, and he wanted to replenish all the stuff. He saw what I can do, and he hired me as a sacristan also. He also had me head up the committee for decorating the church."

The biggest challenge she has faced is getting the fabric. All pieces require liturgical fabric, something that can't be purchased at the local fabric store. Several years ago, she and her husband would travel to Chicago or Evansville to purchase fabric. Now, the digital world has made the search much easier, and she can order it online and get the fabric delivered within 24 hours.

Stein is a bargain shopper, as she looks for the best deals she can find on materials and accessories. She estimates the average cost for the material for a vestment at \$100 and more than 10 hours of work in one garment.

All pieces are memorable, Stein said, especially the work she has done for Bishop Jenky and Bishop Rhoades. Her most memorable piece is when she made her daughter's wedding gown. She enjoyed the chance and honor to create a beautiful gown for her daughter on her special day.

Her next memorable moment will come when she has the honor of making vestments for her grandson, diocesan seminarian Andrew Barnes, who is studying at Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Maryland.

"He already asked me to make him some albs, which I'm going to be working on soon, and I'm making him some deacon stoles," shared Stein, who noted her grandson is scheduled to be ordained a deacon this spring and ordained a priest in 2025. "What I am really looking forward to doing is making his vestments."

For the past 25 years, she has handled the religious garb for churches around the diocese and has decided to semi-retire and do only seamstress work for St. Matthew's Cathedral along with her work as a sacristan.

"I enjoy it," she said. "I still love it, and I'll never stop because that's my thing. I'm going to stay here as long as God wants me to stay."



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U.S. Bishops to Hold New Round of Synod Listening Sessions

BY GINA CHRISTIAN

(OSV News) – Dioceses across the United States are asked to hold additional listening sessions in the next few months, following a request from the Vatican’s Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops, which is preparing for the second session of the global synod on synodality in October.

In a letter dated Tuesday, January 2 (a copy of which OSV News obtained), Bishop Daniel E. Flores of the Diocese of Brownsville, Texas, who chairs the U.S. bishops’ Committee on Doctrine and coordinates the U.S. bishops’ synod process – said his team is requesting “each diocese hold two to three listening sessions regarding the guiding questions” posed by the synod secretariat.

Those two guiding questions were phrased by Bishop Flores and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Synod Team as follows: “Where have I seen or experienced successes – and distresses – within the Church’s structure(s)/organization/leadership/life that encourage or hinder the mission?” and

“How can the structures and organization of the Church help all the baptized to respond to the call to proclaim the Gospel and to live as a community of love and mercy in Christ?”

Bishop Flores asked that each diocese summarize responses to those questions in a three- to five-page document and send it to the USCCB by April 8. The diocesan summaries will inform the USCCB’s summary, which is due to the synod secretariat in May.

Bishop Flores noted that in addition to the listening sessions, “We are encouraged to continue ongoing engagement with the People of God in the dynamism of a synodal style.”

To that end, dioceses may also include with their submissions “a two-page testimony of best practices for synodality”



UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

“Where have I seen or experienced successes – and distresses – within the Church’s structure(s)/organization/leadership/life that encourage

or hinder the mission?” and

“How can the structures and organization of the Church help all the baptized to respond to the call to proclaim the Gospel and to live as a community of love and mercy in Christ?”

that they have developed, the bishop explained.

Bishop Flores also wrote that in addition to the diocesan consultations taking place, “the USCCB will be holding additional listening sessions at the national level with a focus on participation, social justice, and vocations.”

Diocesan-level synod leaders “will be invited to participate in a national working group with the permission of the bishop,”

he said in his letter.

Bishop Flores said that “we all know time is short, but even modest efforts at the local level can bear much fruit. ... Let us do what we can, as well as we can and trust the Lord to accomplish beyond what we can foresee,” he wrote.

Launched by Pope Francis in October 2021, the first session of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, organized on the

theme “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission,” took place October 4-29, 2023, in Rome. Bishop Rhoades was one of five delegates chosen to participate by the USCCB.

The first session of the synod was summarized in a 41-page report intended to allow the global Church to digest, reflect on, and give feedback on its contents ahead of the synod’s final session in Rome next October.

Part of that task is figuring out how decisions are made in the Church in a way that is faithful to its nature – including discerning how episcopal collegiality is exercised in a synodal Church – because the Church’s members have “differentiated co-responsibility for the common mission of evangelization.”

The synod’s report also covers topics such as evangelization as a mandate of baptism, formation in “authentic discipleship” rooted in the Eucharist and Scripture, clerical and lay formation, ministries of pastoral accompaniment, the role of the Eastern Catholic churches in the life of the universal Church, ecumenism, ordaining married men to the priesthood, the role of women in the Church, and the ongoing impact of clerical sex abuse scandals among others.

The synod’s next session in Rome will have the task of making decisions about what concrete proposals to present before the pope.

The Servus Omnium

Lecture

February 13, 2024

Enjoy a Mardi Gras breakfast and receive a blessing from Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades to kick off the Lenten season. Deacon Larry Oney to present “Called and Sent for Such a Time as This.”

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Five Events in 2024 to Help Us Be Better Catholics

As we flip the calendar to 2024, I must admit the thought of the coming 12 months fill me with a certain amount of dread. Entering into another election year, with all of the related political drama, can feel anxiety-inducing, to say the least.

Thankfully, as people of faith, we know that our hope is found not in political parties or their candidates but in Jesus Christ and His Church. So, instead of dreading the first Tuesday in November and the inevitably contentious lead-up, here are five events Catholics can anticipate with joy this calendar year.

In the unlikely off-chance that you haven't heard, the first National Eucharistic Congress in the United States in almost 50 years will be held in Indianapolis in July. The event will include nationally recognized speakers, opportunities for worship and Eucharistic adoration, and plenty of time to deepen one's understanding and love of the Eucharist. The organizing committee has taken several steps to make the event more affordable for families in recent months, including adding the option of purchasing day passes. Leading up to the national event will be four pilgrimages, starting from different points in the country. And parishes will continue planning and holding events as part of the National Eucharistic Revival's parish year – events

that Catholics should make every effort to participate in.

In October, the second part of the two-part Synod of Bishops on synodality will take place in Rome. After round one this past October, we have more of a sense of what to expect this year. We also have a synthesis document that we can continue to digest. And we have more ideas of how we might incorporate synodality in our parish communities and in our lives in general. It's always a good time to listen to and learn from one another, especially within the context of faith, but doing so in 2024 is particularly timely in the life of the Church.

Five years ago this coming April, the world stopped in its tracks as flames devoured portions of the historic and beloved Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris. It was an event that brought nations together in sorrow. On December 8, 2024, the world once again will come together – but this time in joy for the cathedral's scheduled reopening. "Never has anyone alive seen Notre Dame as we shall see it," Father Olivier Ribadeau Dumas, Rector-Archpriest of the cathedral, told OSV News in a recent interview. It's enough to make you want to book a flight to the City of Light to celebrate.

On April 27, the Church will mark 10 years since the canonization of Sts. John Paul II and John XXIII. This milestone



GRETCHEN CROWE

offers us the chance to pause and reflect on these two monumental figures of the 20th century. "They lived through the tragic events of that century, but they were not overwhelmed by them," Pope Francis said at the canonization Mass. "For them, God was more powerful; faith was more powerful – faith in Jesus Christ the Redeemer of man and the Lord of history; the mercy of God, shown by those five wounds, was more powerful; and more powerful, too, was the closeness of Mary our Mother." This year is the perfect time to grow in devotion to these two saints who made such an impact on the Church and the world.

Finally, the beginning of the 2025 ordinary jubilee year, a time of great grace for the Church, will begin on December 24, 2024, with the opening of the Holy Door at St. Peter's Basilica. Pope Francis has asked that Catholics worldwide prepare for the jubilee year by studying the documents of the Second Vatican Council,

CROWE, page 13

Saluting the Chroniclers: Put 2024 on Paper

He began at the beginning: "Left St. Paul Jan. 23rd 98 at 4:30 p.m."

In a leather-bound journal, his neat cursive scrolled in pencil across graph paper, Frank Storms charted his epic pursuit to strike gold in Alaska.

He arrived in 1898, in the middle of a stampede – some 100,000 prospectors who made up the Klondike Gold Rush. The Minnesota man was convinced he had what it took, attaching a newspaper clipping that quoted "the millionaire miner" Dr. F.T. King: "No one should go to Alaska in the hope of finding gold unless he is possessed of a good physique, indomitable will and tenacity, and a willingness to work long and hard and at anything that presents itself."

Frank chronicled his travels in detail, providing summaries and lists. He noted all his supplies. He documented his Christmas menu: oyster soup, fish, roast, Alaska baked beans, creamed potatoes, and mince pie, then a pipe with two friends. And he illustrated his odyssey, sketching tributaries of the Yukon River and "Old Sam's Cabin" where he stayed.

Frank didn't find gold, returning home because of a broken hip. But he did leave his family a treasure: his journal.



CHRISTINA CAPECCHI

More than a century later, we pore over his pages, awed by his daring and his diligence – the latter, necessary for us to learn of the former.

Every Christmas Eve, we pause from our festivities to salute Great Grandpa Frank and the Knights of Pythias, the fraternal organization under which he traveled.

His story lives on.

I've been thinking about journaling, which is both a lost art and a spiritual exercise. Last May, in a fit of end-of-school-year sentimentality, I resolved to begin a simple family journal. I was pained by how quickly it all goes. Journaling felt like the surest way to slow time, to keep all the days from blurring together. They are too sacred to blur.

This was the underlying belief, a sense of urgency and sanctity stirring deep within.

CAPECCHI, page 13

Christ, True God and True Man, Is in Our Midst



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Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

The First Book of Samuel is the source of the first reading for this weekend. Originally, First and Second Samuel were one volume. At some point in history, an editor divided them into the two volumes, so two volumes appear in Bible translations today.

As the title of these books implies, the central figure is Samuel, a prophet active centuries before Christ. Prophets were highly revered throughout the history of the Chosen People. They were seen as God's special representatives, but also personally very holy and devoted to God. At times,

prophets resisted their calling initially. Such was the case of the great prophets Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah. After all was said and done, they accommodated themselves to God's will and accepted the call to be prophets. These figures were admired because the call to be a prophet was seen precisely as a call from God.

In this weekend's reading, God calls Samuel. This occurs according to God's plan. Samuel is open to hearing God, indeed ready to hear God, but Samuel cannot hurry the divine plan.

St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians supplies the second reading. Many of the Pauline writings have their luster in their clear revelation of the bond between true believers and Jesus. Jesus was the Son of God, but also human, in a mystery theologians call the Incarnation.

Truly committed Christians, in faith and baptism, are inseparably bound to Jesus, both in a shared human nature, but also in the divine life given to

believers by Christ.

This supernatural bond, the very keystone of personal salvation, requires Christians not only to be of spiritual faithfulness, but bodily faithfulness as well. They must not allow themselves to fall into carnal sin.

Instructing the Christian Corinthians in this fact seems for some to be excessive for Paul. However, it should be remembered, Corinth was known near and far as a virtual capital of lewdity and vice.

St. John's Gospel furnishes the last reading. It is a story about the decision to follow Jesus by Simon, later known as Peter, and Simon's brother, Andrew. In the story, Jesus intrigues Andrew and Simon. They follow Jesus. Yet, the Lord invites them to be apostles.

They recognize Jesus as Messiah. Jesus calls Peter to a new life, even giving him a new name, Cephas, often translated as Peter.

Reflection

The Church, in the majesty and glory of its liturgy, in a profound gaze into the reality of Jesus, born in Bethlehem, recorded for us in the Gospels, called us all to celebrate the birth of Christ at Christmas.

On Christmas, the Church revealed to us that Jesus was the son of Mary, therefore a human, as she was only human despite her unique holiness and singular place in the divine plan of redemption.

Two weeks later, it celebrated for us the feast of the Epiphany, revealing then to us the fact that Jesus, born in Bethlehem, was divine, the Son of God, and that redemption is God's gift for all people.

So, these past several weeks have been times in which the Church, with the greatest joy and hope, has told us about the Lord. He is the Savior of the world!

Now, the Church asks us in the readings this weekend to consider how personally we shall respond to these marvelous facts. By the mere fact we are of

the Church, or at least interested in God, we are being touched by God's grace. God calls us. He offers us eternal life in Christ.

How should we respond? St. Paul gives very concrete advice. Samuel, Peter, and Andrew are examples. We must accept Christ as the only way to fulfillment and peace.

READINGS

Sunday: 1 Samuel 3:3b-10, 19; Psalms 40:2, 4, 7-10; 1 Corinthians 6:13c-15a, 17-20; John 1:35-42
Monday: 1 Samuel 15:16-23; Psalms 50:8-9, 16bc-17, 21, 23; Mark 2:18-22
Tuesday: 1 Samuel 16:1-13; Psalms 89:20-22, 27-28; Mark 2:23-28
Wednesday: 1 Samuel 17:32-33, 37, 40-51; Psalms 144:1-2, 9-10; Mark 3:1-6
Thursday: 1 Samuel 18:6-9, 19:1-7; Psalms 56:2-3, 9-14; Mark 3:7-12
Friday: 1 Samuel 24:3-21; Psalms 57:2-4, 6, 11; Mark 3:13-19
Saturday: 2 Samuel 1:1-4, 11-12, 19, 23-27; Psalms 80:2-3, 5-7; Mark 3:20-21

Don't Weaponize the Blessing of Couples

What would you do if you saw a fellow Catholic walk over to a holy water font, pull out a squirt gun, fill it up with holy water, and begin shooting others with it?

I can think of a half-dozen ways in which I might respond if I were to see a sacramental directed toward an end to which it was never intended. None of those ways, however, would involve me going over to the holy water font myself, pulling out my own squirt gun, and mimicking the behavior of the person whose actions had set this hypothetical situation into motion.

I hardly need to say why. The man who shot others with holy water was misusing a sacramental, a blessed object whose proper use is an occasion for grace. There are no circumstances in which the proper response to the improper use of a sacramental is for me also to use it for a means to an end other than that to which it is supposed to be directed.

Yet, in the wake of the promulgation of the declaration *Fiducia Supplicans* by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, my social media feeds began to fill up with posts from faithful Catholics urging people to do just that. On the surface, and devoid of context, those messages seem innocuous or even salutary: "Husbands and wives: Ask your parish priest to bless your marriage after Mass this Sunday." In different circumstances, that would be a pious thought and good advice. What married couple couldn't use a little more grace in their shared life?

But context and intention matter. And the context here was the release of *Fiducia Supplicans*, which provided direction on how, and under what circumstances, ordained ministers of the Church might

provide a blessing to couples who are "in irregular situations and same-sex couples without officially validating their status or changing in any way the Church's perennial teaching on marriage." And further context included the very real concern that some members of the clergy would, for ideological reasons, conduct such blessings in a way that would incorrectly signal (both to those being blessed and to others who were aware of the blessing) that the Church has, contra *Fiducia Supplicans*, changed her "perennial teaching on marriage."

As if on cue, the day after *Fiducia Supplicans* was released, Jesuit Father James Martin arranged to offer a blessing to a same-sex couple in the presence of a reporter and a photographer from The New York Times. By inviting the Times to observe a blessing that *Fiducia Supplicans* had posited would be a response to a "spontaneous" request, Father Martin instrumentalized this particular blessing. (Far from being "spontaneous," the blessing, the article revealed, was not requested by those whom he blessed but took place at the prompting of Father Martin.) The ultimate purpose of this particular blessing was not to be a potential conduit of actual grace for those being blessed, but to use *Fiducia Supplicans* to further an agenda, and those being blessed were themselves treated improperly as a means to an end.

But the same is true of every married couple who were being encouraged to ask their parish priest to bless them the following Sunday. That encouragement was not aimed at the good of their souls; it had an ideological purpose similar to, though the polar opposite of, Father Martin's purpose.



SCOTT P. RICHERT

ALL
THINGS
NEW

The weaponization of sacramentals – whether hypothetical holy water shot from a squirt gun or very real blessings offered not with the good of those being blessed in mind but to make an ideological or political point – is always wrong; it is a misuse of something sacred for nonsacred reasons.

Yet God, being God, can turn our misuse of the sacred to the good, and even the ideologically tinged debate about *Fiducia Supplicans* may have a salutary effect if it reminds us that sacramentals such as holy water and blessings are offered to us by the Church not as weapons to be used against one another but for the good of our souls. "The request for a blessing," *Fiducia Supplicans* notes, "expresses and nurtures openness to the transcendence, mercy, and closeness to God in a thousand concrete circumstances of life, which is no small thing in the world in which we live."

So, ask your priest for that blessing, and ask frequently. But do it because you know that you need God's grace in order to bear the burdens of your life and to offer them in union with the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, and not because someone who doesn't have the good of your soul in mind urges you to do so.

Scott Richert is the Publisher of Our Sunday Visitor. Visit OSVNews.com.

CAPECCHI, from page 12

I'd purchased a leather journal and tried to replicate Frank's pencil cursive. But what works for me is sitting down at my desktop computer and tapping a few quick sentences into a Google document. Sometimes right before bed. Sometimes in the window between turning on the stove and bringing water to a boil. Sometimes not at all. (That's part of the deal – no pressure.)

I can think of no better way to launch a new year than to document it. Begin with the simplest stuff: the date, the weather. Then keep it simple. What you did, what you ate, what you saw.

A journal requires neither

analysis nor poetry. It is the recording itself that counts.

It strikes me as an inherently Catholic undertaking: to see each day as a profound gift, however ordinary; to recognize the dignity in each person and encounter; to possess an abiding gratitude, a heart of thanksgiving.

Every January, I recall a passage from the German poet Rainer Maria Rilke, as much prayer as poem: "And now let us believe in a long year that is given to us – new, untouched, full of things that have never been."

It is a matter of faith: We believe in the year given to us by God. We marvel at its novelty, things that are not only new but "have never

been." It sounds so clean and hopeful, like a fresh blanket of snow.

That's how God sees each new life conceived: a unique and unrepeatable soul, someone who has never been, who will change the course of human history. All the details of that life matter, so we give witness to each day, each gift – pencil to paper, fingers to keys.

"Here's what happened," we write.

And we mean, "Thank you."

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

SCRIPTURE SEARCH®

Gospel for January 14, 2024

John 1: 35-42

Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for the Second Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle B: the first apostles meet Jesus. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

JOHN	DISCIPLES	BEHOLD
LAMB	OF GOD	HEARD
FOLLOWED	TURNED	RABBI
TEACHER	COME	YOU WILL SEE
THAT DAY	AFTERNOON	ANDREW
BROTHER	SIMON	MESSIAH
CHRIST	TRANSLATED	PETER

COME AND SEE

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

CROWE, from page 12

especially its four constitutions. The pope has also asked that Catholics enter into a year of preparatory prayer in 2024. To that end, forthcoming from the Dicastery for Evangelization will be an "in-depth series" called "Notes on Prayer" that will promote "the centrality of prayer, personal and communal," according to Archbishop

Rino Fisichella, Pro-Prefect for the dicastery.

We might be facing a contentious election season this year, but we can never forget how much we have to look forward to. May your 2024 be filled with joy.

Gretchen R. Crowe is Editor-In-Chief of OSV News.

SEBASTIAN

FEAST JANUARY 20

Died: c:288



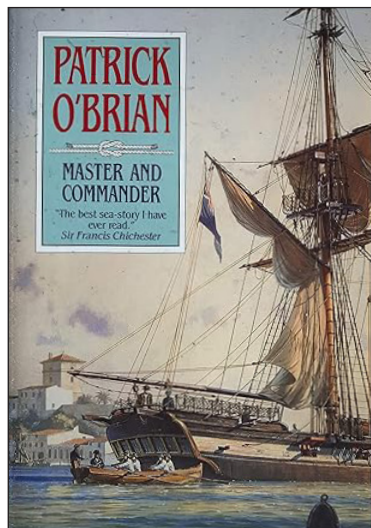
According to the many legends surrounding Sebastian, he was born in Gaul and raised in Milan. Though a Christian, he joined the imperial army at Rome about 283. He made converts of officials and jailers, effected cures, and urged Christian prisoners to stay strong in their faith. He was named captain of the praetorian guards, but the emperor, upon finding out that he was a Christian, ordered his execution. Shot with arrows and left for dead, Sebastian survived and was nursed back to life. Later, he denounced the emperor for his cruelty to Christians, and the emperor had him beaten to death. A favorite subject of Renaissance artists, Sebastian is the patron saint of archers, soldiers, and athletes.

An Adventurous Suggestion for 2024 Reading

BY KENNETH CRAYCRAFT

As the calendar turns and many of us think in terms of itineraries for the new year, I thought it would be appropriate to suggest a reading program of a couple series of novels. It is daunting to begin a sequence of related books. But what better time to set aside our reservations and set out a plan than the beginning of a new year, when we are already thinking in terms of resolutions and agendas?

Described by some as the greatest historical novels ever written, Patrick O'Brian's Aubrey/Maturin novels have provided me with hours and hours of pleasure. Comprising 19 complete novels, they convey the tales of Jack Aubrey, early 19th-century British Navy captain, and his particular friend, ship's physician, Stephen Maturin. Covering



the period of the Napoleonic wars (and including the War of 1812 with the United States), the books are rich in colorful characters, historical detail, and intriguing plot lines. O'Brian's meticulous technical knowledge about sailing (and fighting with) a seafaring Man o' War is simply astounding. As

you navigate to every corner of the globe, you will learn a new nautical term or detail on every page. But mostly you will be entertained by the perfectly paced narrative of these fine novels. Along the way, you will be challenged to consider such things as the nature of patriotism, courage, religious faith in a time of war, the challenges of repentance and forgiveness, and the richness of authentic friendship.

Marilynne Robinson established her reputation as one of America's great living writers with her wonderful 1980 novel "Housekeeping." She took another 24 years to publish her second novel, Pulitzer Prize winning, "Gilead," the first in a four-book sequence followed by "Home" (2008), "Lila" (2014), and "Jack" (2020), about the Ames and Boughton families in the small fictional town of Gilead, Iowa.

"Gilead" is an epistolary novel, written by aged



Photos from Amazon

Mind & Heart

MARTIN LUTHER KING
DAY OF SERVICE



Building a Civilization of Love: A Catholic Response to Racism

Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers

Monday, January 22 | 7:30 PM

Driscoll Auditorium, Holy Cross College

In lieu of registration cost, please bring nonperishable items
for the Saint Augustine Catholic Church Soup Kitchen.

Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers is an internationally renowned speaker, author, and preacher. He holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Economics and Business Administration from the University of Notre Dame, and a Master of Theological Studies Degree from the University of Dallas. He has appeared as a guest on numerous international Catholic radio and television programs, and is the host or co-host of several popular series on the Eternal Word Television Network. He is a member of the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars and the Confraternity of Catholic Clergy. Deacon Harold is the award-winning author of five books, including *Behold the Man: A Catholic Vision of Male Spirituality and Building a Civilization of Love: A Catholic Response to Racism*.

HOLY CROSS
COLLEGE
at Notre Dame, Indiana



COMMUNITY-ENGAGED
ALLIANCE

Protestant pastor John Ames to his young son – to be read after Pastor Ames' impending death from chronic heart disease. It is a heartwarming/heartbreaking letter, exploring themes of human frailty, religious faith, and the problem of authentic Christian witness in the face of evil. Pastor Ames is one of the most sympathetic characters in American fiction, eliciting admiration in the reader for his spiritual candor and moral struggles.

"Home" and "Lila" are worthy successors to "Gilead." The unique feature of the four novels is that they account for the same time periods and events, from the perspective of four different characters. "Home" is narrated by Glory Boughton, the daughter and caretaker of John Ames' best friend, fellow Protestant Pastor Robert Boughton, who is largely confined to his home and requires full-time care. Glory gives up her job as a schoolteacher in St. Louis to accompany her father to a gentle death. Reading Glory's descriptions of some of the same events described in "Gilead" is part of the pleasure of this second book. And the relationships between Glory, her brother Jack, and her other siblings who are "too busy" to help will hit home with many readers.

"Lila," the third novel, is

narrated by Rev. Ames' much younger wife, Lila Ames, and fills in the back story of their eccentric courtship, unlikely marriage, and unconventional domestic relationship. Lila has little learning, but much wisdom. She sees beyond the posturing of her more cultivated friends, demonstrating practical wisdom that transcends her lack of formal education. "Lila" is the perfect third look at the Boughton and Ames families.

As excellent as the series is, it seems that Robinson began to lose interest with the fourth, "Jack." Like its main character, the son of Rev. Boughton and namesake of Rev. Ames, the novel seems to wander aimlessly and randomly, never really finding its place in the otherwise excellent "Gilead" series. It is worthwhile, nonetheless, for tying loose ends left dangling in its three predecessors.

Settling into either or both these series of outstanding novels will not be spending time, but rather redeeming it, giving back to you much more than the time you put into them.

Kenneth Craycraft is an Associate Professor of Moral Theology at Mount St. Mary's Seminary and School of Theology in Cincinnati.

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. For additional listings of that event, please call the advertising sales staff at 260-399-1449 to purchase space.

Theology on Tap Begins Winter Series

FORT WAYNE – Young people in their 20s and 30s are invited to the Winter Theology on Tap Series titled, “The Light Shines in the Darkness.” The weekly series runs every Tuesday from January 16 to February 13. Individuals of any faith are encouraged to attend. The events take place at 2Tom’s Brewing Company, 3676 N Wells St. Doors, food, and bar service open at 7 p.m. Weekly talks begin at 7:30 p.m. Learn more at diocesefwsb.org/tot-fw. Contact John Pratt at jpratt@diocesefwsb.org or 260-399-1412.

Eucharistic Board and Brush

GARRETT – A first of it’s kind board and brush Eucharistic Art event will be held at St. Joseph Parish, 300 W. Houston St., on Monday, January 15, from 6:30-8 p.m. Choose from a variety of stencils and colors to create a wall hanging that displays your faith. Registration required. Seating is limited. There is a \$15 charge for this event, payable at the door. Contact Eileen Sarrazine at 260-750-3706 or register online at stjosephgarrett.com.

Notre Dame Folk Choir to Sing at Mass

FORT WAYNE – The Notre Dame Folk Choir will be touring the Midwest in January. The choir will be singing at the Sunday, January 14, 11:30 a.m. Mass at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, 1105 S. Calhoun St.

Italian Dinner Buffet

GARRETT – The Knights of Columbus of St. Joseph Catholic Church, on the corner of Ijams and Houston Streets, are hosting an Italian Dinner Buffet on Saturday, February 3, from 5:30-7:30 p.m. Proceeds will help restore the St. Joseph Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto. Dinner tickets are \$20. There is a cash raffle, \$5 each or six for \$25. Visit stjosephgarrett.com for information.

Theology on Tap

SOUTH BEND – The winter series of Theology on Tap in South Bend will begin on Tuesday, January 16, with the theme “The Light Shines in the Darkness.” The weekly series runs every Tuesday from January 16 through February 13. On January 16, musician Andrew Goldstein will offer a talk on how Catholics can better pray through music. The event takes place in the Upper Room at Bar Louie in Granger, 7320 Aspect Dr. Doors open at 6:30 p.m., and the talk will begin at 7 p.m. Learn more about the series at diocesefwsb.org/tot-sb. Contact John Pratt at 260-399-1412 or jpratt@diocesefwsb.org for information.

FEMM Introduction for Young Adult Women

NOTRE DAME – If you are a young adult woman interested in learning more about what a healthy fertility cycle looks

REST IN PEACE

Fort Wayne Barbara A. Dawson, 86, Queen of Angels	Patricia Hay, 92, St. Mary	Thomas Stoffel, 91, St. Mary
Dorothy C. Schott, 96, Queen of Angels	Vicki Hott, 61, St. Mary	Matthew Weill, 18, St. Mary
Kelley Workman, 61, St. Vincent de Paul	Joseph Hunnicutt, 90, St. Mary	Marilyn Sue Wideliski, 75, St. Mary
Huntington* Juan Albizures, 96, St. Mary	Phillip Karst, 85, St. Mary	Mary Ann Young, 83, St. Mary
Ann Allred, 61, St. Mary	Eldon Meitzler, 87, St. Mary	John W. Zahm, 90, St. Mary
Sharon Allred, 82, St. Mary	Thomas Mitchell, 72, St. Mary	Ruth Zahm, 78, St. Mary
Thomas Barnhisel, 87, St. Mary	John P. Overman 94, St. Mary	Mishawaka Nancy Rensburger, 65, St. Monica
Thomas Bartrom, 79, St. Mary	Lucille Prunk, 90, St. Mary	Pierceton Thelma Hartley, 80, St. Francis Xavier
Fritz Bickel, 51, St. Mary	Mary Lou Rahr, 74, St. Mary	South Bend Patricia DeVolder, 89, Christ the King
Patsy Bickel, 79, St. Mary	William J. Richardson, 73, St. Mary	Robert Szerencse, 72, Christ the King
Amelia Broxton, 58, St. Mary	Connie Rich, 70, St. Mary	Francis R. Klocke, Jr., 73, Holy Family
Kay Campbell, 80, St. Mary	Jacqueline Riecke, 85, St. Mary	Robert Meiszberg, 93, Holy Family
John David Carnes, 71, St. Mary	John Roberts, 74, St. Mary	Jo Ann Kowalski, 73, Sacred Heart of Jesus
Tami Dalton, 66, St. Mary	Mary Anna Rockefeller, 89, St. Mary	Lucy LaVine, 71, St. Adalbert
Martha Davis, 89, St. Mary	Brad Scher, 60, St. Mary	Victorio Reyes, 64, St. Adalbert
Carolyn DeLuca, 91, St. Mary	Thomas E. Scher, 79, St. Mary	Irene Szymanski, 95, St. Adalbert
Margaret Dolby, 83, St. Mary	Carolyn Shaw, 90, St. Mary	Wabash Paul Joseph Samuel, 80, St. Bernard
Evelyn R. Godfroy, 89, St. Mary	Nancy Smart, 84, St. Mary	Warsaw Harvey James Miller, 84, Sacred Heart
Kenneth Hartman, 82, St. Mary	Abraham J. Smith, Newborn, St. Mary	
Kenneth Hartmus, 50, St. Mary	Mary Lou Smith, 96, St. Mary	
	Jeanette Snow, 86, St. Mary	

* St. Mary Church in Huntington recently submitted obituaries for the past two years.

like and how to track your biomarkers, please join a free, four-session workshop series on the campus of Saint Mary’s College. There is no need to register. Come to the first session and decide if you want to continue. For more information, visit diocesefwsb.org/femm.

CAREER OPPORTUNITY

DIOCESE OF FORT WAYNE-SOUTH BEND

Director of Human Resources

The Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend is seeking a full-time Director of Human Resources. This position will be based in Fort Wayne and will require travel throughout the diocese. The position requires a bachelor’s degree in human resources or business administration (master’s degree preferred). The ideal candidate will hold a SHRM-CP or SHRM-SCP certification. This position oversees the hiring process, leave administration, safe environment, and provides support to diocesan parishes and schools on matters related to human resources.

Interested candidates should apply online at diocesefwsb.org/careers.

Executive Director, Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC)

The Executive Director is the chief administrative officer of the Indiana Catholic Conference and as a registered lobbyist serves as spokesperson for the five Roman Catholic Bishops in Indiana. The Executive Director also serves as the liaison to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, members of Federal and State legislatures, Executive and Administrative offices, and multiple statewide organizations.

Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC) is the statewide coordinating body for the five Roman Catholic Dioceses in Indiana. Its basic purpose is to serve the spiritual, moral, and material well-being of the people of the state:

- by serving as the official spokesperson for the Bishops and Catholic faithful regarding state and national matters
- by representing the Church and developing cooperative relationships where common public policy interests exist with religious and civic, social and governmental units
- by serving as liaison between the Catholic Church in Indiana and national Catholic groups in areas of common public policy interests

Candidates must be practicing Roman Catholics with an in-depth knowledge of the faith and Catholic social teachings. Excellent oral and written communication skills along with demonstrated analytical and organizational ability are required. An advanced degree (or equivalent experience) in one or more of the following related fields is preferred: theology, political or social sciences, philosophy, or education. Previous employment or volunteer experience in the Catholic Church, ideally involving administration, is preferred. The preferred starting date for the position is July of 2024.

Please e-mail a cover letter, resume, and list of references by February 5, 2024, to:

Andrea Wunnenberg
Director, Human Resources
Archdiocese of Indianapolis
1400 N. Meridian St.
Indianapolis, IN 46202
E-mail: awunnenberg@archindy.org

Young People Gather in St. Louis at SEEK Conference

BY ADDISON KREBS

The week of New Years – from Monday, January 1, to Friday, January 5 – I was in St. Louis with 24,000 of my closest friends at the annual SEEK Conference, where we pursued Jesus and celebrated our Catholic faith. It was an experience I'm still unpacking the fruits of. For those unaware, SEEK is a conference put on by FOCUS, which stands for Fellowship of Catholic University Students. The organization has missionaries who work on college campuses across the country and internationally. The conference derives its name from John 1:38, in which Jesus asks Andrew and John, "What do you seek?"

The conference consists of daily Mass, adoration, talks by Catholic speakers, and opportunities to connect with Catholic leaders and organizations. Most days followed the same general schedule, beginning with Mass and then participating in men's and women's sessions. Following these, we had time to grab lunch and take some free time. I enjoyed this break in the day, as it was an opportunity to sit with others from the

More photos are available at todayscatholic.org



diocese and talk about what all we had learned from the previous sessions. This was also a time where we could wander around "Mission Way," which was essentially a big market where you were able to connect with religious orders and Catholic businesses, learn about more mission opportunities than one could do in a lifetime, and grab enough free stickers to cover several water bottles. This was one of my favorite parts of the conference, as it offered a space where you could meet the faces behind all that the Church is doing, and it also was amazing to see and meet so many people who have devoted their lives to serve the Church.

The afternoons consisted of two "impact sessions" in which attendees had several options to hear talks from notable Catholic speakers. This allowed me to tailor my schedule to my interests, knowledge, and season of life. Then, there was more free time before our group from the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend would head back to the hotel for dinner. Any free time we would have after dinner usually was devoted to getting back to the conference center early enough before the keynote for the night. Each night had two keynote speakers, includ-



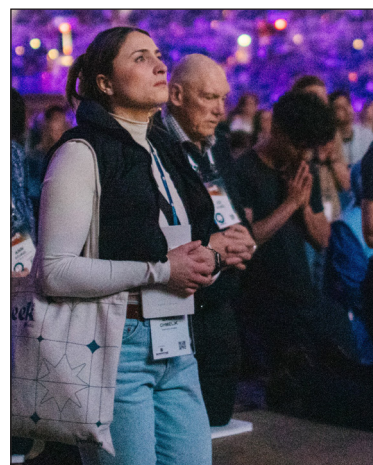
OSV News photo/courtesy FOCUS

Bishops process during the closing Mass at the SEEK24 Conference at America's Center Convention Complex in St. Louis on Friday, January 5. More than 23,000 participants attended the conference, which was hosted by the Fellowship of Catholic University Students.



Photo courtesy of Jocelyn Alcalá

Bishop Rhoades poses with SEEK24 Conference attendees from the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend.



OSV News photo/courtesy FOCUS

A young woman kneels during Eucharistic adoration during the SEEK24 Conference in St. Louis.

ing well-known names such as Monsignor James Shae, Edward Sri, Emily Wilson, Chris Stefanik, and Father Mike Schmitz. Following the keynotes, there were different social events you could attend to end the night.

On Tuesday, January 2, a few others and I went to a worship night led by Damascus Worship, which, for me, was one of the more impactful

events of the conference. However, the most moving event was Eucharistic adoration, which happened on Wednesday, January 3. That night, conference organizers opened the doors to the local public, which resulted in almost 30,000 people gathered in one place to adore Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. To say it was powerful does not even begin to describe the experience.

My biggest takeaway from the conference was that I grew in greater love for the Church, as I was able to witness so many seeking after His heart. Adoration was just one example of this, but I saw it in the quiet moments, as we were shuffling through packed hallways and sitting quietly before Mass. There was a hunger in the atmosphere for the One thing that satisfies our souls. After the week ended, I continue to be empowered by this reality and am further encouraged that the Father has big plans for my generation.

These kinds of conferences inspire a hunger for more. One of the best talks I heard during the week was a live podcast held in the common space done by Damascus called "Beyond Damascus." During the recording of the podcast, the hosts answered the question, "What do you do after a mountaintop experience," which was all too fitting for something like SEEK. Often, when we discuss a conference like SEEK, there is this idea that afterward we have to go back to the "real world" or our "normal life." While these statements are understandable, they actually undercut the whole point of the "mountaintop," because encountering Jesus is more real than the world we go back to. Jesus is more real than any deadline, workweek stress, or class that you're dreading. Coming down from the mountain does not mean you are walking away from Him. In the Transfiguration, Jesus came down the mountain with them, and in the Ascension, though

Jesus left, He sent the apostles His Spirit: "behold I am with you until the end of the age." When you come down from the mountain, you're supposed to bring the glory with you and allow God to change your "normal life."

One of the podcast hosts brought up the Magi to illustrate this, which I find fitting, as we recently celebrated Epiphany. He emphasized the part of the story in which the Magi were told to "go home another way." When you truly and deeply encounter Christ and His Church, you always leave different than how you came. An encounter with Christ always leads to change – to a hunger to share what you have encountered (or more precisely Who you have encountered). "When you go back different, that makes a difference," the podcast host said.

Conferences such as SEEK are important not because thousands of young Catholics were in St. Louis for five days. They are important because, God willing, each of them will go back to their home diocese, to their parish and community, to their families, and allow their encounter with Christ to flow into those around them. This is how we will see revival in the Church, and I am honored to have witnessed the beginning of more and more people answering the question that carries through the age, "What do you seek?"

Addison Krebs is a senior at the University of Saint Francis and is a member of St. Jude Parish in Fort Wayne.