Bishop, St. Patrick’s celebrate Our Lady of Guadalupe

BY JENNIFER MURRAY

FORT WAYNE — “Am I not here, who am your Mother?”

These are the words that touched the heart of a humble peasant, Juan Diego, on a rugged hill in Mexico in the year 1531. She identified herself as the Mother of God and yet by her traditional clothing and her gentle words to Juan Diego, she took on the role of mother of peasants, mother of Native Americans, mother of Hispanics, mother of all who are humble. Today she is known as Our Lady of Guadalupe. Hispanics are deeply devoted to Our Lady and her feast day, on Dec. 12, is a time of great celebration.

Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared to Juan Diego because she wanted a church built in her honor. She sent him to the bishop, an aristocratic Spaniard, who could not believe that the Mother of God would appear to a peasant who converted to Catholicism just years before. He demanded a sign.

She sent him a most miraculous sign. On Juan Diego’s tilma, similar to a heavy shawl or wrap made of cactus fiber, is a magnificent image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. According to the laws of nature, this tilma should have disintegrated after 20 years. Instead the tilma, with the image, has endured for nearly 500 years. The tilma was the sign that caused the bishop to believe. Yet it was the words of Our Lady of Guadalupe to Juan Diego that caused the real miracle to take place. Her words of motherly love brought 9 million Native Americans of Mexico to Christ in less than 20 years.

“Am I not here, who am your Mother?”

Our Lady, Page 3

Christmas message

BY BISHOP JOHN M. DARCY

It is not science that redeems man: man is redeemed by love. This applies even in terms of this present world. Where someone has the experience of a great love in his life, this is a moment of “redemption” which gives a new meaning to his life. But soon he will also realize that the love bestowed upon him cannot be questioned of his life. It is a love that remains fragile. It can be destroyed by death. The human being needs unconditional love. He needs the certainty which makes him say: “neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom 8:38-39). — Pope Benedict XVI, “Spe Salvi”

Thus does the successor of Peter raise our eyes towards the only hope for humanity, the love, which comes to us at Bethlehem. It is a hope, which is not something external when we kneel before the crib, rather it rises in our hearts when we express our faith in the Redeemer, the Son of God, born for our salvation.

We can only begin to understand Christmas and the true nature of its joy when from within our heart we recognize who it is that is born and the purpose of his coming.

He is before us with Mary, whose yes to the angel opened the door for his coming and with Joseph, his guardian and the man of faith — he is before us so that we will freely choose to adore him and choose also to be associated with him in the work of saving humanity.

But we have freedom, indeed the pope’s new message is to a great extent about freedom. We have freedom to make this one day a passing moment in our life something to be experienced and then set aside. Or, with that great gift of freedom, we can offer ourselves to God who has come to receive us and join us to him in the work of salvation. We can say yes to this invitation.

Christmas is all about love — our love for God who has emptied himself for our salvation. We also must pray to him that we will have the same love for humanity, for others, as he has; and in this way, we will be joined to him in the work of redemption.

The crib, like the cross, puts such extraordinary choices before us. From God we have the freedom to choose. From the incarnation, we also have the grace to say yes to him and to the work he has for each one of us. A blessed Christmas to you all.

Joy of the season

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St. Elizabeth Ann Seton expansion

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Flying high review

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No issue next week

Next publication
Jan. 6, 2008
Construction is sign of vitality and the protection of Our Lady

BISHOP JOHN M. DARCY

A tale of two parishes

It was a stormy Sunday morning and 6 to 8 inches of snow had fallen. But, to paraphrase the New England poet, Robert Frost: “I had promised to keep.” So with my drive-way plowed out, I headed west, driving slowly, with two brand new snow tires, towards St. Patrick Parish in Arcola.

Driving about 20 to 15 miles per hour, I made a slow turn the number of people in church was surprising given the severe weather. After Mass, it was my privilege to bless a wonderful new Catechetical Center completed and paid for because of the extraordinary leadership of Father Cyril Fernandes, a priest from the Diocese of Jamshedpur in India. After Mass and blessing, there was a wonderful program with speeches by those who had given such exemplary parish leadership. I met my good friends Alex and Judy Purcell as well as Ed and Mary Ellen Rice and so many others that made possible this magnificent building with its state of the art technology. Also, present were John and Mary Tyler.

I have known St. Patrick, Arcola, for many years and have been there a number of times. My recollection is that early on, some people said this is one of the parishes we should consider closing. When Father Cyril went to St. Patrick, there were 170 families and now 368 families have registered. Many are drawn by the beautiful old church and by the leadership of Father Cyril. However, there has been a significant amount of new homes in the area and more are expected.

This was a joyful event, and I thought also of my good friend, Bishop Felix Toppo, the bishop of Jamshedpur, in faraway India who has provided this exemplary priest for us and who enjoys staying in St. Patrick Parish. I was very pleased to hear that when he comes through the area. Also present and concelebrating was Father Alex Dodrai, who will take the place of Father Cyril while he returns to India to visit his diocese and his family. A joyful event on a snowy Sunday.

Off to Elizabeth Ann Seton

Due to the storm, it was my privilege to be driven to the next stop by Larry Weigand. Now there is something historic here too. Larry, a graduate of Bishop Dwenger High School where he was an outstanding football player on a team that won the state championship, was head contractor in the construction of both buildings in these parishes. His company, so well known in the Fort Wayne area, was dedicating two educational facilities in one day. A great joy for him, I am sure, and for his good parents, Bob and Sally.

At Elizabeth Ann Seton, we dedicated phase three of this extraordinary campus. I often say that the best thing the bishop ever does for a parish is to assign a good priest to that parish. There have been two pastors at Elizabeth Ann Seton, a parish which I was privileged to establish 20 years ago — Jan. 1, 1988 — with land donated by the Gallucci family. First, Father Bob Schulte, the founding pastor and now our vicar general and rector of the cathedral, and in recent years, Father Jim Shafer. Both have given outstanding pastoral leadership to this parish. Here one can see, as earlier at St. Patrick, the truth of Pope John Paul’s definition of a parish, which he calls: “A family of families.”

There are about 1,400 children in religious education if we include, as we certainly should, both the school and the religious education program. Father Shafer has taken full advantage of the diocesan programs for training catechists and has brought so many lay people, men and women, into apostolic works and ministries within the parish. The computer room is state of the art and the classrooms, which have been functioning since school began in August, are filled with light and promise. As you come through the main entrance, there before you, standing on a great platform and quite elevated, is the crucifix. It will be the first thing seen by the children as they come into school each morning and will remind them of Christ our Savior, who always must be central to Catholic education; and they will learn that the cross is a victory for humanity.

I also was pleased to greet in his Benedictine habit Father Bernard Ramenaden, ONB, who along with his brother Ronald is serving in our diocese. Back home across the snowy roads, I felt gratitude to the pastors of these parishes and the generosity of the parishioners who have made possible these two buildings, which will serve to bring the word of God to children for generations to come. We have a great deal of construction going on in our diocese, and this is certainly a sign of our vitality and the protection of Our Lady who is our patroness and to whom we should all have such a tender devotion and love.

All sold out

Word came last week from Greg Ensminger, president of Our Sunday Visitor, that “Worthy of the Gospel of Christ: A History of the Catholic Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend” by Joseph M. White, Ph.D., published by OSV is sold out and an additional 500 are being printed. This was most encouraging. I signed books for one hour at the Notre Dame bookstore. Through my own fault, it was my first time in that magnificent building and I was very impressed. The numbers seeking a book signing was smaller than in our Cathedral Bookstore in Fort Wayne; but of course, many books have now been distributed through parishes. Nevertheless, we are just delighted and Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Company is pleased that there has been so much interest in this history of our first 150 years as a diocese. At the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception 20 copies were sold and people signed up for 30 more. St. Jude, Fort Wayne, also sold all of its copies with many signing up for more.

It was a joy to visit St. Joseph County Library in downtown South Bend next to our diocesan office to present them with two copies of the history. I did the same at the beautiful new Allen County Library in Fort Wayne. Both libraries received the books with gratitude and appreciation, and the South Bend library already had purchased copies.

The visits also reminded me of what a blessed thing a public library is for children and people of all ages.

Upcoming schedule

For the 23rd time it will be my privilege and joy to observe the following Christmas schedule: Mass on Christmas Eve with Father Michael Hentcz at St. Matthew Cathedral Parish, South Bend; midnight Mass, which will be televised, at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Fort Wayne; morning Mass at the University of Saint Francis Chapel, which will be televised in the Fort Wayne area over Channel 33. Then home for a quiet Christmas day and a chance to call my family; two sisters to call this year rather than three. Painful, as it should be, but also with the trust that my dear Mary is in heaven with our parents where she surely appreciates more deeply the meaning of Christmas. I will see you in two weeks for the Feast of the Epiphany, the last day of our Jubilee Year.

TODAY’S CATHOLIC

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PUBLISHER: Bishop John M. D’Arcy
EDITOR: Tim Johnson
ASSISTANT EDITOR: Don Clemmer
STAFF WRITER: Kay Cozad

Editorial Department
PAGE DESIGN: Francine Hogan
FREELANCE WRITERS: Lauren Caggiano, Ann Carey, Michelle Castlemen, Elmer J. Danich, Michelle Donaghey, Bonnie Elberson, Denise Fedorow, Sister Margie Lavonis, CSC, Jennifer Murray, Jennifer Orchsten and Deb Wagner

Business Department
BUSINESS MANAGER: Kathy Denice
AD-GRAFIICS DIRECTOR: Mark Weber
BOOKKEEPING/CIRCULATION: Kathy Voirol
kvoirol@fw.diocesefwsb.org

Advertising Sales
Tess Steffen (Fort Wayne area)
(260) 456-2824
Jeanette Simon (South Bend area) (574) 234-0687

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VATICAN CITY (CNS) — When Catholics fulfill their right and duty to share their faith with others, they are not engaging in proselytism or showing contempt for the beliefs of others, said a new document from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Sharing the Christian faith with others is a duty to share their faith with others, the document harshly criticized the Orthodox countries from charges of proselytism where they come into the church with others who freely ask to join.

“For a long time, the reason for evangelization is that others share their faith with others who do not yet know Christ should be regarded as a work of love, provided that it is done with full respect for their human dignity and freedom.”

Despite the 2000 document’s insistence on the importance of proclaiming salvation in Jesus Christ, he said, “there still exists a coolness toward missionary activity” in many parts of the church.

“In addition, he said, the document is an affirmation of the right and duty of Catholics to share their faith with others who ask to know more, whether those asking belong to other religions or to other Christian communities. He said that when non-Catholics are free to minister to their members in predominantly Catholic countries, it only makes sense that the Catholic Church would have the same right to offer pastoral care to Catholics in predominantly non-Catholic countries. Besides China, where all religion is restricted, and some Muslim countries where Christians cannot freely profess their faith, the issue also involved some parts of the former Soviet Union, where the Russian Orthodox church has accused the Catholic Church of proselytism, or trying to convince members of the traditionally Orthodox population to become Catholic.

“The document said: “The mission of the church is universal and is not restricted to specific regions of the earth. Evangelization, however, must be undertaken according to the different situations in which it occurs.”

Asked specifically about the Russian Orthodox claims, Cardinal Levada said, “Especially in a country like Russia where there were long years of atheistic communism, one must respect the sensitivity of the Orthodox, who are concerned about rekindling Christianity in the life of their people.”

While some evangelical groups have launched proselytism campaigns in Russia, he said, the Catholic Church is there to offer pastoral care to Catholics.

“We do not proselytize, but it can happen that someone has an encounter with the Catholic faith and wants to be a Catholic,” the cardinal said. In such situations, the Catholic Church must respect the individual’s conscience and help him or her to follow it.

Our Lady

Our Lady of Guadalupe did what all the missionaries had been unsuccessful at doing. She showed the people of Mexico that the one true God, Jesus Christ, was not the white man’s God only, but the God of the conquistadors. She identified herself with them. She took the role of their mother and made Christ their brother. She opened her heart to them and that is when they saw the love of God poured out for them.

Five-hundred years and not much has changed. She is still the mother of all who turn to her. None are as devoted as the spiritual descendants of Juan Diego. Mexicans, and indeed numerous other Hispanic peoples, hear in her words to Juan Diego a call to their own hearts.

This year the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe is such an important day. Many traditions have developed to give Hispanics an opportunity to properly honor their Mother.

On Dec. 9, the Hispanic community at St. Patrick Parish, Fort Wayne, celebrated their devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe. The young people danced around the church, in a beautiful procession, before Mass began. They wore traditional clothing and on their heads were headdresses with peacock feathers. Near the altar was a replica of the image of Guadalupe and they danced for her. Little children dressed as peasants went up with offerings. Following the Mass, they performed a skit reenacting those days when the humble peasant, Juan Diego, was given a mission by Our Lady to go to the bishop to build a church.

Bishop John M. D’Arcy took the role of the bishop and shouted “milagro, milagro” or “miracle, miracle” as he saw the tilma with the image of Our Lady. After the skit, the young dancers returned to the front of the church to pay their tribute.

At 5 a.m. before morning Mass on Dec. 12, many Hispanics sing “Las Mañanitas” to celebrate the “birthdays” of Our Lady of Guadalupe. For Hispanics, Our Lady of Guadalupe is not just remembered by a couple of days a year. Julia Busseño said, “In my house, I have an image of the Virgin, an altar to pray.” Marissa Arzate explained that the typical shrine has “a picture or a statue (of Our Lady of Guadalupe). You put candles and other little pictures of saints around her and the cross. You have to open your heart to her and have faith that she will accomplish miracles for you.”

Many Hispanics go to the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico as part of their devotion, particularly after she has interceded for them. In fact, the basilica receives more visitors than Lourdes or Fatima. It is on the knees up to the altar. It is made of rock. Often by the time they get to the altar, their knees are bloody, explained Rita McDonagh.

For those who have not grown up in the Hispanic culture, this level of devotion may seem difficult to understand. Many do not realize that the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe is not, and should not be, a Hispanic celebration only. After all, Our Lady of Guadalupe is the queen of the Americas, not only of Mexico or Latin America. Her message is not only for the ears of Juan Diego, or for Mexican, but for all of us.

Why do so many Hispanics get up at 5 a.m. on Dec. 12 to sing to Our Lady of Guadalupe? Why do they devote a space in their homes for a shrine and time in their days to pray? Why would anyone go on their bloody knees up to an altar?

Sebastian Herandez has the answer for such devotion: “The reason is she is the Mother of God. The reason we all love her so much is she is the most real everyone’s mother.”

“Aim I not here, who am your Mother?” Who could ignore the Mother of God, the mother of our very souls?

Cardinal Francis Arinze, prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments and also a member of the doctrinal congregation, told reporters, “The sharing of our Catholic faith with others who do not yet know Christ should be regarded as a work of love, provided that it is done with full respect for their human dignity and freedom.”

Despite the 2000 document’s insistence on the importance of proclaiming salvation in Jesus Christ, he said, “there still exists a coolness toward missionary activity” in many parts of the church.

“In addition, he said, the document is an affirmation of the right and duty of Catholics to share their faith with others who ask to know more, whether those asking belong to other religions or to other Christian communities. He said that when non-Catholics are free to minister to their members in predominantly Catholic countries, it only makes sense that the Catholic Church would have the same right to offer pastoral care to Catholics in predominantly non-Catholic countries. Besides China, where all religion is restricted, and some Muslim countries where Christians cannot freely profess their faith, the issue also involved some parts of the former Soviet Union, where the Russian Orthodox church has accused the Catholic Church of proselytism, or trying to convince members of the traditionally Orthodox population to become Catholic.

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“Aim I not here, who am your Mother?” Who could ignore the Mother of God, the mother of our very souls?
TAP empowers change for justice

BY MAY LEE JOHNSON

SOUTH BEND — He works to keep the wheels of justice rolling for the victims of racial profiling. Holy Cross Father Christopher Cox, pastor of St. Adalbert Church and co-chair of the Transforming Action Through Power (TAP) sponsoring committee, has heard more than his share of civil rights and immigration horror stories.

“After hearing about so many cases of profiling, we joined members of TAP to try to bring about a change,” Father Cox said.

“Currently TAP is supported by Baptist, Catholic, Lutheran, Mennonite, Pentecostal and several other congregations. “There is not much that any of us can do alone, but when you join forces with a faith-based organization like this one, we become united to accomplish systemic change in the South Bend community,” Father Cox said.

TAP has been going public with an agenda that it has been forming over the past year, and it includes a growing network of member congregations around South Bend who have been groomed to become activists and leaders. They aim their appeals at the officials and political candidates such as mayoral candidates, prosecutors, police chiefs, Fraternal Order of Police presidents, a state senator and representative, a congressman and city council candidates.

Last week the group sponsored a discussion on civil rights and immigration at the Abundant Faith Outreach Center in the South Bend community. Pastor James Williams, Holy Cross Father Christopher Cox, Audrey Jones-Spencer and at-large South Bend Council member Karen White share a few lighthearted moments before discussion of civil rights and immigration issues at a meeting last week at the Abundant Faith Outreach Center. Father Cox is one of the leading members of Transforming Action through Power (TAP).

“I feel really bad, but I never said anything to anyone because all citizens should be treated with respect and dignity,” White said.

Benito Garcia echoed White’s experience with profiling.

“I was on my way home from work when I got pulled over for a tailight being out,” Garcia said.

“The officers were nasty and mean and said things I thought were unfair and out of line, but I said nothing. I was afraid. He finally let me go and told me to have my papers with me the next time. I said, ‘yes sir’ and left.”

The Scripture adopted by TAP comes from 2 Timothy 1:7, and says: “For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.”

“We began working on an ordinance that ... went into effect in July, and there hasn’t been that many complaints about profiling,” Bowers said. Local members of TAP are pushing for a similar ordinance in South Bend.

“I know that profiling is real” said council member Karen White of South Bend. She went on to describe one of her own personal experiences: “I was heading home from a church service; and was about to turn when a South Bend police officer stopped me and began questioning me, and I questioned him back. He said to me, ‘You’re going to have to shut up because we both can’t talk.’”

The officer said that the license plate was expired and warned her.

“May the care we show for the material building — sprinkling it with holy water, anointing it with oil and filling it with incense — be a sign and a stimulus for a more intense care in defending and promoting the temple of the person, which is formed by you, dear parishioners,” Pope Benedict said.

Returning to the Vatican for the midday recitation of the Angelus, the pope told people in St. Peter’s Square that the joy of Advent and Christmas comes from knowing that God, in Jesus Christ, became one of us.

“Christian joy arises from this certainty: God is near, he is with me, he is with us in joy and sorrow, in health and sickness, as a friend and faithful spouse,” the pope said.

Pope Benedict said the fact that Christian joy remains despite sorrow and struggle can be seen in the life of Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who had long periods of feeling that God had abandoned her, but she continued to smile and to take God’s love to the poor and the dying.

“Joy enters the hearts of those who place themselves at the service of the small and the poor. In those who love that way, God takes up residence and the soul rejoices,” he said.

At the end of the audience, Pope Benedict blessed statues of the baby Jesus that children brought to the square in preparation for placing them in Nativity scenes at home and at school. While he wished the children a Merry Christmas, he asked their parents, priests and teachers “to collaborate with enthusiasm for the Christian education of the little ones.”

Tuck Hopkins is one of more than 30 Barnes & Thornburg attorneys providing legal services to their fellow parishioners in the Diocese of Fort Wayne - South Bend.

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Pope says joy of Christmas season comes from Jesus’ presence

BY CINDY WOODEN

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Consecrating a new parish church, blessing figurines of the baby Jesus and reciting the Angelus with visitors in St. Peter’s Square, Pope Benedict XVI said the joy of the season comes from knowing Jesus is present among people and can work through them.

The pope began Dec. 16 by blessing Rome’s new Our Lady of the Rosary Church, sprinkling the building with holy water, filling its corners with incense smoke and anointing its altar with oil.

While the third Sunday of Advent, called Gaudete Sunday, includes a special invitation to rejoice, he said, “in truth, all of Advent is a call to joy before ‘the Lord is coming,’ because he comes to save us.”

Preparing for Christmas, the pope said, the Mass readings “constant repeat that we must wake from the sleep of habit and mediocrity; we must abandon sadness and discouragement; we must strengthen our hearts because the Lord is near.”

Pope Benedict told the parishioners that all their hard work and sacrifice in building the church and worrying over every detail should be a symbol of the sacrifice and care with which they prepare their hearts for the Lord’s coming and their lives for living as Christians.

“The living community is more sacred than the material temple we consecrate,” the pope said. “And to build this living, spiritual temple — which is you — there is need for much prayer” and active participation in the liturgy, catechesis and the charitable and cultural activities that the parish offers.

“May the care we show for the material building — sprinkling it with holy water, anointing it with oil and filling it with incense — be a sign and a stimulus for a more intense care in defending and promoting the temple of the person, which is formed by you, dear parishioners,” Pope Benedict said.

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Times for Liturgy
St. Pius X Parish
52553 Fir Road Granger, Indiana

Christmas Eve
Lessons & Carols 4:30 p.m.
5 p.m. 7:30 p.m.
Lessons & Carols 11:25 p.m.
Midnight

Christmas Day
9 a.m. 11 a.m.

New Year’s Day
9:00 a.m. 11:00 a.m.

William “Tuck” Hopkins
Labor and Employment Department
(260) 425-4644
tuck.hopkins@btlaw.com
Expansion blessed by bishop

BY KAY COZAD

FORT WAYNE — St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church hosts a vibrant and active parish community that has grown to over 2,000 families since it opened its doors on Aboite Center Road 17 years ago. To accommodate the needs of the ever-growing parish, ground was broken for a 55,000-square-foot expansion project in 2006. Now 10 months and much construction later, the newly completed expansion has been dedicated and blessed by Bishop John M. D’Arcy.

The dedication ceremony took place Dec. 16, despite the inclement weather, when Father Jim Shafer, pastor of St. Elizabeth Church, joined by founding pastor Father Bob Schulte, vicar general of the diocese, associate pastor Father Bernard Ramenaden, OSB, and parish staff, gathered with over 300 parishioners and others in the parish activity center to hear Scripture readings, sing and pray together.

The bishop spoke of the 20-year-old parish, which met in Haverhill School for almost three years before the original church was completed, and its growth and activity saying, “You, along with your priest, have built a beautiful facility ... in the middle of modern suburban culture ... and you have a responsibility to make all work come here.” He went on to offer his prayer that the church would be a place where people come to pray and raise their hearts to God.

“A make it a place of thanksgiving,” he said. After sprinkling each new room within the facility with holy water, the bishop blessed the congregation and joined them on a tour followed by a reception held in the new cafeteria on the lower level.

Founding pastor Father Schulte said of the expansion, “It’s beautiful. It’s nice to be able to have all this room for the children.”

The original vision for the parish building phases has met his expectations and he says, “It’s right on (schedule).”

Current pastor Father Shafer said of the dedication and blessing ceremony, “Wonderful! It calls for a place of thanksgiving.”

BISHOP JOHN M. D’ARCY

Bishop John M. D’Arcy blesses the newly completed expansion at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish with holy water in a dedication and blessing ceremony on Dec. 16. The blowing snow and icy road conditions did not deter the over 300 parishioners and interested others from participating in the ceremony, tour and following reception.

God’s blessing on the new facility, which is a grace and blessing to the parish,” Jim Kitchens, business manager and pastoral minister of St. Elizabeth, describes the new facility as a parish activity center, which houses a high school-sized gymnasium complete with a stage. The gym is used not only by St. Elizabeth physical education students but by adult basketball teams and more. The St. Joseph-St. Elizabeth School, with 489 students in all and 290 on the St. Elizabeth campus, has been expanded with four additional classrooms to house third and fourth grade students this year allowing the dedicated teachers of the St. Elizabeth campus to educate children kindergarten through fourth grade.

Lois Wisher, principal there said, “It’s been so exciting... We have the additional room to do the programs that we want to do.”

St. Elizabeth’s religious education program (R.E.) is huge. Kitchens said with over 850 students in pre-kindergarten through eighth grade. These R.E. students have expanded into the new classrooms as well. In addition to the new classrooms, the new facility includes new office space for school personnel including the principal’s office and an office for the guidance counselor. And a state-of-the-art computer lab has been added to the elementary building.

The commercial kitchen in the lower level with its stainless steel appliances and counters feed the 290 students, who enjoy their school lunches in the expansive 400-seat cafeteria, which includes a wall of windows with a view of the outside amphitheater.

The beautifully landscaped amphitheater, which can hold between 100-200 people, will be host to family movies in the summer as well as youth group and parish ministry activities.

And the youth ministry for high school-aged parishioners, now has a room they can call their own in the lower level of the facility, replete with donated furniture, foosball game table and computer outlets. Other rooms are also available for adult gatherings as well.

Of the expansion Father Shafer said, “It enables us to gather to meet the needs of the parish in a special way. It will really change this place ministry-wise. The school will use it most, but it is a blessing to the whole parish.”

The future use of the building is open to all possibilities as Shafer reports that currently they are monitoring its use by the parish ministries and will soon know how to offer it to the surrounding community as well.

Another important part of this expansive building project undertaken by Weigand Construction Company and coordinated by Jerry Mays, includes renovations within the church sanctuary itself, which was repainted in neutral colors. The pews and kneelers were recovered and new carpet and linoleum was laid. And says Kitchens, a much needed roof repair was undertaken, adding that renovations to the existing parish hall, adjoining kitchen, atrium and library are awaiting completion.

Kitchens would like to thank Dr. Mike and Grace Mastrangelo, honorary co-chairs for the fund-raising committee, saying the (monetary) gifts are on target for the impressive project as well as for Bill Niezer’s assistance as the chair of the building committee.

“It was 10 months of construction and has been a joy to work with such a professional group of people,” said Kitchens. “It’s amazing. They did a beautiful job.”
Report cites accomplishments, challenges in church response to abuse

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Although the church has taken positive steps in its response to clergy abuse crisis, more needs to be done, according to a five-year report on the crisis released Dec. 13 by the National Review Board, the lay group that oversees the U.S. Catholic bishops' compliance with child protection policies. The report, addressed to U.S. Catholics on the fifth anniversary of the board's establishment, called the church's response to the abuse crisis "impressive" but also noted that its "work is only beginning." It said church leaders must do a better job of providing victims with the help they need and should also help Catholics at the parish level understand how best to respond to victims and their families. It also recommended church leaders provide "protection and restoration" for priests accused of abuse who are later found innocent and called for "greater speed" in investigating and responding to abuse allegations.

The full report may be accessed online at: www.usccb.org/nrb/nrbrepport2007.pdf.

Bishop praises New Jersey lawmakers for vote to abolish death penalty

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Bishop John J. Smith of Trenton, N.J., said Dec. 14 he was pleased New Jersey legislators voted to abolish the death penalty, but said he does not have a "triumphalist attitude about it" because capital punishment is such a sensitive issue.

Members of the General Assembly voted Dec. 13 to end the death penalty but not until four days after the measure was approved by the state Senate. Gov. Jon Corzine signed it into law Dec. 17. In remarks at the state capitol, Corzine said the decision to abolish the death penalty in the state demonstrated that "New Jersey is truly evolving." He said a fundamental argument against the death penalty is for society to "determine if its endorsement of violence begets violence, and if violence under- endorses of violence begets violence, and if violence under-" and "commitments of life." The governor also said a fundamental commitment is such a sensitive issue.

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Bishop Pelotte of Gallup, N.M., takes medical leave

GALLUP, N.M. (CNS) — Bishop Donald E. Pelotte of Gallup has taken a medical leave of absence, effective Dec. 13. The bishop, who has been recovering from injuries sustained during a July 23 fall at his home in Gallup, had received treatment in Arizona, Texas and Florida and returned to his diocese Sept. 21 with the hope that a return to familiar surroundings would help his recovery. But in consultation with his doctors, Bishop Pelotte has now decided to focus solely on his recovery for an undetermined time period. A Dec. 13 diocesan statement did not say where the bishop will be staying during his medical leave. It simply said he would not be in Gallup. Last summer the 62-year-old bishop said he had fallen down the stairs at his residence, which caused extensive injuries. During the bishop's absence, Father James Walker, vicar general of the diocese, will continue with the administrative duties of the diocese that he assumed earlier this year after the bishop was injured.

Vatican recruits 'spiritual mothers' to pray for priests

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — With a letter to the world's bishops and a 40-page illustrated brochure, the Vatican's Congregation for the Clergy is encouraging eucharistic adoration for the holiness of priests and is recruiting "spiritual mothers" to pray for priests and for vocations to the priesthood. The project, launched Dec. 8, aims to highlight the link between the Eucharist and the priesthood as well as Mary's special role as the mother of every priest, said a letter from the congregation's top officials. Cardinal Claudio Hummes, congregation prefect, and Mauro Piacenza, congregation secretary, said that as part of a wider effort to address the challenges facing priests today, they wanted to promote perpetual eucharistic adora- tion "for the reparation of faults and scandals of the clergy" and also to promote "a commit- ment on the part of consecrated women, celibates, married lay people, and the example of Mary, "might wish to spiritually adopt priests in order to help them with their self-offering, prayer and penance." The letter also asked bishops to promote in their dioceses a "movement of prayer," centered on perpetual eucharistic adoration and involving priests, religious and laypeople.

Chinese bishop released after nearly four months of being detained

ZHENGDING, China (CNS) — After nearly four months of detention, Bishop Julius Jia Zhiguang of Bengbu has been released. Bishop Jia is not registered with the Chinese government and has been detained numerous times in past years. Catholic sources in the Zhengding Diocese told the Asian church news agency UCA News that the 72-year-old bishop arrived at his cathedral in Wuqiu village, in Hebei province, Dec. 14. The vil- lage, which is near Shijiazhuang, Hebei's capital, is more than 160 miles south-west of Beijing. According to one source, Bishop Jia's family made numerous requests for his release because the uncle of the bishop is seriously ill. With Christmas coming up, Bishop Jia's family and the Chinese government and has been detained numerous times in past years. Catholic sources in the Zhengding Diocese told the Asian church news agency UCA News that the 72-year-old bishop arrived at his cathedral in Wuqiu village, in Hebei province, Dec. 14. The vil- lage, which is near Shijiazhuang, Hebei's capital, is more than 160 miles south-west of Beijing. According to one source, Bishop Jia's family made numerous requests for his release because the uncle of the bishop is seriously ill. With Christmas coming up, Bishop Jia's family and the Chinese government and has been detained numerous times in past years. Catholic sources in the Zhengding Diocese told the Asian church news agency UCA News that the 72-year-old bishop arrived at his cathedral in Wuqiu village, in Hebei province, Dec. 14. The vil- lage, which is near Shijiazhuang, Hebei's capital, is more than 160 miles south-west of Beijing. According to one source, Bishop Jia's family made numerous requests for his release because the uncle of the bishop is seriously ill. With Christmas coming up, Bishop Jia's family and the Chinese government and has been detained numerous times in past years. Catholic sources in the Zhengding Diocese told the Asian church news agency UCA News that the 72-year-old bishop arrived at his cathedral in Wuqiu village, in Hebei province, Dec. 14. The vil- lage, which is near Shijiazhuang, Hebei's capital, is more than 160 miles south-west of Beijing. According to one source, Bishop Jia's family made numerous requests for his release because the uncle of the bishop is seriously ill. With Christmas coming up, Bishop Jia's family and the Chinese government and has been detained numerous times in past years. Catholic sources in the Zhengding Diocese told the Asian church news agency UCA News that the 72-year-old bishop arrived at his cathedral in Wuqiu village, in Hebei province, Dec. 14. The vil- lage, which is near Shijiazhuang, Hebei's capital, is more than 160 miles south-west of Beijing. According to one source, Bishop Jia's family made numerous requests for his release because the uncle of the bishop is seriously ill. With Christmas coming up, Bishop Jia's family and...
The Franciscan Center's Thanksgiving Tuesday hits new record

FORT WAYNE — The Franciscan Center served 770 people on its annual Thanksgiving Tuesday, the Tuesday before Thanksgiving that its Food Pantry is open.

“Our largest usage day for our food pantry is always the Tuesday before Thanksgiving,” explains Sally Ley, founder and chief executive officer of The Franciscan Center. “While we may average 300 families a week during the year, we had 770 families visit the food pantry on one day. Men, women and children were lined up around the building at 4:30 a.m. even though we do not open the pantry doors until 9 a.m.,” she said.

As in previous years, The Franciscan Center relies completely on donations to provide the turkeys, chickens, hams and other meats it distributes to its clients. “Just when we started to hand out hot dogs as a last resort to the last couple of dozen clients, a generous donor pulled up in a truck with 80 turkeys. We are truly blessed by the community,” adds Ley.

The Franciscan Center runs a food pantry, Medicine Cabinet and Sack Lunch Ministry. Please contact The Franciscan Center at (260) 744-3907 to arrange a donation for 2008.

Bishop Dwenger students hold fast, recall hunger

FORT WAYNE — In solidarity with their less fortunate brothers and sisters around the world, students, faculty and staff at Bishop Dwenger participated in a 24-hour fast Monday, Dec. 10.

Religion teacher Tom Kenny was the impetus for this project, according to Melissa Wheeler, religion teacher. Kenny was the low religion teacher and coordinator for the fast. The student leaders then decided to organize the fast on Dec. 10, in correlation with World Human Rights Day.

Wheeler explained the philosophy behind fasting: “This is only a phy behind fasting: “This is only a first step—something bigger than herself,” Wheeler said. “We hope that students and adult participants will make a commitment to helping the less fortunate in our world not just for these 24 hours, but for the rest of their lives.”

According to Wheeler, there are other ways to promote social justice beyond fasting. The teacher stressed the importance of remaining aware of relevant issues affecting the world.

“It may seem small, but information spoken will eventually make its way to influential ears,” she said. “Sometimes you will have to look beyond the network news to find this information so it may take some work.”

A good place to start is with the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD), she said. Moreover, lobbying groups, the United Nations and the Peace Corps are also helpful. Information for these organizations is available online at their fingertips so we can put due pres- sure on decision makers.

In closing, Wheeler said this fast is something bigger than her- self. This is simply what Christ has asked us to do, she said. “This is not just about giving away property, it’s a gift to another person.”

Students seem to really see this as well. “It may seem small, but information spoken will eventually make its way to influential ears,” she said. “Sometimes you will have to look beyond the network news to find this information so it may take some work.”

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Gloves and hats needed by The Franciscan Center

FORT WAYNE — When Sally Ley, founder and chief executive officer of The Franciscan Center, was a little girl, she could not wait for Christmas. Her anticipation was not just for toys, but at Christmas time the Sisters of Divine Providence would donate to her and her sisters brand new gloves and hats every year.

“We now want to help others in Fort Wayne as I was helped,” explains Ley. “We have been providing gloves over the years, but this year we want to provide gloves and hats to all of our Sack Lunch Ministry clients—over 1,000 men, women and children!”

The Franciscan Center runs a food pantry, Medicine Cabinet and Sack Lunch Ministry. Please contact The Franciscan Center at (260) 744-3977 for more information or to arrange a donation of new or gently-used gloves, mittens and winter hats.

Serrans host WHLY general manager, plan for luncheon

SOUTH BEND — Richard Petersen, general manager of WHLY, Holy Radio, 1580 AM, the Catholic radio station in South Bend, told members of the Serra Club of South Bend that the complete transfer of the radio station to his group still hinges on com- plete approval of the Federal Communications Commission. Fort Wayne's Catholic radio station, WHLY, in escrow, is owned by the Serra Club.

Deacon Ron Moser, president of the Serra Club, said that a large contingent of officers and members will attend the holiday luncheon for the diocesan semi- narians and seminarians. The luncheon will be held at Fort Wayne’s Summit Club on Dec. 27.

Heading the group will be Richard Wasko, president-elect; George Resnik, past district 37 gov- ernor; and Richard Dombos, a past president of Serra and current diocesan seminarian who will serve as group spokesman. Other officers attending will be Robert Schultflies, vice president of programs; Stephen Eck, Jr., president of technology programs; Dr. Frank Toepp, vice president of the Serra Foundation; Dr. Norlin Rauschoff, treasurer; Joan Dudzinski, vice president of membership; and Marian Chrunokski, EJD

Information coming for papal events

FORT WAYNE — With the announcement of Pope Benedict XVI’s visit to the United States April 15-20, many Serra for tick- ets to papal events have been received through the archdioceses of FW and Washington, D.C. Plans are in formation in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend to obtain some available tickets for the papal visit on April 17 and 20. Those interested in attending the pope’s public events should look for updated informa- tion in the Jan. 6, 2008 edition of Today’s Catholic.
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—Steve Henderson, ‘08, Student Government Association President

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CHRIST CHILD SOCIETY GIFTS

St. Louis Besancon Parish, New Haven, and students from both St. Louis Academy and St. Joseph, Hessen Cassel, participated in a diaper drive for the Christ Child Society during the first two weeks of Advent. In photo with the donations, are, from left, St. Louis Academy students Gus Wyss, Maggie Castleman and Ray Davis.
Jim Goestch holds a coffee sack containing fairly traded Peruvian coffee, one of the 21 countries that supply specific coffees that are roasted at the store. It is part of a local employment training program. Each sack is shipped to the U.S. with a code that indicates its country of origin.

The Fair Trade Certified label guarantees fair prices for consumers, farmers and workers. The label is a voluntary industry initiative that promotes fair wages for producers and sustainable working conditions for workers. It is designed to replace traditional farm-to-fork marketing systems with a new model that places people at the center of the supply chain.

Jim Goestch knows the importance of fair trade firsthand. Jim and his wife Marian Waltz have run a fair-trade organization, Friends of the Third World (FOTW), for 35 years at 611 W. Wayne St. in downtown Fort Wayne. Their Third World Shoppe supports farmers and artisans from as far away as Ethiopia. So what exactly is fair trade? "Fair trade goods are made by people who need to support their families," he said.

Goestch explained that farmers, for example, receive one cent per pound for regular coffee, but $1.30 for fairly traded goods. In the fair-trade system, farmers are organized into co-ops and sell directly to associations, eliminating the middleman.

As Goestch explained, specific criteria must be met to be a fair-trade good and thus is worthy of the official label. According to a pamphlet in his shop produced by nonprofit organization TransFair USA, the Fair Trade Certified label guarantees fair prices for family farmers, decent working and living conditions, environmentally friendly farming practices and quality taste for the consumer. "Your buying has to be fair in context," he explained.

According to Goestch, it's easier to determine a fair price for food than for handmade crafts because of the unique nature of handmade products; honestly, however, always prevails in his shop. "We tell (the farmers and artisans) who give us the products they can ask questions about how we do business," he said.

Goestch said the shop sells an eclectic mix of goods, including children's toy instruments, plant hangers, coffee and tea. Coffee and tea are the biggest sellers and coffee comes from 12 countries. The shop owner said buying fairly traded goods is becoming more popular in today's market. "Fair trade is a trendy thing right now," he said. "It is becoming more noticed by the public."

Beyond the superficiality, Goestch addressed Christians' moral obligation to buy fairly traded goods. "We should care about the things we buy and the people that make them," he explained.

FORT WAYNE — Fair trade is a buzzword today, but there's more to it than buying an expensive cup of coffee at Starbucks.

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According to David Dills, a professor of economics at Indiana University-Purdue Universities at Fort Wayne, the global coffee market has been changing.

"What we've had for economic security is very much dependent on other countries having the opportunity," he said. "Until recently, that was a way to promote this concern, there's going to be turmoil in the world."

Goestch agrees with Dills that the global trade system is flawed. "We have so much disparity between the person who buys $200-gym shoes and the person who makes them for a $1 a day," he said. "Still, he has faith in shop's mission. "Fair trade is one example of a better way," he said. "We know we're making a difference."

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More information about the Friends of the Third World organization, visit www.friendsofthirdworld.org. The Third World Shoppe is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. or by appointment.

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Last year to take charitable IRA rollover

Question: What is the charitable IRA rollover?

Answer: Donors who are age 70 or older can transfer funds directly from their individual retirement account (IRA) to a public charitable organization without including the transfer in gross income for federal income tax purposes. However, the deadline for making a charitable IRA rollover is Dec. 31, 2007.

Before the Pension Protection Act of 2006 was passed, if a donor wanted to use IRA funds for a charitable contribution, he or she would have had to withdraw the funds from his or her IRA account and then contribute the money to the charity. The amount withdrawn was taxable income and reportable on the individual’s income tax return. Depending on whether the donor qualified to itemize deductions, he or she could take a charitable deduction for the amount given to charity, but only up to 50 percent of adjusted gross income.

Currently, until Dec. 31, 2007, charitable gifts from IRAs can be accomplished simply and free of federal income tax. With these tax benefits, you can make gifts from your IRA while you are living and benefit, you can make gifts from your IRA to a charity count toward your mandatory withdrawal or required minimum distribution you must take each year after reaching age 70.

Example: Suppose Mary has $700,000 in an IRA and will be required to withdraw approximately $35,000 this year. And suppose that Mary wants to contribute $10,000 to her parish school this year. She can authorize the trustee of her IRA to transfer $10,000 to the parish school and $25,000 to her. The $10,000 distributed to charity will not be subject to federal income tax.

Donors who may find this new provision of making charitable contributions from an IRA especially appealing will be those who do not itemize deductions, would not be able to deduct all of their charitable contributions because of deduction limits, may have a phase-out of their itemized deductions because of their income level, or are required to take minimum distribution withdrawals even though they do not need them for living expenses.

The charitable IRA rollover can also benefit donors who receive Social Security and are taxed on these benefits depending on how much taxable income they receive from other sources, including withdrawals from IRAs. Accordingly, money in an IRA that is rolled over to a charity, rather than first withdrawn and then contributed to the charity, can have the effect of reducing taxes on social security payments.

The first step in making a charitable gift from your IRA is to contact your IRA custodian to transfer your desired gift amount directly to your parish, school, or other diocesan agency. If the funds are distributed to you followed by a contribution to the charity, you will still have to report the withdrawal as income.

Elsia M. Smith, CPA/PFS, is the director of planned giving for the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend and vice president and director of financial planning for STAR Wealth Management.

The Ins and Outs of Christmas preparation

With the season of Advent almost over, we may be frustrated and even irritable as we try hard to make everything just right for everyone, including ourselves, by the time Christmas arrives. Consider there is an inner and outer side to Christmas preparation. To make holidays meaningful and enjoyable, we need to find ways to balance both outer and inner needs.

The outer preparations are necessary to sustain and build lines of loving communication with family and friends. The to-do list of addressing cards, shopping, gift wrapping, cooking, cleaning, decorating, feasting and traveling helps us sustain traditions and memories from past Christmases and celebrate the continuity of life. The decorations we may use year after year and our Christmas card list can be like memory jewels, reminding us of Christmases past, of family and friends we hold dear. Our sense of smell can invoke memories, too, as our home is filled with the aromas of breads and cookies baking, the turkey or ham roasting, and pies cooling on the kitchen counter; all taking us back perhaps to those special, festive days of our lives.

The ins are the Christmas presents, which can involve planning and choosing just the right gifts for the right persons, followed by the shopping and time for wrapping. But remember, the stress, dread and negative energy we put into our thoughts and words, cards and gifts, food preparation and parties, comes back to us with the same negativity.

Conversely, if our energy is positive, then it will return to us in a positive manner. If we are not excited about sending Christmas cards, giving a gift to someone, decorating our home, and so forth, then we shouldn’t do it. If we truly enjoy many of the things that go into preparing for the holidays, then we should strive to take them on with an open heart and a cheerful outlook. We receive back what we give to others.

If all our preparations are on the material or outer side, however, our happiness will be short-lived. As the holidays wear on we may begin to bemoan the stress, the mess, the extra debts and pounds incurred. We may even vow to leave the country next year before the holidays descend upon us. We create positive energy and enrich our holiday preparations and actions when we also take the time to cultivate the inner side of Christmas.

The Spirit of Christmas

May the Spirit of Christmas fill your life with warmth and joy now and throughout the new year.

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CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

DECEMBER 23, 2007
Three wise Johnson girls honor Jesus birthday in a unique way

BY KAY COZAD

FORT WAYNE — “Tis the season when frantic shoppers mob the stores in hopes of finding the multitude of gifts that might please their loved ones on Christmas morning. The hustle-bustle of Santa-related materialism this time of year sometimes casts a shadow on the real reason for the season. But one Fort Wayne family has found a creative way to honor baby Jesus on his birthday without all the hype.

Jason and Alicia Johnson, active members of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, Fort Wayne, were married in 2000 and enjoyed sharing their families’ regular Christmas traditions that year.

“The first year, we didn’t have traditions of our own,” says Alicia. But, she recalls, that year she was inspired by a homily offered by Father Jim Shafer, pastor of her church. “He mentioned the three gifts and related the Santa story to the tradition of our own.”

Following the birth of their oldest daughter, Mya, in 2002, the Johnsons decided it was time to begin their own Christmas traditions. Mya would receive three gifts from Santa Claus symbolizing the Magi’s gifts to Jesus at his birth. “It helped us simplify ... and control the hustle and bustle,” recalls Alicia. A pillowcase size, drawstring bag, reminiscent of Santa’s big red bag, was constructed adorned with Mya’s name in a drawstring bag, reminiscent of the ornaments ending up at the bottom of the tree.

Each Advent season the manger in the family creche stands empty awaiting Christmas morning when the girls search for the hidden figure of baby Jesus, while the plate, once heavy with cookies for Santa, holds only crumbs. Throughout the yuletide season, the girls take turns moving the three wise men closer to the manger each day.

The three young girls visit their grandmother, Terri Johns, where they bake a cake for Jesus. When the family heads to grand- ma’s where they gather with aunts and uncles to share the holiday feast. Dessert calls for a rousing rendition of “Happy Birthday to Jesus” sung by the entire family as the birthday cake made by the girls is sliced.

Alicia, a second-grade teacher for Southwest Allen County Schools, currently on child-rearing leave, explains that several of the school staff have adopted the Johnsons’ creative way of honoring Jesus.

“I am really on a crusade with my friends,” she says. “I grew up with so much family celebration. The gifts are good but the high-light is being with family.

And her crusade doesn’t stop after the Christmas season is over. The idea of simplicity is important to her. “So I don’t get caught up in the hustle-bustle. I want people to know through my actions that I’m a Christian. I really believe in walking the walk and witnessing through lifestyle. Faith is not just a Sunday thing,” she says.

Jason hopes to begin the tradition of reading the Christmas story from the Bible to his children as he fondly recalls his grandfather, then his own father, reading it to him. And one day when the girls are old enough, the Johnson family will attend midnight Mass as Alicia’s family had done.

Their hope for the future of their children, “I hope it strengthens their faith so they can go to school and explain why they only get three gifts. I hope they’re strong enough to say ‘This is my faith.’ ... and carry it through the generations.”

Wishing everyone a Blessed Advent and Christmas Season! 

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From Our Home to Yours

Wishing you a Blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year!

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(260) 484 - 6555

www.saintannehome.com
SOUTH BEND — Starting in late October, artificial Christmas trees start appearing on the floor of the St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store in South Bend.

Before they get to the floor, however, they have to be assembled. They arrive in boxes, donated by individuals or retail operations. Mike Kamp, known as “Christmas Tree Mike,” is the person who puts them all together.

People say that it takes a lot of patience to put these together,” says Mike, as he deftly spreads out the branches on a tree. “But it’s no different than poppin’ beans or shucking corn.”

Mike has been doing the job for St. Vincent’s since 1994. Before that, he assembled Christmas trees for Simco. He figures he’s assembled about 3,250 trees since 1970. The trees come from a variety of sources.

“Sometimes, Target or other stores will get them in and they’re brand new, but maybe one strand of lights doesn’t work. So they give them to us because they don’t want to fix them.”

Or, families just get bored with the same tree they’ve had every year and decide to upgrade to a bigger one or a different color.

The trees are a hot commodity and sell fairly fast.

He has some tips for those who must assemble trees at home:

- Always start from the bottom up, hang branches to small
- Decorate with lights from the inside out, so the plugins aren’t seen and wires won’t interfere with further decorating
- Use a swivel stand for easier access.

Mike, who was injured in a motorcycle accident years ago and has only one leg, finds the swivel stand convenient. The tree moves around for him, instead of him having to move around the tree.

What’s the strangest tree he’s ever assembled?

“It was a white tree that I think had been left in the sun and it was this golden color. I called it the strawberry blonde tree. It was almost orange. But it sold almost as soon as it hit the sales floor. People just like to have something different new and now then.”

Checking toys on the recall list made easy by St. Vincent de Paul staffer

BY JUDY BRADFORD

SOUTH BEND — Toys will be given out in Christmas baskets this year by the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

That may not seem like major news. After all, the agency has been a distributor of the Marine’s Toys for Tots program for years. But it is news — and it’s good news — when one considers the wave of toy recalls that began in August and forced the Catholic lay organization into a dilemma:

How would St. Vincent’s provide safe toys this year for all of its needy clients who request Christmas baskets?

“It’s been toy recall after toy recall,” said Charlie Thompson, director of conference services and the St. Vincent’s staff member who came up with a solution to the dilemma. “But we were surprised, once the solution was found, how simple it was.”

The agency has limited staffing, and couldn’t begin to check each and every toy in the warehouse awaiting the Christmas giveaway. Moreover, it was beginning to look like no number of volunteers would be able to deal with the job of checking by barcode number.

When Thompson started looking at the recalls on the Internet, however, he realized how easily the thousands of recalls listed online could be cut and pasted into a Microsoft Word program. Pictures could even be pasted into the program to help volunteers identify recalled toys.

“Then, by simply using a ‘find’ function, we can quickly locate the toy by name, if it’s on recall,” said Thompson. “If the name of the toy pops up, then we know to scrutinize it more carefully to see if it’s on the recall list.”

Parents who signed up for Christmas baskets (the application process ended Nov. 21) were also asked, for the first time, to sign a liability waiver since more recalls may come to light after toys are in the hands of children.

Parents were also given instructions on how to check future recalls online, and a toll-free phone number for the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Recalls dated back to 2003, and all the toys checked in October and November of this year were actually collected by the Marines during last year’s Toys for Tots program.

“We feel that, ultimately, it is the parent’s responsibility to check for recalls,” said Thompson. “But as an agency that gives out toys, we also felt it was our responsibility to check for recalls to the best of our ability.”

Regardless of the weather or the food served at a holiday feast, or whether you are alone or in the midst of many, Christmas is always a look at the past.

At the Catholic Cemetery of Fort Wayne, we deal with time in a unique blend of the past, the present and the future for all whom we are called to serve.

May the Blessings of the season be yours.

CATHOLIC CEMETERY
ASSOCIATION, INC.
From ‘Juno’ to the Mexican border, Merry Christmas

While Christmas gets a bad rap as such a commercial holiday in our culture, with a closer look, one can see that, deeper elements and themes of Christmas — and underlying Catholic values — are still present amid the glitz and materialism. These themes continue to make Christmas a time of genuine heartfulness, albeit in very real ways, sometimes as a welcome surprise, other times as an uncomfortable reminder to our conscience. They assert themselves in everyday aspects of society, from political issues to our entertainment.

For instance, we have the movies. Hollywood is so often regarded as a moral vacuum, and yet, in the last year, the films it has been producing have taken an unmistakable pro-life turn. From the moving “Bella,” to the pleasant “Waitress,” to the ultra-raunchy “Knocked Up,” 2007 saw the release of several movies in which women facing unwanted pregnancies decide to keep their babies.

The latest of these is “Juno,” a comedy-drama directed by Jason Reitman that features a sarcastic pregnant teen who decides to promise her baby to a childless upper-class couple who has advertised in a local newspaper. The USCBB review of this film calls it “smart, funny and ultimately moving” and possessing “just the right moral tone.”

This welcome development in filmmaking not only suggests that the themes of planning and policy in the Catholic church saw in her virginity not only a type of interpenetration between church and Mary, but also that God’s grace is always personified, namely that of consecrated virgins or the church and Mary. In our case, however, we will simply concentrate upon Mary and try to discover how she continues to be our guide. In a way, the Annunciation scene in Luke’s Gospel initiates us into many of the truths which are foundational for our spiritual growth.

Everything in the spiritual life is gift — gifts for which we must be thankful. Moreover, it reminds us that God’s grace is always personified. It is the personal nature of the divine romance with us that should lead to true contentment and inner peace. Pope Benedict XVI reminds us that each one of us is important no matter what our circumstances. It is to be found in God’s promise: I will be with you.”

John Nguyen
Niantic, Conn.

Blessings will follow our entrustment

We should commend Bishop D’Arcy for arranging to have the novena of entrustment to Our Lady in honor of her Immaculate Conception in our diocese. Like the mother Mary, our hearts are moved by family problems, sickness, etc., as causing us to be discouraged, which is dangerous to our souls.

During the novenas I attended at Mass at three different churches, I sensed that praying together for our diocese was a comfort to everyone. It’s good to know that our bishop is so concerned about our spiritual welfare that he arranged to again entrust our diocese to Our Lady.

We can expect many blessings from this, as St. Bernard said: “Remember O most glorious Virgin Mary that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help or sought thy intercession was left unaided.” Thank you.

Theresa Gabet
New Haven

Another charitable use for gift cards

I am sending this letter to both your publication and a couple of other Catholic newspapers that I read both in print and online. It is my hope that you will print my letter because it deals with an important topic, especially at the season of Christmas and New Year’s. I recently read an article in the Wall Street Journal that stated statistics from The National Retail Federation that predicted that an amazing $26 billion in gift cards will be purchased during the Christmas season by U.S. consumers.

I would like to share with your readers a strategy I have received gift cards in recent years for which I have had no use. Last Christmas I received a $50 gift card for a retail chain store whose business practices I do not necessarily like. Thinking that this gift card would be useless to me, I donated it to a local home for unwed mothers and was told by an appreciative staff member it would go a long way to help a young mother who is facing the courageous decision to have her baby in the abortion-saturated culture in which we live. Afterwards, I donated two other gift cards that were hanging around from past years, which were also put to good use.

Sometimes these “useless” gift cards go lost or unused. I would like to encourage your readers to consider donating such gift cards that they will not use to a local home for unwed mothers. Such gift cards can make the difference for a brave young mother who has courageously chosen life and has a rocky road ahead of her.

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Weather hype intrudes on the TV Mass

Many viewers of the TV Mass in Fort Wayne were stunned that Indiana’s NewsCenter took an intrusive seven and a half minutes to tell us that last weekend’s winter storm was subsiding. Viewers of the TV Mass missed the majority of the Liturgy of the Word, the readings for the third Sunday of Advent and a part of Mass celebrant Father James Stayle’s homily.

The weather team advised people to stay home, stay off the roads. Ironically, the televised Mass was precisely for the people who were shut in their homes. Not only have Catholics bishops across the U.S. been advocating against this sort of thinking and policy, the Christmas season again calls to mind another group of migrants, specifically Jesus, Mary and Joseph, the holy family, whose trek in the Gospels include Nazareth, Bethlehem and eventually Egypt. They serve as a standard for Christ resides quite literally in, as the Indiana bishops have termed it, the stranger in our midst and that, rather than adopting a hostile stance toward immigrants, Americans might try to make a little room at the inn.

December 23, 2007
Today’s Catholic welcomes letters from readers. All letters must be signed and include a phone number and address for verification.

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From one of the early hymns of the Church (Ode to Solomon), we read: A Virgin pure she comes, And a young virgin she is ... come ye here to me! For I will be your guide In all the ways of truth ... At the time, there was a certain type of interpretation between the church and Mary. In our case, however, we will simply concentrate upon Mary and try to discover how she continues to be our guide. In a way, the Annunciation scene in Luke’s Gospel initiates us into many of the truths which are foundational for our spiritual growth.

Everything in the spiritual life is gift — gifts for which we must be thankful. Moreover, it reminds us that God’s grace is always personified. It is the personal nature of the divine romance with us that should lead to true contentment and inner peace. Pope Benedict XVI reminds us that each one of us is important no matter what our circumstances. It is to be found in God’s promise: I will be with you.”

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In all the ways of truth ...
Advent invitation to come to God

THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

4th Sunday of Advent
Mt 16:8-24

The church is observing the last Sunday of Advent. In As we have already heard, and in great faith, the church will celebrate the feast of the Nativity of the Lord or Christmas.

The church chooses for the first reading on this weekend a passage from the Book of Isaiah. Central in the reading is King Ahaz of the southern Hebrew kingdom of Judah, who reigned in the last third of the 8th century before Christ. His reign is not remembered as having been particularly distinguished. He was no great leader. For Isaiah the definition of a good king, of one who is worthy, of one who can truly be an instrument of the Lord's love to humanity, is always required to elect a new monarch genuinely led the people back to fidelity to the Covenant, and requiring submission to its terms, were the principal responsibilities of the kings. Nothing else mattered.

While Ahaz was not spectacular in his role, God still used him as an instrument to bring the people back to fidelity to the Covenant. Ahaz served God's purpose to save the people from their own sins by faithing a son. When the king's spouse, a young woman, conceived, Isaiah saw in the event a sign of God's caring for the people. What had the lackluster Ahaz could not accomplish would be achieved by the son. Thus, the coming of the new prince was a cause for rejoicing. As its second reading on this weekend, the church selects a section from Paul's Epistle to the Romans. No Christian today would think of challenging Paul's status as an apostle. However, when Paul was alive, his credentials were hardly so universally acknowledged. He himself wrote of ushers who vested themselves with the cloak of being apostles, and who led the faith astray.

Here Paul stresses that he indeed is an apostle, because the Lord called him. St. Matthew's Gospel is the source of the last reading. This reading recalls the miraculous conception of Jesus. Jesus is the Son of God, but the son of Mary, always a virgin. He entered human history directly as a result of God's love for humanity, fulfilling God's promise to give the fullness of life to the people who were faithful.

The Incarnation, as theologians call the mystery of the Son of God's birth as a human, is beyond human comprehension. Not even Joseph, holy as he was, could understand it. God's ways are not our ways.

Reflection

Only two days remain in Advent, and given the frenzy usually connected with preparing for Christmas in our society, these remaining two days of Advent are apt to be quite busy. Nevertheless, two days will be enough for any of us to use the opportunity of Advent to cleanse ourselves of attachments to sin and sinfulness and make ourselves worthy of receiving the Lord.

Christmas can be deeply personal for us, for if we have made ourselves worthy, Jesus will come to us personally on this great feast. The church encourages us, therefore, to accept its Advent invitation to come to God. If we have conscientiously observed Advent, then the church needs us to continue doing so until Christmas. If we have allowed Advent to slip past us, the church calls to us the time left. God wants us to love him, as God loves us. Again and again, God has reached out to people to empower them in coming in him. He sent a son to Ahaz, that the nation might have a good king. He sent Jesus to us: Jesus sent us the apostles. God loves us so much. He reaches out to us. He provides for us in ways we cannot understand. Even in only two days, we can reach out to God, if we so wish. There still is time.

READINGS

Sunday: S 7:10-14 Ps 26:1-6 Rom 1:15-25 Saturday: 1 Jn 2:3-11 Ps 96:1-3, 5b-6, 12b-13-18

ANSWERS:

1. a. rib eye
   b. had to be able to sew and cook fruit pies.
   c. They posted a “no solicitors or deities” sign on the pearly gates.

2. a. That she would suffer pain in childbirth
   b. That she would have to work hard to earn her bread
   c. That she would live forever and have children.

3. a. That fruit gives you gas
   b. That fruit does not look fat in that dress and yes her hair was...
Mary was kept untouched by the stain of original sin

The dogma of the Immaculate Conception holds that from the first moment of her conception in the womb of her mother, Ann, Mary was kept untouched by the stain of original sin. However, it is important for Catholics to remember that this singular grace granted to Mary was possible only through the saving death and resurrection of her Son, Jesus. That is, Mary is redeemed, so to speak, just as you and I are; however, she experienced this redemption from the first moments of her existence. That is, Mary’s sinlessness is as much a fruit of Jesus’ saving work as the forgiveness you or I might receive in the sacrament of penance.

Mary was delivered by Jesus from sin in this sense; she was preserved from sin, and yet, we hold that this was achieved by the same act of Christ, which frees us from sin. Jesus’ saving work, the paschal mystery, was so profound that it is, so to speak, trans- or meta-historical. It was not limited to space and time. This is related to what we hold about holy Saturday. All the fruits from the foundation of the world experienced redemption by Christ’s saving act, even those who might have lived and died prior to it.

Mary Ann’s Christmas dinner

Mary Ann’s Christmas dinner set to “the conflicts and crises that are tormenting the region.”

Memorable, yet not the traditional, Christmas celebrations

SOUTH BEND — This time of year conjures up recollections of Christmases past for many Catholics over the age of 60. Two seniors share some of their most unforgettable, if not traditional Christmases.

Shirley Schwindaman, mother of seven and parishioner at St. Thomas the Apostle Church in Elkhart, recalled one particularly memorable Christmas.

“After my husband Bob died in April of 1986, I was so concerned about the grief my children were experiencing,” she said. “One day that summer a friend of mine mentioned what their family was planning for Christmas. I can still remember that pain and panic overcame me, I thought, ‘How will my children ever have a Christmas like they’ve always known?’ Because their father had been a big part of many years, vacations were nonexistent. As usual I said to God, ‘You’re going to have to help me in my dilemma.’ And as he had done so many other times I think we together went out for a trip to Disney World.”

Shirley continued, “When I told the children I was going to Disney World, they were excited by their sparkle and enthusiasm. When Christmas Eve and Christmas day came, it was a different kind of celebration from the birth of Christ than in the past, and more concentrated on first flights for many of the children, packing and such. They were just so excited.”

Shirley felt Disney World was a good place to send them, as perhaps it had a little less celebration of the birth of Christ than in the past, and more concentration on first flights for many of the children, packing and such. They were just so excited.

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Gospel for December 23, 2007

Matthew 1:18-24

Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for Fourth Sunday of Advent, Cycle A: the beginning of the story of Jesus’ birth. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

SCRUPTURE SEARCH

By Patricia Kasten

JOSEPH’S DREAM


LETTER continued from page 14

isis, threats against the family and an erosion of traditional Latin American values.

Visiting Austria in September, the pope prayed at a Marian shrine with tens of thousands of pilgrims. His Italian travels took him to Wraza, where he prayed at the tomb of St. Augustine, to Assisi in the footsteps of St. Francis, and to Naples for the opening of an inter-religious conference.

The pope continued to gradually replace Roman Curia officials, but his most important set of appointments came this fall, when he named new cardinals. Those receiving the red hat in a November consistory included two Americans: Cardinal John P. Foley, head of the Knights of Columbus, and Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston. Following those, the pope met Bush for the first time for talks that focused on the precarious situation of Christians in Iraq and other conflicts in the Middle East. The Vatican took the opportunity to express the hope for a negotiated settlement to “the conflicts and crises that are tormenting the region.”

Word-becoming-Flesh.

Is Dec. 25 really the birth date of Christ? I heard that he may have been born in April. What is the background for celebrating the birth of Christ on Dec. 25? Anonymous

We cannot be certain of the precise historical date of Jesus’ birth; various dates likely abounded in the early centuries; we know, for example, that Clement of Alexandria (+ c. A.D. 220) had suggested May 20. We do know that it has been commonly accepted that Dec. 25 was roughly the mid-fourth century (as found in the so-called Philocalia, a recording practice in Rome in A.D. 336) in the Western Church.

While some have suggested the date was chosen to oppose the pagan feast of the birth of the “sol invictus,” (unconquered sun), this was likely not the primary reason for this date. Rather, it seems to have been related to the dates of Christ’s death. That is, someone had calculated that the Good Friday on which Jesus had died was March 25, and that it would make sense for the date to be conceived as well on the same day (the Annunciation): nine months following is Dec. 25. This calculation of determining the date seems to have been known to St. Augustine (+ A.D. 430) in the early fifth century.

Father Michael Heintz, rector of St. Matthew Cathedral, answered this week’s questions.
The Holy Grail of reprogramming: A new era for stem cells?

T he recent discovery that reg-
ular old garden-variety skin cells can be converted into highly flexible pluripotent stem cells has rocked the scientific world. Two papers, one by a Japanese group, and another by an American group, announced a genetic technique that produces stem cells without destroying (or using) any human embryos. In other words, the kind of stem cell usually obtained by destroying embryos appears to be available another way. What is required is to transfer four genes into the skin cells, triggering them to convert into pluripotent stem cells. It has been called “biological alchemy,” something like turning lead into gold. Many are calling “hail egg cell reprogramming” as a breakthrough of epic proportions, the stuff that Nobel prizes are made of, a kind of Holy Grail of stem cell research.

As important as this advance may prove to be scientifically, it may be even more important to the ethical discussion. It offers a possi-
ble solution to a long-standing ethi-
cal impasse and a unique opportu-
nity to declare that it is possible even if a truce in the stem cell wars, given that the source of these cells is ethi-
cally problematic stem cells. As one stem-cell researcher put it recently, if the new method produces equa-
tlly potent cells, as it has been touted to do, “the whole field is going to completely change. People working on ethics will have to find something new to worry about.” Thus, science itself may have devised a clever way to heal the wound that opened in 1994 when human embryos began to be sought out and destroyed for their stem cells.

Dr. James Thomson (whose 1998 work ignited the controversy, when human embryos began to be used to find something new to worry about) has overseen the development of numerous embryonic humans himself, had the honesty to acknowledge this fact in comments he made to the New York Times recently: “If human embryonic stem-cell research does not make you at least a little bit uncomfortable, you have not thought about it enough.”

Reprogramming eliminates these deep moral concerns as it offers a highly practical and straightforward technique for obtaining pluripotent cells. As Dr. Thomson himself put it, “Any basic microbiology lab can do it, and it’s cheap and quick.”

Reprogramming is also impor-
tant because it provides an alterna-
tive approach to “therapeutic cloning” and immoral procedure used to obtain patient-
specific stem cells.

Reprogramming provides patient-
specific stem cells as well, but without using women’s eggs, with-
out killing embryos and without creating moral limbo.

The sheer practicality of the new reprogramming approach, coupled with its ethical advantages, must go forward, as if it were the highest good. It must be able to do whatever it wants, whenever it wants, and nobody should be pushing ethical viewpoints to limit what researchers do. That, of course, is a completely untenable position because we reg-
ulate what scientists do all the time. The very mechanism by which we dispense federal money puts all kinds of checks and balances on what researchers can do and there are certain types of research like germ warfare studies or nuclear bomb development that the govern-
ment strictly regulates already.

Other kinds of research are crimi-
nal, such as performing medical experi-
ments on patients who don’t give their consent. The idea that we have to allow science to do what-
ever it wants is little more than “pie-in-the-sky” reprogramming.

The third reason embryo destructive research will still likely be procribed is not all do with abor-
tion. Several astute commentators have noted recently how the whole field of embryonic-skin cell research has become a little bit of “hedge” for abortion. In the same way that a garden gets a hedge placed around it in order to protect it, embryonic stem cells are becoming a place holder for abor-
tion. If embryo killing becomes incorporated into the way we cure illnesses and maintain our health as a society, then abortion on demand will be more likely to curry favor in our culture as well. If those try-
ing to protect embryos carry the day, proabortionists fear that the same ethical arguments will prevail against abortion.

Several factors will therefore influence how this major new stem-cell discovery plays out in the future. One thing is clear, however: those regenerationists, law-
makers and Hollywood personali-
ties who have long dismissed ethi-
cal concerns and advocated human embryo destruction now find them-
selves at an important juncture because of this breakthrough. We can only hope that in the wake of this discovery, the sten call of har-
vesting human embryos will cease ringing in their ears and allow for a new era of ethical science in our society.

FATHER DOMINIQUE CARBONE Ordained Nov. 27, 1999 Pastor, St. Aloysius, Yoder What was your primary influence in your decision to become a priest?

Among other things, the fine example of Christian priests as Father Sarrazine, Father Hammond, Father Urbine, Father Sarazin and a couple of religious priests — Father Sarrazin and Father Lamb.

What is the most rewarding part of being a priest?

Helping the faithful come to a deeper appreciation of their faith in the Lord Jesus.

What hobbies or interests do you have?

I like to read and study, do carpentry and teach art. Most of all, I like building and cooking sausages. I have a number of dif-
f erent kinds of sausages of vari-
ad sizes, but I pretty much just fly for the fun of it.

Have you a pet?

Yes, I have a dog, Pokey, that is about 12 minutes to cook, and I find I can eat it pretty much every single day for months on end.

What is something interesting about yourself that most people might not know?

I can’t imagine what that might be; I am very ordinary.

How do you prefer to be addressed?

With a long French name it makes it tough to go by anything other than Father Dom. But I like to be addressed as Father Dom because it comes easy to all the school kids, especially the shrimps.
USF WOMEN’S BASKETBALL TEAM HOLD NO. 3 PLACE  The University of Saint Francis (USF) women’s basketball team continued to hold the No. 3 spot in the final 2007 NAIA Top 25 ratings released Dec. 12. Coach Gary Andrews’ Lady Cougars (7-1) had won five straight games heading into a Top 25 clash with No. 20, 8-0 Rio Grande University (Ohio) last Friday night in the first game of the Indiana Tech Sport One Classic. USF has now been in the Top 5 for six consecutive ratings and a Top 10 selection for 20 consecutive ratings dating back to Jan. 18, 2006. USF has been in the Top 5 in 10 of the last 12 ratings.

Snow cancels ICCL basketball action

BY ELMER J. DANCH

SOUTH BEND — For only the second time in its 62-year history, the Inter-City Catholic League (ICCL) was forced to cancel its Dec. 16 Sunday schedule because of a snowstorm that hit the South Bend area.

William Sorukas, a longtime volunteer for the basketball program, said the last time such an occasion occurred was approximately 30 years ago. He said the snowstorm simply blocked the parking lots at Saint Joseph’s and Marian high schools. He pointed out that this was the worst in the history of ICCL.

Basketball action will resume Jan. 5-6 at Saint Joseph’s and Marian.

Meanwhile, four teams enjoy their unblemished schedules until the New Year rolls around. They include St. Joseph in Mishawaka, Corpus Christi, Christ the King and St. Anthony. All four have displayed scoring power in their previous victories.

Bishop Dwenger sponsors basketball camp

FORT WAYNE — The Saints Basketball Camp for children in grades K-8 will be held Jan. 12 and 19, and Feb. 2 and 9. Cost is $40. A t-shirt is included, and no special equipment is needed. Kindergarten through third grade will be held from 9-10:15 a.m. and the fourth through eighth graders from 10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. Registration forms are available on the Web site: www.bishopdwenger.com and are due by Jan. 7. Registrations will also be taken at the door.

For information, call coach Scudder at (260) 496-4700 or e-mail dscudder@bishopdwenger.com.

Courting lessons of life with CYO basketball

BY MICHELLE CASTLEMAN

FORT WAYNE — Queen of Angels Coach Herb Berg hopes to teach his players how to “go after things in basketball like they will need to go after things later in life.”

“We have a great group this year and very supportive parents,” said Berg, the Royals leader. Berg also reports, “Our scorers are very unselfish and try to involve everyone on the team in the offense.” He plans for his team to improve each week and correct what they did wrong against a team in their second meeting.

In his eighth season at Queen of Angels after a nine-year run at Sacred Heart, Berg is assisted by Coach Rick Stout this year. Their 12-player combined roster includes Cam Wirick, Isaac Berg, James Myers, Alex Balestra, Phil Dusseau, John Ayres, Adam Simpson, Will Hilger, Austin Stout, Tommy Moffett, Sean Ryan and Jacob Harris.

The Royals (2-1) started off Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) league play with wins against Most Precious Blood and St. Therese, but lost to the Hessen Cassel Squires on Saturday, Dec. 15. In the 51-27 loss, Simpson led the Royals with 13 points.

“We were hoping to stay within 20 points, but Hessen Cassel is a tough team,” said Berg. Will Knapke’s 13 points and Mitch Castlemann’s 11 mounted the scoring attack for the Squires, now 7-0.

In other hoops contests last weekend, two Blue League boys’ teams battled to a 27-21 finish with St. Thomas coming out on top. St. Aloysius’ Luke Little paced the Gators with 11 points while Logan Dorman and Greg Shields had 9 points each for St. Therese. In the final game of the day at St. Joseph Hessen Cassel’s Msgr. Cantor Activity Center, the Huntington Catholic Rams were downed by the Lady Gators from St. Aloysius, 32-29, in an exciting matchup. Sterrett was on fire for the Gators scoring 18 points while Pike and Stoffel led the Rams with 12 and 10 respectively.

Coordinator Denny Jamison is busy planning the 2007 Holiday Hoop Fest the week between Christmas and New Year’s, which will feature several CYO boys and girls teams. CYO league play will resume on Saturday, Jan. 5, with games slated at St. Aloysius, Queen of Angels and St. Vincent.

Fifth and sixth grade basketball

At the fifth and sixth grade level, both the girls and boys teams from St. Joseph, Hessen Cassel, remain undefeated. The Lady Squires downed St. John the Baptist, Fort Wayne, last week while the boys got by St. Vincent. The St. Louis-St. Rose Twins defeated St. Therese in their season opener. The Twins are very deep this season with 14 on the roster report coaches Neil Oberley and Larry Castleman.

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‘The Kite Runner’ not to be missed

BY HARRY FORBES

NEW YORK (CNS) — Fans of Khaled Hosseini's international bestseller “The Kite Runner” will not be disappointed and should find the film version (Paramount Vantage) a richly satisfying adaptation, despite screenwriter David Benioff’s necessary abbreviation of some events.

The film, quite superb in every way, opens in the year 2000. Amir (Khaled Abbadi), an Afghan writer now living in the United States, has just had his first book printed, and a shipment has arrived from the publisher. His excitement is undercut by a call from his father’s old friend, Rahman Khan (Shaun Toub), entreating him to visit him overseas.

Amir thinks back to his childhood in 1970s Afghanistan. Now played by Zekiria Ebrahimi, young Amir lived with his father, Baba (Homayoun Ershadi), spending endless days playing with his best friend Hassan (Ahmad Khan Mahmoodzada), the small but feisty son of his father’s longtime servant Ah (Nab Tanka). The boys spend their days watching American Westerns like “The Magnificent Seven” at the local cinema, and flying their kites (a major pastime there) high above Kabul. Amir, an otherwise solitary boy who thinks his father hates him for causing the death of his mother during childbirth, is unassertive and lets the quick-witted, slingshot-savvy Hassan fight his battles. Kindhearted Rahman takes an interest in Amir and seems to understand the boy’s pain. One day after Amir has a tremendous victory with his kite, Hassan runs off to retrieve it some distance away, and is set upon by Assef (Elham Ehsas) who has an illegitimacy theme, a violent scene with no nudity involving a small boy and a bully, two distantly worded sexual references, an illegitimacy theme, a violent beating and a woman’s stoning. The USCCB Office for Film & Broadcasting classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG-13.

Amir grows up — an aspiring writer, now living with his grieving father who’s developed a weak heart — and falls in love with Soraya (Atossa Leoni), the daughter of a hard-line Afghan known as the General (Abdul Qadir Farrokh).

The call from Rahmin will give Amir a chance to atone for his misdeed in a way he never could have imagined, a mission that will bring him back to a greatly changed Afghanistan.

Under Marc Forster’s sensitive direction, the beautifully acted film provides a fascinating portrait of pre- and post-Taliban Afghanistan, such as we rarely get to see. Despite the lack of recognizable names, “The Kite Runner” has fine human values, a strong affirmation of friendship and family, and a redemptive ending that should not be missed.

In Dari and English. Partially subtitled.

The film has a single profanity and use of the F-word, a brief rape scene with no nudity involving a small boy and a bully, two distantly worded sexual references, an illegitimacy theme, a violent beating and a woman’s stoning. The USCCB Office for Film & Broadcasting classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG-13.

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December 23, 2007

TODAY’S CATHOLIC
WHAT’S HAPPENING

WHAT’S HAPPENING carries announcements about upcoming events in the diocese. Send in your announcement at least two weeks prior to the event. Mail to: Today’s Catholic, PO. Box 11169, Fort Wayne 46856; or e-mail: ftcogan@fsOUS.edu. Events that require an admission charge or payment to participate will receive one free listing. For additional listings of that event, please call our advertising sales staff at (260) 456-2824 to purchase space.

FUNDRAISERS
Knights plan spaghetti dinner
South Bend — The Knights of Columbus Council 5521, 6153 S. Ironwood Dr. will have a spaghetti dinner on Friday, Dec. 21, from 5-7 p.m. Adults $6, children (5-12) $3. Dinner includes spaghetti, salad, garlic toast and coffee. Carry-out available.

Country Chef fish dinner
Fort Wayne — The Bishop Dwenger music boosters will have a fish dinner on Friday, Jan. 11, from 4:30-7:30 p.m. in the cafeteria. Tickets are adults $8, children $6 and children 5 and under are free.

St. John the Baptist sells recipe book
Fort Wayne — “Taste and See,” a recipe book of more than 430 recipes has been released by St. John the Baptist Parish. Copies are $10 and may be purchased at Cathedral Bookstore or Waynedale Bakery. If you’d like to order a book call Tim Robison at (260) 745-7663. Shipped books will have an additional $3 mailing charge.

MISC. HAPPENINGS
Montreal Pilgrimage
South Bend — Christ the King Parish is organizing a pilgrimage to St. Joseph’s Oratory in Montreal June 16-20, 2008, and will cost $475 per adult (based on a double-occupancy room). Registration forms can be found online at www.christ- thekingonline.org. A $50 deposit will reserve your seat. For information call Linda Fitzpatrick (574) 273-3113 ext. 315 or Deacon Steve Lacroix at ext. 316.

Light Feast
Fort Wayne — An orientation meeting for the 12-week spiritual weight loss program, The Light Feast, will be held in the east room of St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church on Monday, Jan. 7, from 9-11 a.m. Meetings for the series will be held Monday mornings in the same location. For more information contact Nancy Simmonds at (260) 637-9041.

New Year’s eve party
South Bend — A Polish-style sit-down dinner and party will be held Monday, Dec. 31, at the Holy Family parish center. An open bar, party favors and continental breakfast will be served. Doors open at 6 p.m., dinner served at 7 p.m. Music by deejay Jack Reichert from 8 p.m. to 1 a.m. Tickets available at the Holy Family rectory for $30 per person.

DEVOTIONS
All family rosary
Fort Wayne — The next all-family rosary will be Sunday, Jan 6, at 3:30 p.m. at MacDougall Chapel (on the grounds of The Consultant of the Immaculate Conception). The intention is for all families, especially families with difficulties. All are welcome.

Divine Mercy devotions
Fort Wayne — St. Henry Parish has Divine Mercy devotions every Wednesday at 3 p.m. and first Sundays at 3 p.m.

Centering prayer
South Bend — Centering prayer is held every Tuesday from 4 to 5 p.m. at Little Flower Chapel, 54191 N. Ironwood.

DONATIONS
Mustard Seed Furniture Bank
Fort Wayne — The Mustard Seed Furniture Bank accepts donations of bedroom and living room furniture, tables, chairs, bed linens and towels. Items must be in working order and free ofrips, tears, stains, burns and animal hair. Donations may be picked up by calling (260) 471-5802. The Mustard Seed is dedicated to providing household furnishings to those in need.

St. Vincent de Paul Store always in need of donations
Fort Wayne — Donations are always accepted for cars, trucks and vans. Donations are tax deductible. Call (260) 456-3561 for pick up or drop of at the store, 1600 S. Calhoun St.

VOLUNTEERS
Volunteers needed for Hospice Home
Fort Wayne — Volunteers are needed to assist the agency in a variety of roles. Duties include patient support and clerical support. Garden volunteers are also needed to maintain the Seasons of Life perennial garden. Volunteer training is being planned. Call Ann Blue at (260) 435-3235 or visit www.vnhh.org for information.

Volunteers needed
Fort Wayne — The Franciscan Center Clothes Closet is in need of volunteers. Call Doris Bermers at (260) 744-3977 for information.

Erin’s House seeks good listeners
Fort Wayne — Erin’s House is seeking volunteers who are good listeners with a caring and compassionate heart for children and young adults ages 3 to 25. Call (260) 423-2466 for information.

Volunteer for St. Mary Soup kitchen
Fort Wayne — St. Mary Parish is in need of regular volunteers for the soup kitchen on Wednesday and Friday mornings. Additional substitutes are needed for all days and shifts. Interested persons 16 and older should call (260) 493-6415. Some lifting is required.

TV MASS GUIDE FOR JANUARY

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“Catholic Mass” on WNDU-TV 16, 7:30 a.m. on Sundays.

Christmas TV Mass Specials

FORT WAYNE
Christmas Eve Midnight Mass live from the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
Celebrant: Bishop John D’Arcy Christmas Morning: Live 10:30-11:00 a.m.
WANE-16
Celebrant: Bishop John D’Arcy

SOUTH BEND
Christmas Day 6:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
WNDU-TV 16
Celebrant: Father Chris Cox, C.S.C.
Sacred Heart Basilica

REST’S IN PEACE

Columbia City
Theresa Carmilla Miller, 84, St. Paul of the Cross
Fort Wayne
Sharon K. LeFebvre, 72, St. Jude
Agnes V. Stefanek, 90, St. Charles Borromeo
Herbert K. Brockmeyer, 43, St. Patrick
Huntington
Ronald R. Ross, 91, St. Mary
Mishawaka
Elise R. Honold, 96, St. Bavo
Lawrence A. Hayes, 70, Queen of Peace
Notre Dame
Father Arthur M. Shoenfeld, CSC, 77, Sacred Heart Basilica
Francis Shortlesee, 86 Cedar Grove Cemetery Chapel
South Bend
Josephine M. Geissler, 85, Little Flower
Linda L. Rice, 60, St. Stanislaus
Lucille V. Browiak, 92, St. Adalbert
Lucille A. Sieracki, 77, St. Hedwig
Robert A. Amos, 54, Holy Cross
Rosemary C. Grundler, 79, Holy Family
Louise F. Singleton, 81, Little Flower
Ernest A. G. Bonek, 79, Christ the King
Mary C. Mannell, 80, Christ the King
Edward S. Tafelski Sr., 91, St. Adalbert
Sister Elizabeth Weisenbach, 85, Church of the Immaculate Conception, St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Ind.
Sister served at St. Jude, Fort Wayne.
Sister Raymond Hunter, 100, Church of the Immaculate Conception, St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Ind.
Sister served at St. Augustine, Fort Wayne.

DIRECTOR of Religious Education
Sister Mary D. Brantley, 91, St. Adalbert Church
Sacred Heart Parish, a parish of 900 families located on the campus of Notre Dame (although independent of Campus Ministry at ND), worshiping in the Crypt under the Basilica, invites applicants for the position of DRE. Duties include, but are not limited to, children’s religious education, sacramental preparation programs, adult formation, and RCIA.
The ideal candidate would have some years of experience directing religious education, a graduate degree in theology, a lively prayer life, a faith-filled character, knowledge of the Church and world, an interest in justice, a commitment to Christ’s peace, and the ability to work well with people of various backgrounds and experience. The parish wishes to fill the vacancy by January 2008. Send cover letter and resume to the pastor:
Rev. John Patrick Riley, CSC Sacred Heart Parish, University of Notre Dame, 104 The Presbytery, Notre Dame IN 46556 or by email: John.Priley33@nd.edu
Requests for more information can be addressed to Chris Miller, DRE at cmiller4@nd.edu
Christmas

Its simplicity is majestic and its majesty fits the heart and mind of any individual who contemplates its mystery. It is so old, we know just what is coming, but so new that it delivers a bright spark of faith, hope and love. It is what we want for others delivered through ourself. It is sublime. It is powerful. It is real!

TODAY’S CATHOLIC